

A black and white illustration showing Jesus on the right, wearing a simple robe, kneeling and reaching out his hand to a man on the left who appears to be in distress or awe. They are outdoors with trees in the background.

Use Week of:

Unit 25 • Session 2

Three Parables

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Luke 15

STORY POINT:

Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

KEY PASSAGE:

Colossians 1:13-14

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How does God care for His creation?
God loves and rules over His creation
according to His perfect plan.

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LEADER Bible Study

In Luke 19, Jesus went after Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. Zacchaeus was not well liked, but his interaction with Jesus led him to repent of his wrongdoing. Jesus said to him, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

Who are “the lost”? What does it mean to be lost? In Luke 15, Jesus told three parables to the crowd of tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, and scribes. Jesus’ teaching brought gospel truth to the tax collectors and sinners—those whose unrighteousness separated them from God—and to the Pharisees and scribes—those who relied on their own righteous efforts for salvation.

The first two parables are similar. In one, a man loses a sheep. He leaves his flock to find the missing sheep, and he rejoices when it is found. In the second, a woman loses a silver coin. The woman carefully searches until she finds it. Then she calls her neighbors and friends to celebrate with her. Heaven rejoices when even one sinner repents. Finally, Jesus told a parable about two sons. The younger son asked for his inheritance, wasted his money on immoral living, and decided to return to his father. Rather than rejecting his wayward son, the father embraced him. The older son, who had always been obedient to his father, reacted with anger.

As you read Luke 15, think about the crowd Jesus was speaking to. The focus is often placed on the younger son—the one with whom the tax collectors and sinners could identify—but Jesus also made a point about the older son. The older son was like the Pharisees and scribes, focused on his own morality and feeling entitled to his father’s favor.

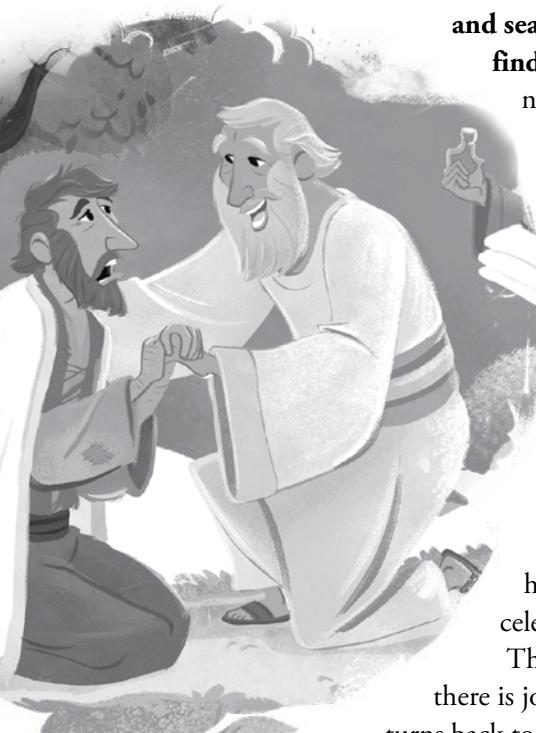
Jesus taught what God is like. He seeks sinners who have wandered far from Him, and He seeks sinners who try to earn salvation by their good works. As you teach, help kids understand that being lost means not knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior. God loves us, and He actively seeks to bring sinners to Himself.

The BIBLE Story

Three Parables

Luke 15

Tax collectors and sinners came to listen to Jesus teach. The religious leaders complained because Jesus welcomed sinners, so **Jesus told them three parables to teach them about God.**



Jesus said, “If a man has 100 sheep and loses one, what does he do? He leaves the 99 sheep and searches for the lost sheep until he finds it. Then he tells his friends and neighbors, ‘Let’s celebrate! I found my lost sheep!’ In heaven, there is more joy when one sinner repents and turns back to God than for 99 people who did not wander off.”

Jesus also said, “If a woman has 10 silver coins and loses one of them, what does she do? She lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it. Then she tells her friends and neighbors, ‘Let’s celebrate! I found my lost coin!’”

Then Jesus repeated, “In heaven, there is joy when one sinner repents and turns back to God.”

