

Jesus' Parables in Chronological Order

Parable #29 — Luke 15:3-7 — The Lost Sheep

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Parable #30 — Luke 15:8-10 — The Lost Coin

⁸“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Parable #29 — Luke 15:3-7 — The Lost Sheep

1. Jesus told two previous parables about sheep (Matthew 18:12-14, John 10:1-18). In the first, he contrasted the sheep to “little ones” (children, seekers). In the second, he contrasted the sheep to ones who know him (followers, Christians). In this parable, to whom does he contrast the herd of sheep? The lost sheep?
2. “Sinner” is not a word that often comes up in casual conversation. What comes to mind when you hear the word? What word(s) would we more likely use to refer to a “sinner” today (crook, criminal, wrongdoer, evildoer, offender, embezzler, scamster, perp, or _____)? Do any modern words really describe the concept?
3. What does the word “sin” mean? Does it mean something different to different religious groups (Jews, Roman Catholics, Buddhists, Protestants, Christians)?
4. Who was Jesus’ audience for this parable? (15:1-2)
5. How are we like sheep? In what ways do we go astray?
6. Jesus says the shepherd will hunt for a lost sheep and bring it home and there will be rejoicing. But in Verse 15:7, he implies that a lost sinner must do one additional thing that a sheep does not have to do. What is it that we need to do?
7. How does the picture of “rejoicing in heaven” over repentance make you feel?

Parable #30 — Luke 15:8-10 — The Lost Coin

1. What value did the woman place on each coin? Why did she look so hard for it?
2. How is a repentant sinner like a found coin? Why does God care so much about repentant sinners?
3. How many repentant sinners does it take to cause heavenly rejoicing? How does that make you feel?
4. In what ways does God’s value of people differ from ours? Who would you rejoice more over accepting Jesus as savior, a close family member or a scavenger in the Guatemala City Garbage Dump? (Be honest!)

Parable #29 — Luke 15:3-7 — The Lost Sheep — Leader's Notes

Before going to the questions, an observation. In traditional Roman Catholic Bibles (especially before 1920), verse 7 is translated as: "I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that does penance more than upon ninety-nine just who do not need penance. The difference of *doing penance* (earning forgiveness and salvation) rather than *repenting* (accepting God's gift of forgiveness) is quite dramatic.

1. Jesus told two previous parables about sheep (Matthew 18:12-14, John 10:1-18). In the first, he contrasted the sheep to "little ones" (children, seekers). In the second, he contrasted the sheep to ones who know him (followers, Christians). In this parable, to whom does he contrast the herd of sheep? The lost sheep?

In this parable, Jesus compares the flock of 99 who were not lost with righteous people who do not need to repent. Actually, the word "righteous" means "right with God," which means those people who have *already* repented and received forgiveness and mercy from God. No one is totally free from sin—at some point everyone must repent and be born again. But even after being born again, being accepted by God and receiving eternal salvation from him, we still should continue to repent of our sins and ask God to continue forgiving us.

The lost sheep in the parable is the lost sinner who has not already repented. Or it might possibly even be one who had been born again and then deliberately turned his back on the Lord.

Note the difference between this and the other lost sheep parables—there are several reasons that a person may not be part of the kingdom of God.

2. "Sinner" is not a word that often comes up in casual conversation. What comes to mind when you hear the word? What word(s) would we more likely use to refer to a "sinner" today (crook, criminal, wrongdoer, evildoer, offender, embezzler, scamster, perp, or _____)? Do any modern words really describe the concept?

3. What does the word "sin" mean? Does it mean something different to different religious groups (Jews, Roman Catholics, Buddhists, Protestants, Evangelical Christians)?

Sin is a term used mainly in a religious context to describe an act that violates a moral rule or one of God's laws. Commonly, the moral code of conduct is decreed by a divine entity.

Sin is often used to mean an action that is prohibited or considered wrong; in some religions (notably some sects of Christianity), sin can even refer to a state of mind rather than a specific action. Colloquially, any thought, word, or act

considered immoral, shameful, harmful, or alienating might be termed “sinful.”

In *Biblical Christianity*, sin is portrayed as not following God’s moral guidance, based on the account of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis. They disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which gave them the ability to judge and know good from evil for themselves. Thus, the moment Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree—which God had commanded them not to do—sinful death was born; it was an act of disobedience, thinking they could become like gods, that was the sin. However, because Eve was deceived, while Adam was not, it is usually believed that Adam held the greatest responsibility for the evil that took place, for which reason the Fall of man is referred to as the “sin of Adam.”

