

The Gospel of Luke, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 20: The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son

Luke 15:1–32

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This chapter sits very near the center of the gospel, and the teacher should feel both its tenderness and its precision. Doctrinally, Luke 15 reveals the seeking, initiating love of God for the lost, the reality that heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents, and the nature of genuine repentance set against both mere regret and cheap presumption. The danger in teaching this chapter is to let its warmth dissolve into a vague message that God simply accepts everyone as they are. He does not. The shepherd seeks, but the sheep is carried home. The father runs, but the son first comes to himself, resolves to return, gets up, confesses, and comes home. Grace and repentance are held together here, and the teacher must hold them together too.

Be especially careful at the heart of the third parable. The prodigal does not pray a prayer from the far country and remain among the pigs; he acts. He arises and goes to his father, and he confesses with his mouth. This is the biblical pattern of a sinner turning to God: not faith only, not a private feeling of belief, but a real turning that gets up and comes home, that confesses and submits to the father's house. At the same time, the son earns nothing. The robe, the ring, the feast are pure gift. Teach students that the necessity of repentance and return never makes salvation a wage we earn, and the freeness of grace never makes repentance optional. Both errors miss the chapter.

Yet this passage was never meant only to settle the doctrine of salvation. It is here to search the heart. Let the elder brother do his work on your class. Many faithful church members are far more like the resentful older son than they would ever admit, keeping quiet ledgers, comparing themselves to others, secretly offended when grace is lavished on the openly sinful. Aim at both targets: send students home marveling at a God who runs to meet the returning sinner, and send them home willing to search their own hearts for the joyless, self-righteous religion that stands outside the party in the dark.

Question 1

Student Question:

Jesus answers the grumbling that "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (v. 2) with three parables that all end in a search and a celebration, and He says plainly, "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (v. 7). What do these stories teach us about the heart of God toward the lost, and about who takes the initiative in our salvation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin by setting the scene Luke gives us, because the three parables are not free-floating illustrations but a direct answer to a specific complaint. The tax collectors and sinners are drawing near to hear Jesus (v. 1), and the Pharisees and scribes grumble, “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (v. 2). In their world, table fellowship meant acceptance and intimacy. Their accusation is that Jesus welcomes the wrong people. Jesus does not deny it. He explains it, and in explaining it He unveils the heart of God.

Notice that in all three parables the movement is from God toward the lost, not from the lost toward God. The shepherd goes after the sheep until he finds it (v. 4). The woman lights a lamp and sweeps the house until she finds the coin (v. 8). The father, as we will see, runs to the returning son. Help students grasp that our salvation begins in the seeking heart of God. We love Him because He first loved us. The initiative is His.

Be careful here to teach this rightly and avoid a Calvinistic misreading. The fact that God seeks does not mean the lost are passive objects with no real response to make. The sheep and the coin cannot repent, which is precisely why those two parables emphasize God’s search; but the son must come to himself, get up, and come home. God genuinely seeks every sinner through the gospel, and every sinner can genuinely respond. The seeking love of God and the responsible turning of the sinner are both true, and Luke 15 teaches both across its three movements.

Then let the refrain land. There is “more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (v. 7). This is the doctrinal opener of the lesson, so let it stand tall. The heart of God is not reluctant toward returning sinners. He is not standing with arms crossed, waiting to be persuaded. He is the One on the search, and when the lost are found, heaven throws a party.

Land it pastorally. Many people secretly believe God tolerates them at best. This passage says otherwise. The God revealed by Jesus is the God who goes looking, and who rejoices out loud when the wanderer comes home.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The seeking, initiating love of God for the lost, who pursues sinners through the gospel (Luke 19:10; Ezekiel 34:11–16)
- Heaven’s genuine joy over one sinner who repents (vv. 7, 10)
- Repentance as the necessary response to God’s seeking grace, not an optional add-on (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30)
- The reality that God seeks all and that sinners can genuinely respond, against the error of irresistible grace and unconditional election
- The incalculable worth of a single soul to God

Discussion Prompts

- What does it tell us about God that He responds to a complaint about His mercy with three stories about searching?
- How do these parables show that salvation begins with God's initiative rather than ours?
- Why is it important to say both that God seeks every sinner and that every sinner must genuinely repent?