Jesus told a third story. “A man had two sons. The younger son said, ‘Father, give me my inheritance today.’ So the father gave his son his share. The younger son left home. He wasted his money and lived foolishly. There was a famine, and the people in

• Use sound

effects: Play sound effects as you tell the story, such as sheep baaing, coins jingling, or pigs oinking.

• Draw pictures:

As you tell the story, draw simple pictures on a dry erase board or large sheet of paper. Consider drawing sheep, some coins, and a father with two sons.

that country did not have enough food. The son got a job feeding pigs. He was so hungry, even the pigs' food looked tasty.

“The younger son made a plan. He would go back to his father and admit he was wrong. He would ask to work for his father like the servants.

“So the younger son headed home. He was still a long way away when his father saw him coming. His father ran to him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The son began to apologize. ‘I have sinned against God and against you,’ he said.

“But the father told his servants, ‘Let’s celebrate with a feast! Bring the best robe and put it on my son! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. This son of mine was lost, and now he is found!’

“At this time, the older son came from the fields and heard music at the house. ‘What’s going on?’ he asked one of the servants.

“‘Your brother is here,’ the servant said. ‘Your father is celebrating.’

“The older brother was angry! He refused to go to the feast. The father asked him to come inside. The older brother said, ‘I never disobeyed you! But you never threw a party for me.’

“‘Son,’ the father said, ‘everything I have is yours. We have to celebrate. Your brother was lost and is found.’”

Christ Connection: The religious leaders complained that Jesus welcomed sinners. Jesus told these parables to teach about God’s forgiveness. God sent Jesus so sinners can be forgiven. As Savior, Jesus seeks sinners. He paid the ultimate price—His own life—to save people from sin.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Three Parables

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 15

STORY POINT: Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

KEY PASSAGE: Colossians 1:13-14

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How does God care for His creation? God loves and rules over His creation according to His perfect plan.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to tell about a time they lost or misplaced something that was very important to them. Did they ever find it? Where was it?

SAY • It can feel very scary or frustrating to lose or misplace items that are important to us. But the joy we feel if we finally find it again is very special. Today we will learn about three stories Jesus told about people finding what they had lost. These stories will help us understand God's love for people.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Shepherd's Roundup" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Shepherd's Roundup" activity page. Challenge the kids to find and circle 10 sheep hidden in the picture.

SAY • Today we will learn about three stories Jesus told about people finding what they lost. One person was a shepherd who lost a sheep. This shepherd went to great lengths to find his sheep. What would you do to find a lost sheep?

Session starter (10 minutes)

LOW PREP

OPTION 1: Coin collecting

Before the session, hide 10 plastic coins in the room.

During the session, invite the kids to find the lost coins.

You may choose to time them and see how quickly they are able to find all 10.

SAY • Great job finding those coins! Have any of you ever lost money? It can be very frustrating to misplace money. Today we will hear about a story Jesus told in which a woman searched her whole house to find just one missing coin out of ten. How would you feel if you found a lost coin?

- plastic coins
- stopwatch (optional)

OPTION 2: Sheep toss

Place a plastic cup on the floor. Instruct the kids to line up about five feet from the cup. You may use tape to mark a line for kids to stand on when taking their turn. Give kids a cotton ball and allow them to take turns tossing their cotton ball to land in the cup. You may award points, such as one point for hitting the cup and three for landing the cotton ball inside the cup.

- plastic cup
- cotton balls, 1 per kid
- tape (optional)

SAY • Those cotton balls are soft and fluffy, almost like sheep. Today we will learn about a shepherd in a story Jesus told. He didn't toss his sheep away but went out in search of a single lost sheep even though he had 99 others that were not lost! Would you do the same to find a lost sheep?

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Three Parables

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 15

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KEY PASSAGE: Colossians 1:13-14

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How does God care for His creation? God loves and rules over His creation according to His perfect plan.

Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

· leader attire

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

[Leader enters wearing casual clothing.]

