



STORY 73

Lost and Found

LUKE 15

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Luke 15.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan to answer the lawyer's questions. And while the lawyer may have gotten an answer to his big question about living forever, there were still many more people with many more questions. There were also more people trying to catch Jesus doing something wrong. People who didn't like what Jesus was saying and doing. Jesus didn't like that they grumbled about God's grace or about his spending time with people who were lost. And so Jesus told more stories to show them why he came to be with sinners. He told them a story about a man who went to rescue his lost sheep. He told them about a woman who scoured her house looking for a precious coin. After telling stories of a lost sheep and a lost coin, he told one about a lost son. He told them these parables because the Pharisees and scribes were complaining about how

1
Read

2
Teach

really bad people (“tax collectors and sinners,” Luke 15:1) were coming to Jesus, eating with him, listening to him, and following him. His stories helped show why there is much joy when lost things are found—and why spending time looking for the lost is good. How will the Pharisees respond to the stories? Will their grumbling against Jesus turn to joy? Will they begin to seek the lost with hope that they will be found? Let’s find out!

TELL THE STORY

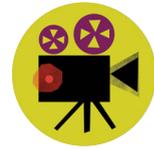
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Jesus came
to rescue and
redeem lost
sinners.

This is the famous story of the prodigal son. Of course, most people don’t know what “prodigal” even means. It means wasteful or reckless. A prodigal is someone who recklessly wastes money. But there is more to the famous parable of the prodigal son than the story of a son who wastes money. He certainly does that! He spends all his father’s money. But he also has an amazing transformation.

The story goes like this. Once there was a rich man who had two sons. The younger son said, “Father, give me right now all the money I will receive when you die. My inheritance!” His father agreed. The boy then took the money and traveled far from home. Before long he spent every single dollar on selfish things with sinful people. Now he was poor and hungry and needed a job. The only job he could find was feeding pigs. Oink. Oink. Ugh. Ugh. He was so hungry he dreamed about eating the pig slop. Yuck. Yuck. Especially for Jews who want nothing to do with “unclean” pigs. Suddenly an idea came to him: “Why starve to death? Why not go home? Even your father’s hired servants have more than enough to eat.” As he walked home, he rehearsed what he would say to his father: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to

be called your son” (15:18–19). What an amazing transformation—from prodigal to humble and repentant. But how would his father respond? Before he reached the front door, his father noticed his son walking in the distance. Did he lock the door? No. Send out the guard dogs to sic ‘em? No. The father loved him and forgave him. He ran to his son, hugged and kissed him, and ordered his servants to give his son new shoes, clothe him with the best robe, and put a ring on his hand. Then he gave this order: “Let us eat the biggest and best cow and celebrate. Steaks for everyone! For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (see 15:23–24). The father had been longing for just such a transformation. He rejoiced to have his son back home.

How do you think the Pharisees reacted to this story? We’re told they responded by ridiculing Jesus (Luke 16:14). Instead of learning from Jesus, they remained upset with Jesus for seeking the lost. Their hearts toward the “sinners” remain unchanged. How sad.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Do you know that not everyone was excited when the prodigal son returned home? When the older brother heard the music and saw the dancing (and likely smelled the tasty steaks on the grill), he was angry and refused to join in the celebration. He complained just like the Pharisees and scribes did. He told his father, “What are you doing? Look, all these years I have faithfully served you and never disobeyed you, and you have never thrown even a little party for me. But you have thrown a big party for this sinful son of yours, who did terrible things and spent all the money you gave him. Why?” (see 15:29–30). He thought we earn the Father’s favor, so he begrudged when it was an undeserved gift. The father replied to the older son, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found” (15:31–32).

The older brother’s thinking is common even today. It’s easy to think we deserve God’s salvation because we’ve done enough good things. We’re not as bad as others (so we think). Jesus told the three “lost” parables to correct such thinking. All heaven rejoices when someone repents of their sins and returns to God. When the lost are found. That is why Jesus came and spent time with sinners—to seek and save the lost, like us. When we understand the true gospel, we rejoice that God came to rescue sinners of all kinds.

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Why were the Pharisees upset with Jesus? Whom did Jesus come to save?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus came to find lost sinners.

2. **QUESTION:** In the last parable, what was lost? What had he done to ruin his life? How did the son think his father would respond when he returned? How did his father respond when he returned to him? What does the story teach us about our Father in heaven?

TAKEAWAY: We are never too lost to return to our Father in heaven.

3. **QUESTION:** What are some of the things the father did when his son returned home? Why did he do them? What does this teach us about how God feels when a sinner repents and returns to him?

TAKEAWAY: God rejoices when someone repents of sins and returns to him.