Question 2

Student Question:

In the first two parables it is the shepherd who goes after the sheep "until he finds it" (v. 4) and the woman who lights a lamp and sweeps "until she finds it" (v. 8), searching diligently for what is lost. When you think about how you came to know God, how much do you tend to credit your own searching, and how does it change you to see how relentlessly God was seeking you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the first self-examining question, and the goal is to reorient the way students tell the story of their own salvation. Most of us instinctively cast ourselves as the searcher who finally found God. Luke 15 reverses the picture. The shepherd searches "until he finds" the sheep (v. 4); the woman searches "until she finds" the coin (v. 8). The lost thing does not find its way home on its own. It is sought.

Press gently on the word "until." Both the shepherd and the woman search with a relentless, unstoping diligence. The woman lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully. This is not a casual glance around the room. It is the picture of a God who will not give up easily on what is His.

Help students feel the personal weight of this. Ask them to look back at the people, the providences, the sermon, the friend, the hard season, the gentle nudges that drew them toward God. Behind all of it was a seeking Shepherd. The hand we thought was our own reaching out was, underneath, the hand of God reaching for us first.

Then turn it toward gratitude and humility. If God sought me when I was wandering and could not save myself, then I have nothing to boast in. And if He sought me, He is seeking others still, which prepares the heart for the question of the wandering ones in our own lives that comes later in the lesson.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's prior, seeking love as the ground of our salvation (1 John 4:19)
- Humility that recognizes salvation as God's gift, not our achievement (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Gratitude as the proper response to having been sought and found

- The diligence and persistence of God's pursuit of the lost

Discussion Prompts

- Looking back, where can you now see God seeking you before you were seeking Him?
- How does it change you to see your salvation as God's search rather than your discovery?
- What does the word "until" tell you about how God pursues the lost?

Question 3

Student Question:

Each parable closes with heaven rejoicing: "joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (v. 10), and the father declaring, "it was fitting to celebrate and be glad" (v. 32). What does it tell us about God and about the worth of a single soul that the response to one sinner returning is not mere relief but a celebration in heaven?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This doctrinal question lingers on the joy that ends each parable, because the joy is the point Jesus is pressing on the grumbling Pharisees. The shepherd calls together his friends and neighbors to rejoice (v. 6). The woman does the same (v. 9). And there is joy "before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (v. 10). The father insists, "it was fitting to celebrate and be glad" (v. 32). Heaven does not merely tolerate the return of sinners; it throws a feast.

Draw out what this reveals about the worth of a single soul. The shepherd does this math over one sheep in a hundred; the woman over one coin in ten. By the world's accounting, the loss is small and the search is not worth the trouble. By heaven's accounting, the one is worth turning everything upside down to recover. Each person who comes to God is the occasion of a celebration among the angels.

This is a corrective to two errors at once. It corrects the cold heart that sees evangelism as a duty or a numbers game, and it corrects the despairing heart that thinks it is too small or too far gone to matter to God. There is no anonymous crowd in heaven's eyes. There is the one, and the one is worth everything.

Connect this to repentance specifically. Notice that the joy is over the sinner "who repents" (v. 10), not simply over a sinner. Heaven rejoices not because sin is winked at but because a wanderer has genuinely turned and come home. The celebration is real because the repentance is real.

Bring it home to worship. When a soul is restored, when someone obeys the gospel, when a wandering brother or sister comes back, our response should mirror heaven's. We should celebrate. A congregation that has lost its joy over the lost being found has drifted from the heart of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The infinite worth of a single soul to God (vv. 4, 8; Matthew 16:26)
- Heaven's joy specifically over the sinner who repents, not over sin overlooked (v. 10)
- Repentance as essential to the celebration, joining God's grace and the sinner's turning
- The call for God's people to share heaven's joy over the lost being found (Luke 15:32)
- A right view of evangelism as joyful recovery rather than cold duty

Discussion Prompts

- What does heaven's celebration teach you about how God values one person?
- Why does Jesus emphasize joy over the sinner "who repents" and not simply over the sinner?
- When was the last time your heart truly rejoiced over someone coming to the Lord?

