



THE LOST

Jesus Christ's parables about lost things teach us about God's love, our individual worth, and not judging others unrighteously.

By David A. Edwards

Church Magazines

Have you ever been lost? Perhaps as a child you wandered into an unfamiliar place. Or perhaps someone gave you bad directions for how to get somewhere. Or maybe you decided to go your own way even though someone you could trust told you where to go. No matter how you got lost, once you realized you were lost, the feeling was the same—frustrated, confused, perhaps panicked and desperate, even if you stubbornly persisted in getting more lost. And imagine how your parents would've felt if they couldn't find you.

Jesus Christ told three parables about things that were lost: a sheep, a piece of silver, and a son (see Luke 15).

He told these parables after the Pharisees and scribes criticized Him for associating with sinners who had come to hear Him (see Luke 15:1–2). The Pharisees thought that the kind of people who were gathered around Jesus were unclean—so unclean, in fact, that being around them and eating with them made you unclean too.

In sharing these parables of lost things, the Savior told the Pharisees and scribes—and tells us—something about His mission, the worth of every soul in God's eyes, the importance of repentance, and how He feels when we judge one another unrighteously and think we're better than others.

THE LOST SHEEP (LUKE 15:4-7)

Situation	A man has 100 sheep.
Problem	One sheep is lost.
Solution	The man leaves the 99 and seeks the lost sheep until he finds it.
Result	The man brings back the lost sheep on his shoulders, calls friends and neighbors together to rejoice.
Lesson	“ Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.”



BIBLE FACTS: SHEEP

- Sheep were one of the earliest domesticated animals many thousands of years ago.
- Sheep were important to the economy of the ancient Middle East, providing meat, milk, fat, horns, wool, and skins. Sheep were also important because of their use in religious sacrifices.
- If a sheep is lost and separated from the shepherd and flock, it's defenseless against predators.

How was it lost? Through unintentionally wandering.
What was its value? The same as each of the other sheep.
How was it found? Through the shepherd's tireless seeking.
How does finding it make the shepherd feel? Joyful.

Bible Video
 Watch a video about the parable of the lost sheep at lds.org/go/sheepNE1116.



THE PIECE OF SILVER (LUKE 15:8-10)

Situation	A woman has 10 pieces of silver.
Problem	One piece is lost.
Solution	The woman lights a candle, sweeps the house, and seeks diligently until she finds it.
Result	The woman calls friends and neighbors together to rejoice.
Lesson	“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

How was it lost? Through carelessness.
What was its value? The same as each of the other pieces of silver.
How was it found? Through the woman's diligent seeking.
How does finding it make the woman feel? Joyful.

BIBLE FACTS: PIECES OF SILVER

- The piece of silver in this parable is a Greek coin called a *drachma*.
- A drachma was worth relatively little, but a poor person could have used it to pay for two days' worth of food.
- A day laborer's daily wages would have been about one drachma, but a woman likely would have earned less than half that amount for a day's work.

Part One

THE PRODIGAL SON (LUKE 15:11-32)

Situation	A man has two sons.
Problem	One son asks for his inheritance, takes it and goes to a far country, wastes his money on “riotous living,” is left with nothing, and is reduced to feeding swine to get by.
Solution	The son “comes to himself,” remembers his father’s house, decides to return to confess his sins and beg to be his father’s servant.
Result	The father sees his son from far off, runs to him, receives him with gladness, clothes him with fine things, and tells his servants to kill the fatted calf and call everyone together to make merry.
Lesson	“Let us eat, and be merry : for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”