LEADER • Hey, friends! I'm glad you could make it back this week. You know, if you look around my shop, you might get the feeling that I have no real system of organization. You'd be right! I always mean to get things put in order and take a thorough inventory, but I just never quite get around to it. Sure, there's a bit of method to my madness, but it's nowhere near what I wish it would be.

So it's unsurprising that I tend to misplace things a lot. Take yesterday for example. I had a customer who called to see if we happened to have any antique toys from the Mutated Adolescent Samurai Frogs line. I knew we had two, one of which is a Friedman figurine, but I couldn't remember if the second was Hayek or Keynes.

I had to practically turn the shop upside-down

searching through all the clutter to find the second action figure. Turned out, I would have been wrong either way. The second toy I had in stock was Locke! I felt silly, but thankfully the customer really appreciated the effort.

The whole experience had me thinking about our Bible story this week. Jesus told three different parables about people finding lost things. I'd like to tell you all about it.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Let's start by remembering our big picture question and answer. *How does God care for His creation? God loves and rules over His creation according to His perfect plan.* We will see that clearly in Jesus' parables. When things go wrong in creation, God is there to comfort us. His plan was never to leave us alone in sin. Instead, God's plan was to send Jesus and restore the world from all the damage sin causes. That includes His saving us through Jesus!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

- Giant Timeline

LEADER • When Jesus was on earth, He traveled all over Israel performing miracles and teaching people about God. Jesus spent a lot of time teaching people about God's kingdom. **God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything.** Jesus also spent time explaining what God is like and how He loves. Jesus used *parables*—stories with deeper meaning—to

help explain how God feels toward those who do not know Him. Our story is called “Three Parables.”

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- “Three Parables” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Open your Bible to Luke 15. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Three Parables.”

LEADER • Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

The lost are any people who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus. It is important for us to know that God loves the lost, because it helps us understand God’s incredible love. Because God is perfect and holy, He would be just to leave us alone in sin. Instead, He sent Jesus to save us.

How did you feel about the older brother in Jesus’ parable about the lost son? When I was young, I sometimes read the story and thought the older brother was right. It seemed unfair to me that the younger brother would get a party after the mistakes he had made.

It can be tempting to believe that if we behave in the right ways, we deserve better treatment or more love from God. That’s what the religious leaders in Jesus’ day thought! Thankfully, God’s love for us does not depend on how we behave. That’s a good thing because it means that God also doesn’t love us less when we misbehave and make sinful choices.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • The religious leaders complained that Jesus welcomed sinners. Jesus told these parables to teach about God’s forgiveness. God sent Jesus so sinners

can be forgiven. As Savior, Jesus seeks sinners. He paid the ultimate price—His own life—to save people from sin.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 25, Session 2” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about what they would do if a bully from school showed up at church. Guide them to discuss how the way we treat people shows what Jesus is like.

- “Unit 25, Session 2” Questions from Kids video

Missions moment (3 minutes)

 Print the “Soto Family Ministry” printable and cut apart the captions. Display the photos from the printable. Invite kids to work together to match each caption with a picture.

- “Soto Family Ministry” printable

LEADER • Many of the people in Utah have heard of Jesus, but they do not know the truth about Jesus found in the Bible. **Jesus came to seek and save the lost**, so Luis knows that Jesus wants the people in Utah to hear about Him.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Colossians 1:13-14. Then sing the key passage song.

- Key Passage Poster
- “Kingdom of the Son (Colossians 1:13-14)” song

LEADER • As soon as we have faith in Jesus, we are rescued from darkness. We immediately become citizens of God’s perfect kingdom. In God’s kingdom, Jesus is our perfect King. He loves us and helps us to glorify God with our lives. When we tell others about Jesus and God’s kingdom, we are part of Jesus’ mission to save the lost.

· “Jesus, Our Savior”
song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Let's worship Him for His mercy and love. Sing together “Jesus, Our Savior.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, thank You for sending Your Son to rescue us. We know that we cannot find Jesus on our own by our good works. Instead, Jesus seeks us out to draw us near. Help us be a part of Your mission in the world. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He’s already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Three Parables

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 15

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KEY PASSAGE: Colossians 1:13-14

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How does God care for His creation? God loves and rules over His creation according to His perfect plan.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- dry erase board or chalkboard
- marker or chalk
- sticky note
- pen

Before the session, write out the key passage, omitting a single word. Write that word on a sticky note and hide it somewhere in the room. During the session, challenge the kids to identify the word that is missing. Then instruct them to find the word somewhere in the room. When the kids find the sticky note, place it on the board to fill in the blank. Read the key passage a few times together.