Question 4

Student Question:

The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine in the open country to go after the one (v. 4), and the woman turns her whole house upside down for a single coin (v. 8). Is there someone in your life, a wandering child, a friend who has drifted, a person far from God, whom you have quietly written off as not worth the search? What would it look like to share the Shepherd's heart for that one?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question moves the seeking heart of God from doctrine to mission. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine in the open country and goes after the one that is lost (v. 4). The woman turns her whole house upside down for a single coin (v. 8). The question for the student is simple and searching: is there a person in your life you have stopped searching for?

Help students name the people honestly. There is the prodigal child who broke the family's heart and has been gone for years. There is the friend who drifted from the Lord and now seems unreachable. There is the relative whose hardness has made us quietly give up. We do not usually announce that we have written someone off; we simply stop praying, stop reaching, stop hoping.

Hold up the Shepherd's persistence as the model. He does not wait for the sheep to find its own way back; he goes. The woman does not assume the coin will turn up; she searches. The heart of God leans toward the lost one, and as His people we are invited into that same leaning. This is not nagging or pressuring; it is the patient, prayerful, hopeful pursuit of love.

Move toward something concrete. Ask each student to name one wandering person and one specific step of pursuit this week, a prayer renewed, a call made, a door reopened, an invitation extended. The Shepherd's heart in us always takes the form of a step toward the one.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The call to share God's heart for the lost and the wandering (James 5:19–20)
- Persistent, patient pursuit as an expression of love, not pressure
- The danger of quietly writing off people God has not given up on
- Intercessory prayer and personal reaching as the form the Shepherd's heart takes in us

Discussion Prompts

- Who is the one you have quietly stopped searching for?
- What would it look like to pursue that person the way the shepherd pursued the sheep?
- What is one specific step toward that person you could take this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

When the younger son hit bottom feeding pigs and longing to eat their pods, Luke says "he came to himself" (v. 17) and resolved, "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned" (v. 18). Trace the steps of what the son actually does in verses 17 through 20. What does this teach us about the nature of genuine repentance, and how is it more than simply feeling sorry or regretful?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now the lesson turns to the heart of the third parable, and this is where the doctrine of repentance is taught most clearly in the chapter. Walk the class slowly through what the son actually does. He is in the far country, destitute, feeding pigs, so hungry he longs for their pods (vv. 15–16). Then Luke gives us the hinge of the whole story: "he came to himself" (v. 17). Repentance begins with a moment of clear sight, when the sinner finally sees his condition honestly and stops making excuses.

Then trace the steps in order, because Jesus lists them deliberately. He recognizes his condition: even his father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, while he perishes with hunger (v. 17). He resolves to act: "I will arise and go to my father" (v. 18). He prepares an honest confession: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you" (vv. 18–19). He humbles himself, no longer claiming the rights of a son. And crucially, verse 20 says, "And he arose and came to his father." He does not merely feel; he gets up and goes home.

This is the place to teach the difference between genuine repentance and mere regret, because the contrast is everywhere in life. Plenty of people in the far country are sorry, sorry they got

caught, sorry the money ran out, sorry for the consequences. That is worldly grief, and Paul says it produces death (2 Corinthians 7:10). Godly grief produces a change of mind that leads to a change of direction. The prodigal does not just regret the pigsty; he leaves it. He turns around and walks the long road home.

Guard the class against two ditches here. On one side is the error of faith only, the idea that the son could have believed his father was good and remained among the pigs and still been restored. He could not. He had to arise and come. On the other side is the error of thinking the journey home earns the welcome. It does not, as the next questions will show. Genuine repentance is a real turning that acts, even though it earns nothing.

Land it on the conscience. Repentance is not a feeling we work up; it is a turning we carry out. It is coming to ourselves, owning our sin without excuse, and getting up to go home to the Father. Ask the class where, right now, the Lord may be calling them not merely to feel sorry but to arise and come.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Genuine repentance as a change of mind that leads to a change of direction and action (Acts 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:9–11)
- The difference between godly grief that produces repentance and worldly grief that produces death
- Repentance involving honest confession of sin without excuse (1 John 1:9; Luke 15:18–21)
- Repentance as more than regret: the son arose and came home (v. 20)
- The biblical pattern of turning to God, against the error of a faith that never acts

Discussion Prompts

- What are the specific steps the son takes from verse 17 to verse 20?
- How is genuine repentance different from simply feeling sorry or regretful?
- Where might God be calling you not just to feel sorry but to arise and come home?

