



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Worth Repeating / Week 1

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SERIES SUMMARY

A four-week series on the Parables of Jesus.

WEEK 1: God loves you even when you're lost.

WEEK 2: At God's party, the invitation is for us all.

WEEK 3: When it comes to prayer, don't quit because it's quiet.

WEEK 4: Putting others first changes us and our relationships for the better.

SCRIPTURE

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him (Luke 15:20 NIV).

'For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found' (Luke 15:24 NIV).

TEACHING OUTLINE

SCRIPTURE

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him (Luke 15:20 NIV).

'For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found' (Luke 15:24 NIV).

INTRODUCTION

- Have you ever heard something over and over again?
- When something is told over and over, it's because someone thought it was worth repeating, retelling, or reposting.
- Tell a personal story about a time when something really important got lost.

TENSION

- Being physically lost can make us feel scared, frustrated, or even embarrassed. And it can be hard to know what to do next.
- But even in the most familiar places, we can feel lost emotionally or spiritually when we:
- Don't know how we got where we are.
- Aren't sure what we're doing or why we're doing it.
- Feel isolated, alone, or afraid.
- Don't know what to do to change things.
- Maybe you feel lost because of a circumstance you're in, a choice you made, or because you feel unseen, unnoticed, or unloved.
- We've all felt lost at some point in our lives, and in those situations, it can be hard to know how to find our way back again.

TRUTH

- Jesus used stories-parables-to help people better understand things about God. In a parable written by Luke, we read about the Prodigal Son.
 - A father had two sons, and when the younger son asked about receiving his inheritance early, the father agreed to give both of his sons their money.
 - The older son stayed home, worked hard, and was responsible with his money, but the younger son left home and spent all his money living wildly.
 - When famine hit, the younger son had no money for food and took a job as a pig farmer. He went from living a wealthy and crazy life to living a poor and sparse life. He was lost.
 - Eventually the younger brother went back to his father to ask for a job. The father was so happy that his lost son had returned that he embraced his son with love, acceptance, and celebration. (Luke 15:20)
 - Instead of focusing on all the reasons his son was lost, the father celebrated the fact that his son had been found. (Luke 15:24)
- This parable illustrates for us that, like the love the father had for his younger son, God loves us even when we're lost.
- God doesn't expect us to get everything together before we come to Him. His love meets us where we are.
- God loves us so much that any time we feel lost, He'll be waiting for us with open arms.
- Even if we don't feel lost-like the older brother in the Scripture-we all need God's love and acceptance.
- No matter what we've done or how lost we feel, God is there and loves us.

APPLICATION

- God loves you even when you're lost.
- Remember this . . .
 - Look around and recognize where you are.
 - Remember what God wants for you: to be found.
 - Tell someone about where you are right now.

LANDING

- God loves you so much, and He'll meet you where you're at in life.
 - What's one reason I might feel lost right now?
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YOUR STUDENTS

The concept of being “lost” isn’t easy for middle schoolers to grasp. For starters, being emotionally or spiritually lost is an abstract concept that may be hard for their concrete-thinking brains. Additionally, their self-awareness is still developing so they may not yet be aware of or able to see how they might be lost. If they don’t feel it, it’s hard for them to know how they’re experiencing it. Giving an example or two from your own life will help make this idea of being lost a little easier for them to not only understand, but look for in their own lives.

INTERACTIVE: LOST AND FOUND

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you’ll use a prop (your church’s lost and found box) to help explain the parable of the Prodigal Son and make it more relatable for your students.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Your church's lost and found box
- 3 commonly lost items (This is only needed if the contents in the lost and found box are sparse.)

HOW-TO

The story of the Prodigal Son may not be very relatable to middle schoolers at first glance, as most of them haven’t experienced actually being lost and then found. To help make this story come to life for your students, you’ll use your church’s lost and found box.

Before your talk, pull aside the box, and if needed, add some commonly lost items like a smart phone, keys, a wallet, headphones, or jewelry. (You’ll be displaying and talking about three of these items during your talk, so check to see if you have enough items before you begin.) Be sure your items have value and would be missed by their owner if lost. (To add some humor to this Interactive, add something totally weird and random to the box!)

When prompted in the Truth section of your talk, you’ll bring out the box and use its contents to relate the Scripture to students’ lives. Check out your Teaching Script for details on when and how to do this.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Worth Repeating / Week 1

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BOTTOM LINE

GOD LOVES YOU EVEN WHEN YOU'RE LOST

INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

Have you ever heard something over, and over, and over, and over again? Maybe it's something your teacher says all the time or your best friend's new catch phrase. Maybe your mom or dad says the same thing to you every morning on your way out the door. Or your little brother has told you his favorite joke ten times in the last two days, and you could probably say it from memory by now! Maybe it's gossip that spread around your school like wildfire or some kind of news that's blowing up on social media.

