

Following the King

Studies in Luke's Gospel

Luke 15:1-32

Discussion starter

1. Sometimes we use the word 'lost' (as in 'the lost') to describe people who do not follow Jesus. Why do we use this term, and is it an appropriate description of such people?

In Luke 15:1-32 Jesus tells three parables that answer the complaint of the Pharisees and teachers of the law that he 'welcomes sinners and eats with them' (v 2).

Read Luke 15:1-32

Complete the table below.

	Main character (s)	Item 'lost'	Ending
Luke 15:4-7	eg. shepherd		
Luke 15:8-10			v. 9 rejoicing
Luke 15:11-32			

God's attitude toward the lost

All three of Jesus' parables are very similar. Taken together they say something profound about God's attitude toward 'the lost'.

2. What is this attitude and how does this explain why Jesus welcomes and eats with 'sinners'?
3. Spend some time carefully examining Jesus' 3rd parable (the lost son/forgiving father). If God is represented by the father in the story what do we learn *in particular* about God's concern for the lost?

4. What evidence can you muster from your knowledge of both Old and New Testaments that points to God's deep concern for 'the lost'?¹
5. Why do you think God is deeply concerned for 'the lost'?

Our attitude toward 'the lost'

*It's often the case that Jesus' parables come with a sharp sting in the tail. **Luke 15:28-32** is one such example.*

6. Who are Jesus' words in these verses directed to, and what is he saying about their attitude toward 'the lost'?²
7. In a few words summarise the difference between the father's and the older brother's attitude toward the lost son/brother.
8. The spectrum below represents two very different attitudes toward 'the lost'. Indicate your concern for the lost by placing a X on the spectrum.

*God's concern
for the lost*

*Jewish religious leaders'
concern for the lost*

9. How is your concern for 'the lost' translated into action in your life?
10. Why ought God's people be concerned for 'the lost'?
11. Do you see a concern for 'the lost' reflected in the priorities of our church?
12. What are some of the things we can do (individually and as a church) to translate our concern for the lost into real action? How can we, as a Home Group, reach out to people who do not follow Jesus? Why not commit to something tonight?

Conclusion – a hypothetical

Paul has been a Christian for almost 10 years. He has grown a lot in spiritual maturity in this time, and is quite involved in several ministries in his church. However, he really doesn't like going to church at Christmas and Easter. That's because a whole lot of 'strangers', who wouldn't ordinarily come to church, turn up for their bi-annual 'dose' of Christianity. He can't help thinking these people are fooling themselves if they think God will somehow be impressed by their turning up. Furthermore he can't help feeling just a little resentful that his church is 'invaded' by these 'pagans' who give God little thought for the rest of the year.

Can you relate to Jake's experience? What light does tonight's passage shed on Jake's experience?

- Complete this sentence based on tonight's study. "Being a disciple of Jesus means..."

Pray it in

¹ You might like to look up some of the following references: Ezekiel 34:1-16 (circa. 587/6 BC around the time of Judah's exile); Mark 6:34; John 3:16; Luke 19:10; Colossians 1:13-14.

² Keep the context in mind: *for whose benefit did Jesus tell these parables?* See 15:1-2.

Study 05

- Two or three people should pray out loud, asking God to help us all become the disciples He has called us to be.