Question 6

Student Question:

The son had rehearsed a speech asking to be made “as one of your hired servants” (v. 19), but the father interrupts with a robe, a ring, sandals, and a feast, restoring him fully as a son (vv. 22–24). Are there ways you still try to earn your way back to God, offering to be a servant when He wants to call you a child? Where do you find it hard to simply receive grace you could never deserve?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses on a subtle and very common spiritual problem, the impulse to earn our way back to God rather than receive His grace. The son had carefully rehearsed his speech: "I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants" (v. 19). It is a reasonable plan. He will work off his debt, earn his keep, prove himself. But the father will not let him finish the servant part of the speech.

Notice what the father does instead. The best robe, the family ring, sandals for his feet, the fattened calf, a celebration (vv. 22–24). Each of these says son, not servant. The robe is honor, the ring is authority and belonging, the sandals are the mark of a free child rather than a barefoot slave. The father restores him fully and freely, before he has worked a single day.

Help students see themselves in the son's servant speech, because it is one of the most religious things we do. We come back to God, but we secretly plan to make it up to Him. We will try harder, serve more, prove we are worth keeping. Underneath is a refusal to simply receive grace, perhaps because receiving feels too humbling, or because we cannot believe the welcome is real.

Be careful and balanced here, because this is not a license for passivity. The son did have to come home; repentance is real and necessary, as the previous question taught. But once home, he could not earn his sonship. Grace is received, not purchased. The teacher should help students hold these together: we genuinely turn and come, and yet the welcome we receive is sheer gift.

Land it on the heart. Some of the most exhausted Christians are exhausted because they are trying to be hired servants in a house where the Father wants to call them children. Ask the class where they are still working to deserve a love that God simply gives.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Salvation and restoration as the free gift of God's grace, not earned by works (Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:5)
- The full restoration of the repentant sinner to the standing of a beloved child (Galatians 4:4–7)
- The error of trying to earn God's favor rather than receive His grace
- The balance of genuine repentance with grace freely given, neither earning nor presuming

Discussion Prompts

- In what ways do you still try to earn your way back into God's favor?
- Why is it sometimes so hard simply to receive grace we did not deserve?
- What does it mean that the father wanted a son, not a hired servant?

Question 7

Student Question:

While the son “was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him” (v. 20), and only then did the son finish his confession. What does the father’s running, embracing, and lavish restoration reveal about the character of God and the nature of the grace He extends to returning sinners?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This doctrinal question fixes the class’s eyes on the father, who is the clearest picture of God in the parable. Read verse 20 slowly: “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.” Every phrase is loaded. The father saw him while he was still far off, which means the father had been watching the road, day after day, waiting. The love was waiting before the son ever turned around.

Then the father runs. In that culture a dignified older man did not run; it was undignified, even shameful, to gather up his robes and run like a child. But this father runs, publicly, toward a son who had disgraced the family. He absorbs the shame himself rather than make the boy crawl back in humiliation. He embraces him and kisses him before the son has finished a word of his confession.

Draw out what this reveals about God. He is not a reluctant judge who must be talked into mercy. He is a Father whose compassion runs out to meet the returning sinner. The grace here is lavish and undeserved and entirely on the father’s initiative. This is the gospel: not that we cleaned ourselves up enough to be acceptable, but that while we were still a long way off, God moved toward us in Christ.

Be careful to keep grace and repentance together, because this question follows the one on repentance for a reason. The father runs to a son who is coming home. The compassion does not cancel the confession; the son still says, “Father, I have sinned” (v. 21). But the order matters: the father’s love is not the reward for a perfect confession. It is the welcome of a heart that was already running toward the boy. Grace meets repentance; it does not wait for repentance to be impressive.