SAY • When it comes to spiritual things, there are two kingdoms. We are all born as slaves to sin in the kingdom of darkness. Only Jesus can rescue us and bring us into His perfect kingdom. Once Jesus finds us and rescues us, we can be part of His mission—telling others about Him so they can be saved, too.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set
(005802970, optional)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Luke 15. Ask the kids how many total chapters are in Luke. (24) Ask the kids how they can find Luke if they don't know where it is in their Bibles. (*Use the table of contents.*) Then ask how chapters and verses within a book are marked. (*The large numbers mark chapters; the small mark verses in a chapter.*)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What did the Pharisees and scribes complain about? (*Jesus' welcoming sinners, Luke 15:2*)
2. How did the three characters from the parables react when what they lost was found? (*by rejoicing and celebrating; Luke 15:6,9,32*)
3. Why was the older brother angry at the end of that parable? (*He felt his father was treating him unfairly, Luke 15:29-30*)
4. Do you ever feel like running away from God to live your own way? *Guide kids to think about the choices they make. Help them think through times when it may feel like obeying God is a burden, such as when a seeing popular movie or playing a popular video game dishonors Him. Encourage kids to speak openly about when it is hard to obey God.*
5. Do you ever feel like it's unfair for God to love people who disobey Him? *Help kids see that all people are sinners. We often try to rank our sin or compare it to other people's sin to justify why we chose to sin. Help kids understand that all sin deserves death.*
6. How should we react to a person becoming a believer in Jesus? *Direct kids to remember how God reacts to sinners' repenting. Discuss the fact that God welcomes sinners and loves them. Help them see that we should respond like God does, with joy and celebration, not with doubt or skepticism.*

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

SAY • Jesus came to seek and save the lost. God loves when sinners turn from sin toward Jesus. We can rejoice in God's goodness to sinners—including ourselves—and celebrate when people come to faith. God's love is endless.

LOW PREP

- “Soto Family Ministry” printable
- index cards
- pencils
- tape

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: The Soto family

Allow the kids to spend a few minutes reviewing the photos and captions from the “Soto Family Ministry” printable. Give each kid an index card. Encourage the kids to write or draw pictures on their cards to help them remember ways they can pray for the Sotos this week. Help the kids tape their cards next to the pictures. Consider displaying these pictures and cards for the remainder of the unit.

SAY • Luis and Betty Soto know that many people in Utah are lost; they do not know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. Our prayers help strengthen their work to share with as many people as possible about salvation through Jesus. **Jesus came to seek and save the lost**, and we can be a part of Jesus’ mission by showing His love, praying for missionaries and the people they serve, and telling others about Jesus.

OPTION 2: Parable puppets

Provide craft sticks, cotton balls, fabric samples, plastic coins, yarn, chenille stems, glue or tape, markers, and other craft supplies. Help the kids make small stick puppets they can use to act out the parables.

For example, a cotton ball glued to the end of a stick could be a sheep. Two sticks in the shape of a cross with a face drawn on the “head” and a bit of cloth cut to look like a robe could be the lost son. Yarn used for hair could change the figure into the woman with the lost coin, or a chenille stem in the shape of a shepherd’s crook could mark the shepherd. Encourage kids to be creative. Provide small plastic bags for kids to take their puppets home.

SAY • **Jesus came to seek and save the lost.** He told three different parables to help us understand God's love for people who do not know Him. With these puppets, we can be a part of Jesus' mission to save lost people! You can use these puppets to tell the parables Jesus told to people you meet.

When we live on mission by showing Jesus' love and telling others about Him, we glorify God and help grow His kingdom. That is why we are here on earth, to glorify God and lovingly obey Him. He does not want anyone to remain in the kingdom of darkness. [See *2 Peter 3:9*.]

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.