

Three Parables

Bible Passage: Luke 15

Main Point: Jesus is the One who seeks and saves the lost.

Key Passage: Mark 6:34

Big Picture Question: Why did Jesus tell parables? Jesus told parables to teach people about God and His kingdom.

WATCH THIS WEEK'S ONLINE VIDEO

Open your Bible to Luke 15.

Say •What was Jesus' first parable about? (*a lost sheep*) The man who lost his sheep left behind his flock of 99 sheep to find the sheep that was lost. When he found the sheep, he celebrated! He was so happy. Jesus said this is what heaven is like. There is a great celebration in heaven when someone who is lost turns from sin and turns to God. Being lost means not knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Jesus' second parable was about a woman who lost a coin. When she found it, she celebrated! Jesus said again that this is what heaven is like. There is a great celebration when someone who is lost turns from sin and turns to God.

Jesus' third parable was about a son who left his father's home. He went to another country and wasted all his money. The son realized he had made bad choices, and he decided to go back home. Maybe his father would give him a job as a servant. At least he would have food to eat and a roof over his head.

When the son went home, what did the father do? Was the father angry at him for being foolish? No! The father saw his son coming, and he ran to him! He gave him a big hug and a kiss, and he threw a party. The father did not treat him like a servant; he loved him as his son!

Did you know that's what God is like? We are foolish when we sin and disobey God, but God wants us to turn back to Him. He will not be angry when we tell Him we are sorry; He will be happy!

That's not the end of the story, though. The son had an older brother. The brother was angry that the father celebrated when the younger son came home. The older brother had always obeyed the father, and he didn't think it was fair for the father to throw a party for the younger son.

Christ connection

Say •Jesus told this story because the Pharisees and other religious leaders were like the older brother. They tried hard to obey God's laws, and they didn't think Jesus should be friends with people who had done bad things. The good news is that Jesus is the mighty friend of sinners! We are all sinners, and Jesus wants us to turn away from our sin and trust in Him.

As the Savior of the world, **Jesus is the One who seeks and saves the lost.** He invites them home to be with God forever.

Key passage

Show the key passage poster. Read Mark 6:34 aloud. Instruct boys and girls to stand, and lead them to read the key passage together.

Leader •Jesus said that the people in the crowd were like sheep without a shepherd. What did He mean? [*Allow kids to respond.*]
When sheep don't have a shepherd, they wander around aimlessly. Like sheep, the people needed someone to rescue them, take care of them, and lead them. Jesus is our Shepherd. He rescues us, takes care of us, and leads us back to God.

Key passage activity

Tape a large piece of paper to a focal wall. Show the key passage poster and lead kids to read Mark 6:34 aloud.

Separate the key passage into phrases that include key words. Choose several key words and call for volunteers to draw pictures on the paper to represent the key words.

Examples: several stick figures might represent a crowd, a heart might represent the word *compassion*, a sheep and shepherd might represent their corresponding words, and an apple might represent the word *teach*.

Guide kids to say the key passage. Use the illustrations as prompts for the phrases of the passage.

Say • Jesus had compassion on people who came to Him. Today we learned that **Jesus is the One who seeks and saves the lost**. He has compassion on sinners and wants us to turn to God and be forgiven.

Pray

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

Leader • God, thank You for sending Jesus to rescue us from our sin. Without Jesus, we are lost, but **Jesus is the One who seeks and saves the lost**.

Help us be lights in a dark world full of people who do not know and love You. Give us courage to tell others the good news about Jesus. Amen.

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. Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Bible story review & Bible skills

Form three groups of kids to act out the three parables. The first group has two kids (the man and the sheep), the second group has one kid (the woman), and the third group has three kids (the father and two sons).

Any remaining kids can be extras in the parables (sheep, neighbors, servants, and so forth). Provide a Bible and choose a volunteer to read a selected passage for the parable. Allow kids to act out the scene as the volunteer reads. Ask review questions after each performance.

Parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7)

What did the man invite his friends and neighbors to do? (*rejoice, celebrate; Luke 15:6*)

Parable of the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)

What did the woman invite her friends and neighbors to do? (*rejoice, celebrate; Luke 15:9*)

Parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11-32)

How did the father react to the son's return? How did the older brother react? (*The father celebrated, but the older brother was angry and refused to celebrate; Luke 15:23,28*)

Say •Great work, everyone. **Why did Jesus tell parables? Jesus told parables to teach people about God and His kingdom.**

Jesus taught the religious leaders about why He was friends with sinners. In these three parables, we learned that **Jesus is the One who seeks and saves the lost.** Being lost means not knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

Option 1: Classroom scavenger hunt

Prepare a scavenger hunt using items already in your room, or position common objects throughout the room. List on a piece of paper 10 descriptions of items.

Suggestions: *something that is round, something that is yellow, something you use every day.* Make two copies of the list. Then form two teams of kids.

Give each group a list and challenge them to work together to find items in the room that match the description. Emphasize that kids should not collect the items, but they should write the names of the items next to the descriptions on the list.

After each group finishes, invite teams to share the items they found for each description. Lead the class to cheer and clap about each item.

Say •Great job searching for these items. Today's Bible story is about three parables that Jesus told. In these parables, people were looking for things that were lost. Let's find out if they were found.

Option 2: Concentration cups

Scatter the objects on a floor or table and cover each object with an overturned cup. Mix up the cups. Guide kids to take turns uncovering two objects.

If a player uncovers a pair, he keeps it. If not, he covers both objects again and the next player takes a turn. The player who finds the most pairs wins. For an added challenge, keep the empty cups in the game.

Say •Was it difficult to find the matches? How did you feel when you found a match? Finding something I am searching for makes me want to celebrate!

Today's Bible story is about three parables Jesus told. In each parable, something that was lost was found—and people celebrated!

Option 3: Come home tag

Clear a large area for kids to play an active game. Choose one kid to be *It*. Blindfold *It* or instruct him to close his eyes. Instruct the rest of the kids to scatter and stand somewhere in the room. Explain that *It* will move around the room with his eyes closed, attempting to tag other players. Other players may not move.

It will detect the presence of other players by reaching out or by sound, saying, "Come home!" All the other players should respond, "Abba!" Explain that *Abba* is an Aramaic word that young children would use to address their fathers, like *Daddy*.

When a player is tagged, he should sit down at a designated wall. Play until *It* tags all the players. If time allows, choose

another player to be *It* and play again.

Say • Today we learned about three parables Jesus told. These parables were about things or people who were lost and then found. Jesus told this parable to teach that **Jesus is the One who seeks and saves the lost.**

He seeks sinners who have wandered far from Him, and He seeks sinners who try to earn salvation by their good works. God loves us, and He actively seeks to bring sinners to Himself.

Option 4: Lost son relay

Form two teams of kids. Set up a relay course for each team. Each course will have four stations. Explain what kids should do at each station:

Place pennies on the floor. Position a small trash can a few feet away. Each player will pick up five pennies and say, “I want my money!” Then toss the pennies into the trash can and say, “I wasted my money!”

Provide animal crackers or fish-shaped crackers. Players eat one snack before moving on.

Set a coat and costume ring on the floor. Players should put on the coat and ring and say, “I’m home!” Then take them off.

Set toy drums or pianos on the floor. Players should pick up the instrument and play a tune, saying, “Let’s celebrate!” Then the player will tag the next person in line, who will move through the course.

Continue until all players move through the course.

Say • The father was happy to accept his younger son when he returned home. In the same way, God is happy when a sinner repents and turns to Him.

Journal and prayer

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Prompt kids to think of someone they know who is lost—someone who doesn’t know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Encourage them to pray for an opportunity to tell that person the good news about Jesus. Guide kids to write in their journal pages what they might say to someone who doesn’t know Jesus.

If any kids in your group are unbelievers, guide them to list questions they have about Jesus and encourage them to talk this week to a parent or teacher about their questions.

Say • **Jesus is the One who seeks and saves the lost.** We can trust God to work out His plan of salvation, and when someone repents of sin and trusts in Jesus—that person is found! We can gather with our friends and celebrate!

Lead kids in prayer. Thank God for being a loving Father who joyfully welcomes into His home both people who have wandered away from Him and people who have trusted in themselves instead of in Jesus.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Mixed Feelings” on the activity page. Direct kids to write a short description of how each person felt at the end of the parable of the lost son. If kids need to review the story, guide them to read Luke 15:20-31 in their Bibles.