Close in worship. The picture of God that Jesus paints here is almost too good for the religious mind to accept, which is exactly why the Pharisees were offended. Let the class sit in the wonder of a God who runs.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The compassionate, initiating love of God, who moves toward the returning sinner (Romans 5:8)
- Grace as lavish and undeserved, restoring the sinner fully (vv. 20–24)
- The father absorbing shame rather than demanding the sinner’s humiliation, a picture of the cross

- The proper joining of God's free grace with the sinner's genuine repentance and confession (v. 21)
- The fatherhood of God toward those who come home to Him (2 Corinthians 6:18)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the father saw the son "while he was still a long way off"?
- Why is it significant that the father ran and embraced him before the confession was finished?
- How does this picture of God compare with the way you have pictured Him?

Question 8

Student Question:

The elder brother "was angry and refused to go in" (v. 28), insisting, "these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat" (v. 29). Where do you recognize the elder brother in yourself, the quiet keeping of accounts, the resentment when others receive grace, the joyless sense that your obedience has earned you something God owes you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question turns the mirror toward the elder brother, and the teacher should not rush past it, because for a room full of faithful church members this may be the most convicting question in the lesson. The elder son hears the music and dancing, learns that his brother has come home, and "was angry and refused to go in" (v. 28). His complaint is a ledger: "these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat" (v. 29).

Notice what the elder brother's words reveal. He talks about serving and obeying, but the language is the language of a slave, not a son. "I served you" and "I never disobeyed" and "you never gave me." He has lived in his father's house for years as if he were earning wages, and he is keeping a careful account of what he is owed. He cannot even call the prodigal his brother; he calls him "this son of yours" (v. 30).

Help students see how respectable this sin is. The elder brother never left home. He did everything right on the outside. And yet his heart is far from his father, full of resentment, comparison, and joylessness. He is offended by grace shown to someone else. This is the particular temptation of the faithful, the dutiful, the lifelong members. We can keep all the rules and still be standing outside the party in the dark, angry that God is so generous with people we think deserve it less.

Guide the class into honest self-examination. Where do we keep accounts with God, quietly expecting that our years of service have earned us better treatment than others? Where does

the conversion of an openly sinful person stir something other than joy in us? Where are we more comfortable with our own goodness than amazed by God's grace? The elder brother is in most of us somewhere, and grace begins to heal him only when he sees him.

Be gentle but clear. The father loves the elder son too and comes out to plead with him (v. 28). The invitation is open. But the elder son must lay down his ledger and come in. So must we.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The sin of self-righteousness and the danger of a dutiful but loveless religion (Luke 18:9–14)
- The danger of keeping accounts with God, treating obedience as earning wages rather than loving sonship
- Resentment of grace shown to others as a mark of a heart far from God
- The call to rejoice when the lost are found rather than to envy God's mercy (v. 32)

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you recognize the elder brother's account-keeping in your own heart?
- How do you tend to respond when God shows grace to someone you think deserves it less?
- What would it look like to lay down your ledger and come in to the celebration?

Question 9

Student Question:

The chapter ends with two sons and one father. The younger son comes home through repentance, confession, and a humble return, and is met with the father's free and lavish welcome, while the elder son stands outside in self-righteous resentment, refusing to rejoice (vv. 17–32). What does this final parable teach us about repentance, about grace, and about the deadly danger of a religion that is dutiful on the outside but proud and joyless within?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal question of the lesson, and the teacher should give it the most time, because in this final parable Jesus brings together the two great truths the whole chapter has been teaching and holds them up for the grumbling Pharisees, and for us, to choose between. Take the class back through the structure: there are two sons and one father, and both sons are lost, one in the far country and one in the field, but only one comes home.

Teach the younger son as the picture of repentance met by grace. He came to himself, resolved to return, arose, came home, and confessed (vv. 17–21). His turning was real and active; it was not a feeling he nursed in the pigsty but a road he walked. And yet he earned nothing; the robe and ring and feast were pure gift. Here is the gospel pattern: a sinner genuinely turns and comes to the Father, and the Father, by sheer grace, restores him fully as a child. Repentance and grace are not rivals. They meet on the road home. The teacher should resist both distortions firmly:

this is not salvation by mere belief while remaining among the pigs, and it is not a welcome the son purchased by the misery of his journey. He came home, and grace ran to meet him.