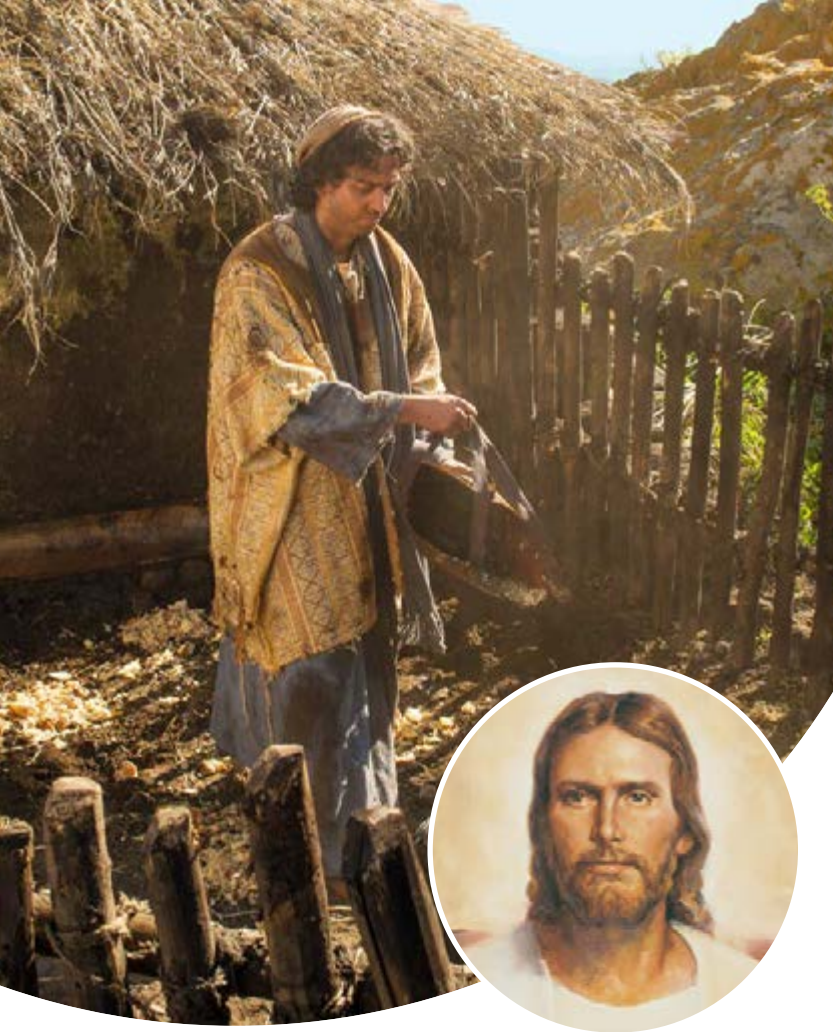
How was the younger son lost? Through his own deliberate choices—he lost himself.
How was he found? He “came to himself”—he found himself by remembering his true self, his identity as his father’s son. Then he chose to return.
How does finding him make the father feel? Compassionate (see Luke 15:20) and merry (see Luke 15:24).

Part Two



Situation	The man’s older son comes in from the field as the celebration is taking place and learns of his brother’s return.
Problem	The older son is angry and refuses to go in because he’s been good but has never been given a celebration.
Solution	The father comes out to ask his son in. He hears his son’s complaint and reminds him, “Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.”
Result	Unknown. The story ends with the older son still outside.
Lesson	“It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”

How was the older son lost? Pride, anger, and jealousy (he would not go into his father’s house to celebrate).
How may he be found? By listening to his father, humbling himself, and choosing to rejoice over his brother rather than stubbornly insisting on his own superiority.
How would finding him make the father feel? Joyful.



BIBLE FACTS: PRODIGAL SON

- Under Jewish law, the oldest son would receive a double portion (see Deuteronomy 21:17). So since the father in this parable had two sons, the oldest son stood to receive two-thirds and the younger son one-third of the inheritance.
- Normally, an inheritance was claimed only after the father's death. To demand it earlier would have been very unusual and probably very impudent.
- Swine are considered unclean animals under Jewish dietary laws (see Leviticus 11:7), so the “far country” the prodigal son went to may have been among Gentiles, those who were not the Lord's covenant people.
- When he returns to his father's house, the younger son first addresses him with a title (“Father, . . .”), a sign of respect and dignity. When the angry oldest son speaks to his father outside the house, he does not greet him with a title.

Bible Video

Watch a video about the parable of the prodigal son at lds.org/go/prodigalNE1116.

POWERFUL MESSAGES

The messages from these parables are simple and powerful:

- The Savior's mission is to save every soul who repents and comes unto Him.
- Every soul is of equal worth to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
- The worth of each soul is so great that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will go to every effort to seek out, find, and save each one—one by one.
- If we repent, the Savior will carry us on His shoulders to return us back to the fold—to safety, peace, and, ultimately, salvation and exaltation.
- Every lost soul who repents and is found causes joy in heaven.
- There's more than one way people become lost, but how they're lost doesn't matter—they can be found, and the Lord and His servants will try to find them.
- Even those who deliberately lose themselves can “come to themselves” and return to Heavenly Father through humble repentance.
- Everyone needs repentance (perhaps especially those who think they don't).
- Everyone can change. The promise of cleansing and healing through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is real. Jesus Christ invites *all people* to come unto Him and be transformed through His grace.
- It isn't for us to judge someone as beyond saving.
- The Savior doesn't give up on anyone—not you nor anyone you might think of as lost. We shouldn't give up on anyone, either, including ourselves. **NE**



NONE ARE SO LOST

“If for any reason you . . . have lost your way, then you need only apply the Savior's teachings from Luke, chapter 15, to correct your course. . . . Why did Jesus teach these parables? He wanted us to know that none of us will ever be so lost that we cannot find our way again through His Atonement and His teachings.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Apr. 2012 general conference.