

Parables: Jesus the Storyteller

Part 4: Lost Sheep...Coin...Son

2021.7.25



TALKING WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide

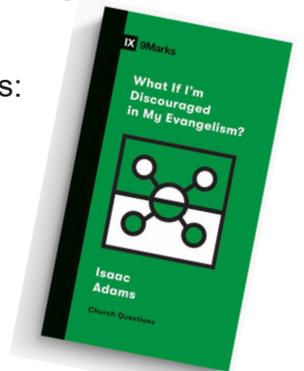


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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Discussion & Reflection

- 1 Tozer said: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." What comes into **your** mind when **you** think about God? How has that image changed over time?
- 2 Who has heard someone **contrast** Jesus with "the God of the Old Testament"? Tell us about it. When that contrast is made, how is Jesus described? How is "the Old Testament God" described?
- 3 Since Hebrews 1:3 says that "Jesus is the **exact** representation of God's nature", **whose** image do you think folks need to revise more—Jesus' or the Father's?
- 4 Whose image do **you** more need to revise, Jesus' or the Father's—**and in what ways?**
- 5 In his book, **What If I'm Discouraged in My Evangelism?**, Isaac Adams states:
"Our job is to proclaim salvation not produce it. We're called to deliver a message to people; God's the one who delivers people from sin."
1 Corinthians 3:5–7 talks about two Christian workers (Paul and Apollos) and God. Each plays a role in evangelism and discipleship. What are they?
- 6 How have you seen this truth play out in your own life and ministry?



- 7 **Creating "God Space":** "God Space" is where cynics, skeptics, and spiritually curious people can **safely** raise their questions, reservations, and doubts because we have listened well and demonstrated love in **practical, authentic** ways.
 - Think of a friend or family member who likely holds an unbiblical view of God or of Jesus.
 - Review Luke 15:11-24. What aspects of God character in v. 20-24 would they find attractive?
 - As a group, brainstorm questions and comments you could use to discuss this with them. Roleplay how to initiate and have a highly relational, redemptive conversation on the character of God.

Application-Challenge

- Think of one or two people with whom you would like to build a redemptive relationship.
- Build a relationship by focusing on areas of common interests.
- Pray for opportunities to discuss spiritual issues.
- Invite them to attend church with you, then take them out to lunch and hear about their experience.
- Love them as God loves them!

1 Read Tozer's quote, then ask both questions. The first question focuses on how they conceptualize God now, while the second question asks about how that conception has changed over time.

If you wish, you could follow up with other questions, such as:

- What influenced your change of concept of God more: a person or an event? Tell us about it?
- How stable do you think your current concept of God is? Why do you think that?

2 Many people say things such as "The Old Testament God is angry and vengeful, but Jesus is loving." or some such thing. This is what you're aiming at—if people make a distinction between God's character in the OT and NT, **how** do they characterize that difference?

3

So, **if** Jesus and the Father are identical in character, attribute, and intention (and **yes**, they are), **then** any discrepancy between our concepts of Jesus and "that Old Testament God" must be demolished. So, in **what** ways does our perception of the Father need to change? Do we see him as compassionate as we see Jesus? He is. Do we see Jesus as equally wrathful at sin as is the Father? He is. So, the question is: how do we need to adjust our conceptions of Jesus and of the Father? Question focuses on how **others we know** may need to adjust their views of Father and Son.

4 This question turns the spotlight on **us**—how do **we** need to adjust **our** views of Father and Son.

5 Read this quote and then the Scriptural passage, then ask the question. (They make the same point.) This point sets up the next question...

6 Now is the time for group members to tell stories of coming to faith—either their own, or when they helped someone else trust the Savior. How were people involved in the process? What did God do? Some group members will be ready to share their answers, but try to involve every member in telling his/her story. Don't rush this question.

7 And now, turn your focus outward: how can we take these truths about beauty of God—enduring love, coupled with burning righteousness—how can we help others around us begin to find God **attractive**? Work through these steps of creating "God space". Some group members will find building redemptive relationships natural and easy, others will find it awkward and scary. Help each other prepare to reach out.