Whatever it was, you heard it over, and over, and over again because somebody thought it was worth repeating, retelling, or reposting. They thought it was so memorable, or funny, or exciting, or important that they just had to share it. To them, it was worth repeating.

And that's exactly what we're going to talk about today: stories that are worth repeating! But before we get into it, I want to tell you a quick story from my own life that's been repeated a time or two over the years.

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following thoughts or ideas . . .

- Tell a story about a time that something really important got lost.
 - Maybe you lost something really valuable to your parents, or your dog ran away, or you even got lost or separated from your family in the mall as a kid.
 - Keep this light! The goal is simply to set up the idea of what it feels like to be lost.
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TENSION

3 MINUTES

So let me ask you a few questions. How do you know if you're lost? [Pause to let students respond. Repeat some of their answers so that the whole audience can hear.] Okay, now that we know what it means to be lost, with a show of hands, how many of you have actually been lost? [Pause to let students respond.] How did that make you feel? [Pause for response.] Right! It's scary, and frustrating, and maybe a little embarrassing to be lost, isn't it? When we lose sight of the final destination or goal, it's easy to feel lost. When we find ourselves in unfamiliar surroundings or unexpected situations—when everything feels a little bit turned around—it can be hard to figure out what to do next.

Now, I'm not just talking about being physically lost. Sometimes, we feel lost in other ways. **Sometimes we feel lost emotionally or spiritually, too.** Even in the most familiar of places—at home, at church, at school—we can still feel completely and totally lost.

How do we know when we're lost emotionally or spiritually? Well, it's a lot like how we know we're lost physically. When we don't know how we got where we are, we're probably lost. When we aren't sure what we're doing or why we're doing it, we might be lost. When we feel alone, isolated, or afraid, we're probably a little lost. And when we don't know what to do next to change the way things are, we may be feeling lost.

That sense of feeling lost can happen for all kinds of different reasons. Maybe you feel lost because of **a circumstance you're in**. Your parents got divorced, your boyfriend dumped you, your family is moving to a new city. Now you're in a situation you didn't expect to be in, and you aren't sure what to do. Or maybe you feel lost because of **a choice you made**. A decision you knew wasn't right. A moment that's left you feeling disappointed in yourself. And because of it, you aren't sure what to do next. Maybe you feel lost because you think **you're stuck where you are**. You can't change the past or the present in your life. You can't move forward, and you can't make things different. Or maybe you feel lost because **you think you're unseen, unnoticed, or unloved**. Nobody seems to care what you do or how you feel, and that leaves you feeling more alone than ever.

If we're honest, **I think we'd all say we've felt a little bit lost at some point in our lives.** You might feel that way right now! And it probably feels a little hopeless, doesn't it? Feeling lost can sometimes feel like being trapped. We don't know how we got there, so we don't exactly know how to get out, do we? At the end of the day, none of us wants to stay lost. But ultimately, we just aren't sure how to find our way back again. We aren't exactly sure how to be not-lost.

TRUTH

7 MINUTES

Thankfully, the Bible tells us so many stories about people who felt lost and didn't know what to do about it. But one of the best things about Jesus is that He doesn't want anyone to stay lost, including you and me.

One thing you might not know about Jesus is that He was a great storyteller. In fact, He used stories to help people better understand things about God. **These stories are called parables.** Jesus' parables often involved everyday scenarios that were familiar to His audience at the time. He would use them to change their way of thinking or show them something new about God. And trust me, these are definitely stories that are worth repeating.

One of Jesus' followers, a guy named Luke, wrote one of the parables that we're going to look at today. And it's a parable that changed people's views on what it meant to be lost.

The story starts like this. There was a man who had two sons. One day, the younger son told his dad that he wanted his share of his inheritance, or money from the family. Now this may not seem like a big deal, but at that time, inheritances weren't passed down until the father was dead. So basically, this younger son was saying, *"I don't want to wait for you to die, Dad. Give me that money now."*

Surprisingly, the father decided to give in and let both his sons have their shares right then. The older son stayed put, continued working hard, and took care of his money. But all this newfound wealth was more than the younger son could handle. He left his father's home and, as the Bible tells us, he spent all his money on "wild living." Now, I don't know exactly what that means, but it sounds like it wasn't the wisest use of his inheritance.

But then, a famine hit the land, which meant that there wasn't enough food for everyone. And because the younger son had spent all his money, he got a job feeding pigs to get by. Basically, this younger son went from living a wealthy and wild life to living a hard-working and sparse life. He let his greed get the better of him and that got him off track. He had forgotten what was really most important in life. **In short, he was lost.**

Instead of staying where he was, the younger son decided to take a brave step. He went back to his father and asked for a job working for him. Now I'm going to be honest: If this were me, I'm not sure I could do this. After I spent all the money I'd been given and gotten completely lost, I think I'd be afraid to go home and ask for help. I'd be afraid that my dad would be angry, or hurt, or even punish me for what I did. It would make sense, right?