Then teach the elder son as the picture of the deadly alternative, a religion that is correct on the outside and rotten within. He never left, never disobeyed, kept every rule, and yet he is angry, resentful, joyless, and standing outside the celebration in the dark (vv. 28–30). His goodness has not drawn him close to the father; it has made him proud and cold. He represents the Pharisees and scribes who started the whole conversation by grumbling that Jesus receives sinners. Jesus is gently exposing them: you are the elder brother, and your spotless record has not made you love what your Father loves.

Make the doctrinal point unmistakable. Two things will keep a person out of the Father's house and out of the joy of heaven. One is open rebellion, the far country, and the cure for that is repentance and return. The other is self-righteousness, the elder brother's resentment, and the cure for that is also repentance, the humbling of the proud heart that thought it had earned something. Both sons needed to come in through the same door of humble grace. Religion that does not bow at that door, no matter how dutiful, stands outside in the dark.

Notice finally how Jesus ends the story, or rather how He does not end it. The father pleads with the elder son, and the curtain falls with the elder brother still outside, the question hanging in the air. Jesus deliberately leaves it open because He is asking His hearers to write the ending with their own response. Will the self-righteous come in and rejoice that the lost are found, or will they stand outside, offended by grace? The chapter that began with a complaint ends with an invitation. Let the class feel the weight of that open door.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Genuine repentance and free grace held together: the son truly turned and came home, yet earned nothing (vv. 17–24)
- Salvation as the sinner's real turning to the Father met by the Father's free welcome, against both faith only and earning
- Self-righteousness as a soul-destroying danger as real as open rebellion (Luke 18:9–14; Matthew 23:25–28)
- The need of the dutiful elder brother to repent of pride and resentment as much as the prodigal needed to repent of rebellion
- The universal call to come in through the door of humble grace and rejoice over the lost being found (v. 32)
- God's patient pleading even with the self-righteous, leaving the response in their hands

Discussion Prompts

- How does this parable hold together the necessity of repentance and the freeness of grace?
- Why is the elder brother's self-righteousness just as dangerous as the younger son's rebellion?

- Jesus leaves the story unfinished; how does each of us write the ending by our own response?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole chapter, from the grumbling Pharisees to the father pleading with his angry son in the dark. Jesus is showing us a God who seeks the lost, runs to the returning, and even goes out to plead with the self-righteous. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these three parables. What is the single truth from Luke 15:1–32 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this final question to gather the whole chapter into a single response. Lead the class back across the ground they have covered: the grumbling Pharisees and the welcoming Jesus, the shepherd searching for the sheep, the woman sweeping for the coin, the father running to the son, the elder brother standing in the dark, and over it all the joy of heaven over one sinner who repents. Three things lost, three searches, two sons, one Father who seeks them all.

Resist the urge to introduce new material here. The aim is integration and personal response. Some in the room are the younger son and need to come home. Some are the elder brother and need to lay down a ledger and come in. Some are being called to share the Father's heart and go searching for a wandering one. Give the class space to identify honestly where they are in the chapter.

Press gently toward specificity. A vague resolution to be more gracious or more grateful rarely changes anything. Ask each person to name one concrete truth from these parables and one concrete response they will carry into the week, a repentance to begin, a grace to finally receive, a ledger to lay down, a lost one to pursue.

Close the session by lifting eyes to the God these parables reveal. He seeks the lost, runs to the returning, and even goes out into the dark to plead with the self-righteous. The same God is at work in this room. Let the final word be wonder at a love that will not stop searching, and an invitation to come in and join the celebration.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Integration of the lesson's themes: God's seeking love, heaven's joy, genuine repentance, free grace, and the danger of self-righteousness
- The transforming purpose of God's word, which aims at changed lives and not merely informed minds (James 1:22)
- Personal response, whether repentance, receiving grace, or pursuing the lost, as the goal of studying this chapter

- Worship of the seeking, welcoming God as the fitting climax of the passage

Discussion Prompts

- Which figure in the chapter are you most like right now, and what does that call you to do?
- What single truth from Luke 15 do you most need to carry into this week?
- What is one concrete response you will make to what God has shown you here?