

# Bible Stories for Adults

## Parables on Finding the Lost

Luke 15

### Opening

- Gathering: What is your favorite parable and why?
- Today's Focus: Jesus taught in parables in order to reveal God's heavenly truths in ways that earth-based people could understand.
- Key Verses: *In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.* Luke 15:10
- We had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.* Luke 15:32

Opening Prayer

### Lesson

Parables

What is a parable?

Jerome - "A shadow of truth cast before"

*Sounds like a pleasant yarn, but keeps something up its sleeve which pops up and leaves you flat*  
Funk & Wagnalls

What a parable is not:

Proverb (*Proverbs 22:6*)

Simile (*Psalms 1:3-4*)

Metaphor (*John 6:35*)

Allegory (*John 15:1-8*)

Fable (*Judges 9:8-15*)

Read an example of a short parable that sounds like a fable:

Matthew 21:28-31a

What truth pops up and knocks flat the self-righteous elders whom Jesus was addressing?

Matthew 21:31b-32

Parables must always be interpreted in the context of the lesson Jesus was teaching

*Parabole*

Used only in Matthew (17 times), Mark (13), Luke (18) and Hebrews (2)

Hebrews uses for *symbolic* (9:9) and *figuratively* (11:19)

John uses *paroimia*

*Mashal*

Translated in Septuagint as *parabole*

Not used in Old Testament for fables (2 Kings 14:9), riddles (Judges 14:14), stories, etc.

Used as concept describing wisdom or revelation

*Meshalim*

Septuagint translated as *Paroimiai*

Translated to Latin in the Vulgate by Jerome as *Parabolai*

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### Jesus' Parables (*Matthew 13*)

What did David foretell about the Messiah's manner of speaking?

Psalm 78:1-2

How was this prophesy fulfilled by Jesus?

Matthew 13:34-35

Why did Jesus speak in parables?

Matthew 13:10-12

Were all of Jesus' parables stories?

Matthew 13:31-32

Were all of Jesus' stories parables?

Luke 10:25-37

Between 25 and 79 of Jesus' parables are recorded in the Bible

Depends on the definition used for parable

### Parables of the Kingdom (*Matthew 13*)

What was Jesus' most common topic for comparison in a parable?

Matthew 13:44-46

Were all of Jesus' parables descriptive of God or did some describe sinful man?

Luke 18:9-14

Did any parables teach us how to live as God's people?

Luke 18:1 (1-8)

Did Jesus' followers understand His parables when He said them?

Matthew 13:36

Did Jesus explain all of His parables, or were His disciples left to figure some out on their own?

Mark 4:33-34

Why were those who didn't follow Jesus unable to understand His parables?

Matthew 13:13-15

Did any of Jesus' parables hit home with those outside of His followers?

Matthew 21:45 (28-45)

### Who Were the Pharisees? (*Matthew 23*)

Why had the people of Judah been exiled to Babylon?

Nehemiah 9:29-30

What did the returned exiles do to show their commitment to God's law?

Nehemiah 9:38; 10:29

What sect evolved that worked to make sure people didn't disobey the law, even accidentally?

Acts 26:5

How did Jesus respond to the Pharisees' complaint that He didn't follow their rules?

Mark 7:5-8

What did Jesus say about the Pharisees' efforts to get people to heaven by adding to God's Law?

Matthew 23:4, 13

How did Jesus graphically point out how the Pharisees' detailed rules missed the main purpose?

Matthew 23:24

For Home Study: Read Matthew 23 for further understanding of how Pharisees were misdirected

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### The Lost (*Luke 15:1-7*)

What major Pharisee rule did Jesus break that led to the parables in Luke 15?

Luke 15:1-2

Why was this so bad in the eyes of the Pharisees?

Psalm 1:1

What had the Pharisees missed about God's relationship with sinners?

Ezekiel 18:23

How did Jesus reply to the Pharisees' rebuke of His association with sinners?

Luke 15:3-6

What does a lost sheep have to do with a sinner?

Luke 15:7

Would a studied Pharisee recognize this connection?

Ezekiel 34:11-12

### The Search (*Luke 15:8-10*)

Did Jesus feel that the one parable was enough to get the Pharisees to understand?

Luke 15:8-9

NOTES: It would take months for a Palestinian woman to save ten drachmas

The coins were most likely her dowry and were worn on a string as a necklace

How intently would she look and how much would she rejoice upon finding it?

What does searching for a lost coin have to do with searching for lost sinners?

Luke 15:10

### The Lost Son (*Luke 15:11-19*)

Were these two parables enough for the Pharisees to see God's desire to restore the lost sinner?

Luke 15:11-12

What did the younger son get as his share of the estate?

Deuteronomy 21:17

How responsible was the son with his inheritance?

Luke 15:13-14

How responsible had Israel been with her inheritance?

Jeremiah 16:18

How bad did the son's situation become after he ran out of money?

Luke 15:15-16

Why was this considered by Jews to be the lowest depth to which he could sink?

Leviticus 11:7-8

How bad did Israel's situation become after her rebellious living?

Lamentations 1:18, 20

What did the son decide after coming to his senses?

Luke 15:17-19

What did Israel decide after coming to her senses?

Lamentations 3:40-42; 5:21

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### The Forgiving Father (*Luke 15:20-24*)

How was the son received after returning from squandering a third of his father's estate?

Luke 15:20

What kind of reception can we expect after returning from squandering what our Father gives us?

Romans 8:38-39

Did the father accept the son's application for employment?

Luke 15:21-22

Will God restore us to sonship if we return to Him, or will He continue to reject us as we rejected Him?

Romans 9:26

Was the father thinking of ways for the son to repay his evil?

Luke 15:23-24

Does God, our Father, have ways for us to repay our evil?

Micah 7:18-19

Isaiah 43:25; 44:22; 55:7

### The Faithful Son (*Luke 15:25-32*)

How did the faithful and reliable older brother feel about the return of his brother?

Luke 15:25-30

Did the early Christians better understand God's grace and mercy to the penitent?

Acts 11:1-3

How did they respond when they learned that God had accepted the Gentiles also as His sons?

Acts 11:17-18

If those who stray are freely taken back, isn't it unfair for those who remain faithful?

Luke 15:31

How does the father in the parable summarize Jesus' key point of Luke 15?

Luke 15:32

Why didn't Jesus complete the story with how the elder brother responded?

Matthew 12:30

### Closing Prayer

### Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I demanded, pushed for or taken for granted something that was really a gift?  
(*Luke 15:12; 17:10-19; Proverbs 30:15a; Romans 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 3:1-5*)
2. What have I squandered that was costly to others?  
(*Luke 15:13; 16:1; Jeremiah 16:18; Matthew 7:6*)
3. What times of despair or trouble in my life resulted from my own selfish actions?  
(*Luke 15:14-16; Romans 2:8-9; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; Philippians 2:3-4; James 3:14-16*)
4. How often and in what ways do I show God's unconditional love to someone else?  
(*Luke 15:17-27; 6:27-36; Genesis 45:4-5, 14-15; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 3:16-18*)
5. When have I been jealous of love or mercy given to someone else?  
(*Luke 15:28-32; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Jonah 3:1-2; 3:10-4:3; Matthew 20:1-16; John 21:18-23*)