

Lesson 24: The Parable of the Lost

Objective: To know that God is a loving Father *who seeks and waits* for the return of His "lost" children.

Background: Parables are a favorite teaching method of Jesus. In fact, most of His teaching during the Later Judean ministry is by means of parable and illustration. The purpose of Jesus' parables, found in the Four Gospels, are intended either (a) to teach about the Kingdom of God (God's dealing with the world and man) or (b) to present a type of human conduct for a warning or an example.

Instruction: Familiarize yourself with the three parables found in Luke 15:1-32.

Let's Think: Imagine you were present at the scene.

1. What was the criticism of the religious leaders when people were crowding to hear Jesus? (Lk 15: 1,2) In response to the criticism, Jesus told three simple stories serving as a mirror to reflect the nature of God, *who God is*.

The Twin Parable of "The Lost Sheep" and "The Lost Coin." (Lk 15:4-10).

2. In what way is God like the shepherd and the woman? Has He written the sinners (the lost) off as the Pharisees did? And does He desire the destruction of the sinners (the lost) as the Pharisees thought? Substantiate your answer.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (or the parable of "The Loving Father") (Lk 15:11-32).

3. Was the young son going "up" or "down" hill after he left his father's house? Explain.
Do you see the steps: *realization, resolution, and repentance* that led to the restoration of the prodigal? Explain (Lk 15: 11-24).
4. How was the prodigal received by the father? Did the father forgive him? What do you think of the father? Explain (Lk 15: 20-24). How is God like the father and much more?
5. What was the reaction of the elder son to the return of his brother? Did he understand his father's heart? What do you think of the elder son? Explain (Lk 15:25-32). In what ways are the Pharisees like the elder son? Explain.
6. What light do the parables shed on the ministry of Jesus? Explain (cf. Lk 19: 10). How did it answer the criticism of the Pharisees? What was the criticism? (Lk 15:1, 2).
7. Do we have "Pharisees" in churches and Christian circles today? If so, what do modern Pharisees look like? Discuss.
How does this study help you to understand the nature of God and the nature of evangelism?

Let's Remember: Jesus said, "For the Son of man (means Jesus) came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10).