Sermon Summary (Key Text: Luke 15:4-32)

A. W. Tozer astutely observed that “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” But in the theological cafeteria of the twenty first century, many create God a la carte, combining whatever ideas they find palatable and appealing. Confusion about God isn’t new, so one of the reasons Jesus came to earth was to reveal what God is like (John 14:8–10). If you want to know what God is like, look no further than the life and teaching of Jesus Christ! The self-righteous Pharisees had no concept of a God who loved sinners and who sought to bring them into fellowship with Himself, but Jesus’ attitude towards sinners was diametrically opposed to the Pharisaic concept. What exactly is God’s attitude toward sinners? This question was so vital that Christ went into great detail to provide the answer through an extended parable (Luke 15:1-32). It gives us unusual insight into God’s heart for sinful people like us and serve as an exhortation to the church. Notice the pattern running through each of these parables: Something is lost (a sheep, a coin, a son). A search is made. The item is found. Everyone rejoices.

I. God actively seeks to restore lost men and women to himself. The story of the prodigal son is the story of humanity. It begins with an intimate father-son relationship, but the son spurns his Father’s love, goes off in search of the good life, but discovers that life outside of his father’s house leads to disillusionment and despair. The son comes to his senses and hopes that his father will take him in as a hired servant (but he must have been quite fearful as he approached his Father’s estate). While still a long way off his Father saw him and couldn’t contain his joy, yelling to his servants: “Quick! Bring the best robe, put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Kill the fattened calf! Let us eat and be merry, for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again, and he was lost and has been found.” Church, behold the love of God! We were the prodigal. This is our story! But now that we’re back in our Father’s household, sometimes we forget that there are still many other prodigals out there. God is still looking down that road, still yearning for the return of that lost son or daughter. But God carries out this mission through the church.

II. We are God’s instruments of reconciliation in the world (Ephesians 3:10 & 2 Corinthians 5:20). We are surrounded by people who are facing a Christless eternity. They are still prodigals. God wants them to return to his household, but they don’t know the way. Church, we have the privilege and responsibility of pointing men and women back to God! Who is going to tell our neighbors, our co-workers, our family members about Jesus if we don’t?

III. God’s people must aggressively seek out modern day prodigals. The church’s ministries include worship, instruction, fellowship and evangelism. Early in the life of any church, evangelism or outreach assumes a primary role. But as the church grows and numbers are added, other areas require more and more of our energy. Instruction, fellowship and worship begin to assume paramount importance, and if we are not careful, outreach will be neglected and we will isolate ourselves from the very people God has called us to reach. That was the error of first century scribes and Pharisees. When Jesus told the first two parables, his original listeners would have agreed that this is how things ought to be: when something valuable is lost and then recovered, it leads to joy. But then, Jesus threw the Pharisees a curve: his third parable revealed the sinful, selfish attitudes of the elder brother—the Pharisees—who refused to respond with joy (v. 1-3 & 25-32).

These parables serve as a rebuke to any church or any Christian which neglects to reach out to those who don’t know Christ. So, I ask: Are **you** building redemptive relationships with **your** unchurched friends, family members and neighbors? Let’s get out there and build redemptive relationships with our unchurched neighbors. Tell them how God rescued you and gave you purpose and meaning. God is on a search and rescue mission, and he wants us to join him and to care like he cares.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) *is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to let Elisha teach us how to build redemptive relationships...*

Monday—Read 2 Kings 4:8-10. How did this woman signal that she was open spiritually?

Tuesday—Read 2 Kings 4:11-17. What was Elisha's response to her kindness toward him?

Wednesday—Read 2 Kings 4:18-21. Why do you think God allowed this tragedy to occur?

Thursday—Read 2 Kings 4:22-30. How did the Shunammite's response evidence faith?

Friday—Read 2 Kings 4:31-37. How might God use you when tragedy strikes your friend?

Saturday—***In preparation for worshipping the risen Lord with your church family,***
study **Luke 16:19–31.**

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]