4. **QUESTION:** How did the older brother feel when his brother returned home and his father rejoiced? Would you have felt the same way? What did his father encourage him to do? How should we feel if Jesus has found us?

TAKEAWAY: We should rejoice that we have been found by Jesus and rejoice when others are saved.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Gather My Sheep

Supply List: poster board, marker, tape, cups, cotton balls, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Draw a large rectangular “sheep pen” on poster (one per team), and tape it to the wall opposite the starting line. Fill each cup with one hundred

Memory Verse

There is joy
before the
angels of God
over one sinner
who repents.

LUKE 15:10

cotton balls (one cup per team), and place the cups along the starting line across from the sheep pens.

Divide children into teams of five or six, and have each team line up behind a cup. Give each team a glue stick. On “Go” the first person on each team must take the glue stick and one cotton ball out of his team’s cup, run to glue the cotton ball inside the sheep pen, and run back to hand the glue stick to the next player in line. Play continues with each player’s gluing one cotton ball at a time. The first team to glue all their cotton balls inside their “pen” wins. Remind children that Jesus will find all his sheep.

Option 2: Pass the Snort and Baa

Supply List: none

Have children sit in a circle. One child starts the game by looking at the child on her left and making a pig snort noise without laughing. That child must then pass the snort to the person on his left, and so on around the circle. If the person snorting or receiving the snort laughs, he is out. When the snort has been passed around the circle, continue play by passing a sheep’s baa around the circle without laughing. Continue play (alternating between snorts and baas) until one child remains or until time is up. Remind children that Jesus told a parable about a lost sheep and a parable about a lost son who was so hungry he dreamed about eating pig slop!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Coin Hunt

Supply List: paper plates, crayons, fifty to one hundred coins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Hide coins around the room.

Have each child write his or her name on a paper plate and place it in the center of the room. Tell children that there are coins hidden all around the room and that their goal is to find as many as possible. On “Go” have children begin looking for coins. When a child finds a coin, he must place it on his plate before finding another one. Play continues for a couple minutes or until all the coins have been found. The child with the most coins wins. Remind children that Jesus came to search for the lost.

Option 2: Lost and Found

Supply List: random objects, dry rice, large bucket

Before Class: Gather objects like buttons, bouncy balls, clothespins, and the like. Mix the objects with rice in a large bucket. Make note of the objects in the box.

Divide children into two teams, and have them line up facing each other with the bucket of objects in the middle. When you call out one of the objects, the first person on each team runs to the bucket to find the object named. The first person to find the object gets a point for her team. Continue calling objects until all children have had the opportunity to participate and all objects have been found. The team with the most points wins. Remind children that Jesus came to seek what was lost.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Party Hats

Supply List: paper, scissors, streamers, staplers, markers, glue sticks, sequins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a large semicircle pattern with the words “Rejoice! The lost are found!” printed inside it (one per child). Cut streamers into 5-inch lengths. Make a sample craft.

Set copies, streamers, and remaining supplies on tables. Children first cut out a semicircle and decorate one side. Then they shape the semicircle into a cone, stapling along the seam to close. Have children glue streamers to the point of the hat.

Option 2: Paper Bag Pig

Supply List: paper, paper lunch bags, scissors, glue sticks, tape, crayons, pencils, pink pipe cleaners, googly eyes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a pig nose and two pig ears (one set per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Children first color and cut out a pig nose and two ears. Then they glue the nose, ears, and two googly eyes to the bottom flap of the bag, creating a pig puppet. Have them add a tail by wrapping a pink pipe cleaner around a pencil and taping the tail to the back of the puppet. Remind children that the lost son was so hungry he dreamed of eating pig slop!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Coin Collage

Supply List: paper, variety of coins, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the words “I was lost, but now I am found,” with FOUND in block letters (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies, coins, and crayons on tables. Have children place a coin under the found paper so the coin is inside one of the block letters. Gently color on top of the coin with a crayon. Have children continue this process with different coins and colors until the block letters are filled in.

Option 2: Lost Things Story Wheel

Supply List: paper, scissors, colored pencils, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of an 8-inch-diameter circle divided into three equal sections (one per child). Make copies of another 8-inch-diameter circle with a one-third section marked (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child one of each circle. Set remaining supplies on tables. Children first cut out the circles, then take the circle divided into three sections and label the sections “A Lost Sheep,” “A Lost Coin,” and “A Lost Son.” Have children draw pictures to go with each parable. Instruct children to cut out the one-third section on the other circle and fasten this circle on top of the first using a brass fastener. Have them write, “God rejoices when the lost are found” on the top circle. Children can rotate the top circle to remind them of each parable.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.