



“WASTE: Looking For A Purpose”

Luke 15

Small Group Plan

Jesus once told a trio of “lost” stories. The first two were about a lost animal and a lost object, but the third story was about a lost person. All three are about the tragedy of being lost, but it’s the last story that strikes so close to home.

Even though it was told thousands of years ago it’s a completely modern story. A young man inherits an estate, cashes it in, and parties until he’s broke. And when he receives his inheritance, he doesn’t leave home with a sense of mission. There is no sense of purpose. He’s not going to seek his fortune. He’s going to spend his fortune. He’s going to have fun. And he learns the hard way that you can’t enjoy things that money *can* buy, if you ignore the things that money *can’t* buy — loyalty, commitment, patience, and purpose, to name a few.

Yes, all three stories are about the heartbreak of “lostness,” but this story is a bit different. The sheep became lost because of foolishness, the coin was lost because of carelessness, but the boy was lost because of his own willfulness. He chose to leave. As one writer put it, “*God has given us the freedom to be miserable.*”

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- What is the closest you came to running away from a problem? Explain.
- If you were to “run away” to a “far country,” where would you go and why?
- If you had access to a lot of wealth to “squander” how would you do it?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— THE REBELLION —

LUKE 15:11-16

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So, he divided his property between them. ¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.”

- Why would a boy with such a loving Father choose to leave?
- Why did the father agree to his son’s foolish request (v. 12)?
- What would be the modern equivalent to “squandering” in “wild living” (v. 13)?
- What does this parable tell us about the nature of humanity?
- Describe the kind of mindset that spends “everything” (v. 14)?
- What is the modern equivalent to being “in need” (v. 14)?
- What changes would make a Jewish man want to eat pig’s food (v. 15)?

— THE REALIZATION —

LUKE 15:17-20A

¹⁷ When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.” ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

- What brought the boy to “his senses” (v. 17)?
- Why did he rehearse his speech?
- What was he expecting from his father?
- Find the process in the story that turned the boy’s life around.
- Why is it significant that when he returned it was to a Relationship rather than to a set of rules? — “went to his father” (v. 20)

— THE REUNION —

LUKE 15:20B-24

²⁰ 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.

²¹ The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” ²² But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate.

²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” So, they began to celebrate.

- Notice the conjunction — “The son said ... But the father said” (vs. 21-22).
- What does the Father in the story teach us about the nature of God?
- Does this parable speak to the issue of grace and works? How?

— THE RESENTMENT —

LUKE 15:25-32

²⁵ Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ “Your brother has come,” he replied, “and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.” ²⁸ The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So, his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, “Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!” ³¹ “My son,” the father said, “you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

- Who does the older brother represent?
- Why does Jesus tell this story and who is it aimed at?
- How is it possible to be with the “Father” (v. 31 — God) and not have His heart?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Who are you most like in the story — the leaving prodigal, the hurting Father, the returning prodigal, the resentful older brother? Explain.
- How do you identify with the younger son?
- How would you compare your spiritual journey to that of the younger son?
- This story ends with celebration. What do you have to celebrate?
- As you close in prayer, ask God for His heart of mercy and grace.