But that's not what happened at all. Take a look:

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him (Luke 15:20 NIV).

Isn't that crazy? This father was so happy his lost son had returned home that he embraced him with love. He didn't ask where he'd been or what he'd done; **he simply accepted him back.**

The story goes on to say that the father decided to throw a huge party for the son, giving him some clothes, the family ring, new shoes, and big feast to celebrate his return. Then, he made this statement:

'For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found' (Luke 15:24 NIV).

What an epic ending to this parable! **Rather than focus on all the reasons his son was lost, the father simply celebrated the fact that he was found.** That's amazing!

Remember we talked about how Jesus used parables to teach us about God? Well, this one is no different! I think what this parable shows us is this: **God loves you even when you're lost.** Though the younger son was totally lost, his father welcomed him home with nothing but love and acceptance. And God does the same for us!

INTERACTIVE: Lost and Found

This is where you'll use your church's lost and found box to help explain the parable of the Prodigal Son and make it relatable to your students. See the Communicator Guide for details.

Think of it like this box. Does anyone have an idea of what this is or what's in it? *[Hold up the lost and found box and let a few students shout out answers.]* That's right, this here is our church's lost and found box! Have you ever looked in it before? It contains a lot of valuable stuff! Like this *[say the name of an item and hold it up]*. I bet whoever lost this was really upset when they couldn't find it. Or *[say the name of another item and hold it up]*. I'm sure that was really important to the owner. And look at this! *[Hold up another item.]* I don't know about you, but if I lost any of these things, I'd really, really miss them. I'd do anything possible to find them! Why? Because they're valuable and important to me. And that's exactly how God feels about us!

God cares about us when we're lost. He still loves us. He's watching and waiting for us to come back. **He doesn't expect us to get it all together before we come to Him. He just wants us to turn to Him for help.** He wants His love to meet us where we are. He wants His most valued treasures—us—to return to Him. Because **He loves us and misses us when we're lost.**

And when we return to God [*hold up a lost and found item*], He rejoices! It's just like when we find something we've lost. We don't obsess over and worry about how the item got lost or where it was all this time. No, we're just happy to have found it! That's exactly how God feels when we return to Him.

This is what I want you to remember: **God loves you even when you're lost.**

If you're feeling lost because of circumstances or choices, know that you don't have to stay there. **God is waiting for you to turn back to Him—to be received and loved just as you are.** You don't have to get it all right; you just have to ask for His help as you go. And as this parable shows us, **God loves us so much that any time we feel lost, He'll be waiting for us with open arms.**

Now maybe you're sitting here thinking, *"That's great and all, but I've never done anything to make me feel lost. I've made all the right choices, so why are we celebrating someone who maybe hasn't?"* Well, if that's you, let me say this: I've been there, too. And so has another person in our story: the older brother. Remember him? He stayed behind with his father, worked hard, and did all the "right" things. But his younger brother, the one who did the opposite, is the one who ended up with the big party. Unfair!

Well, I'd argue that maybe, the older brother was just as lost. Sure, he didn't go out and squander his father's wealth, but he seemed more concerned about getting his father's blessing than he was about his actual relationship with his dad. He was obedient, but wrongly so, because he got angry that his obedience hadn't earned him a party. Plus, he didn't celebrate along with his dad when his brother came home. He lost sight of what was important—his relationship with his dad and loving his brother. And because of that, he needed God's love and acceptance just the same. We all do!

We all need to know that **no matter what we've done or how lost we feel in our hearts, God loves us even when we're lost.**

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

The next time we're feeling lost, how can we remember the truth of this parable? How can we remember that we're loved by God no matter what?

- First, **look around and recognize where you are.** Be honest about why you feel lost and how you got there. Determine what led you to feeling lost in the first place.
 - Then, **remember what God wants for you: to be found.** He wants you to come home. He wants to be with you. He wants to love you just as you are. So find wisdom in the younger son's story that we just heard and receive God's love. Confess to Him that you are lost. Be honest and real about it! Then, let His love meet you right where you are.
 - Finally, **tell someone about where you are right now.** While it's important to pray and be honest with God, it's also important for you to be honest with someone in your life. Someone like a trusted adult or Small Group Leader. Inviting someone in isn't only a great step to helping you get back on the right path, but it's also a great way to avoid feeling lost right now.
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LANDING

1 MINUTE

Remember, **God loves you even when you're lost.** God loves you so much, and He'll meet you wherever you're at in your life right now.

So as you head to Small Group today, think about this question: **What's one reason I might feel lost right now?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