The Greek word in the New Testament that is translated in English as “sin” is *hamartia*, which literally means missing the target. 1 John 3:4 states: “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” Jesus clarified the law by defining its foundation: “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40)

Roman Catholic doctrine distinguishes between personal sin (also sometimes called “actual sin”) and original sin. Personal sins are either mortal or venial.

Mortal sins are sins of grave (serious) matter, where the sinner is fully aware that the act (commission or omission) is both a sin and a grave matter, and performs the act (or omission) with fully deliberate consent. The act of committing a mortal sin cuts off the sinner from God’s grace; it is in itself a rejection of God.

Venial sins are sins which do not meet the conditions for mortal sins. The act of committing a venial sin does not cut off the sinner from God’s grace, as the sinner has not rejected God. However, venial sins do injure the relationship between the sinner and God, and as such, must be reconciled to God, either through the Sacrament of Penance & Reconciliation (commonly called confession) or, in the case of lesser sins, receiving the Eucharist (Communion or the Lord’s Supper).

Judaism regards the violation of the divine commandments to be a sin. Judaism teaches that sin is an act, and not a state of being. Humankind was not created with an inclination to do evil, but has that inclination “from his youth”(Genesis 8:21). People do have the ability to master this inclination (Genesis 4:7) and choose good over evil (conscience)(Psalm 37:27). Judaism describes three levels of sin. The first and most serious one is someone who sins intentionally. The second is one who commits a sin by accident. The third category is someone who was raised in an environment that was assimilated or non-Jewish, and is not aware of the proper Jewish laws. This person is not held accountable for his or her actions.

Islam sees sin as anything that goes against the will of Allah (God). Islam teaches that sin is an act and not a state of being.

Buddhism does not recognize the idea behind sin because in Buddhism, instead, there is a “Cause-Effect Theory.” known as Karma, or action. In general, Buddhism illustrates intentions as the cause of Karma, either good, bad, or neutral.

In *Hinduism*, the term sin is often used to describe actions that create negative karma by violating moral and ethical codes.

(Above excerpted from Wikipedia)

4. Who was Jesus’ audience for this parable? (15:1-2)

It says that tax collectors and sinners were gathered around Jesus to listen to him. But the Pharisees and Jewish teachers of the law were muttering about that. These religious leaders were always careful to stay “clean” according to Old Testament law. In fact, they often went well beyond the law in their avoidance of certain people and in their ritual washings. In contrast, Jesus took this idea of “cleanliness” lightly. He touched those who had unclean diseases, he neglected to wash in the ritualistic way, and he associated with rejected people. He came to offer salvation to sinners, to show that God loves them, and didn’t worry about the Jews’ accusations.

5. How are we like sheep? In what ways do we go astray?

6. Jesus says the shepherd will hunt for a lost sheep and bring it home and there will be rejoicing. But in Verse 15:7, he implies that a lost sinner must do one additional thing that a sheep does not have to do. What is it that we need to do?

7. How does the picture of “rejoicing in heaven” over repentance make you feel?

Want another view? Amy-Jill Levine in the Jewish Annotated New Testament likens this parable to an ancient theological theme in the Midrash Rabbah 2.2 about Exodus which depicts Moses as the good shepherd who seeks after a lost sheep and so receives a divine commission to shepherd God’s people, Israel. So Jesus was just retelling a story with which the Jews were already familiar.

Parable #30 — Luke 15:8-10 — The Lost Coin

1. What value did the woman place on each coin? Why did she look so hard for it?

First of all, the woman was not a widow (or a different word would have been used) and this was not money for household expenses as a woman would not have been entrusted with that in those days. In the Near East, women received ten silver coins as a wedding gift as a provision in the case of future need, especially for the death of her husband. So besides their monetary value, such coins had sentimental value like that of a wedding ring, and to lose one would be extremely distressing.

The lost coin was probably either a Greek *drachma* or Roman *denarius*, each worth about an average day's wages (Matthew 20:2). Smaller Near Eastern houses frequently had no windows and only earthen floors, making the search for a single coin difficult. The coin itself was small—about the size of an American dime—and probably tarnished, so would be very hard to find.

2. How is a repentant sinner like a found coin? Why does God care so much about repentant sinners?

Like finding a valuable and sentimental coin, so do the angels of God rejoice over a repentant sinner. Each individual is precious to God. He grieves over every loss and rejoices whenever one of his children is found and brought back into the kingdom.

3. How many repentant sinners does it take to cause heavenly rejoicing? How does that make you feel?

Just one! The Life Application Study Bible suggests that perhaps we would have more joy in our churches if we shared Jesus' love and concern for each lost person.

4. In what ways does God's value of people differ from ours? Who would you rejoice more over accepting Jesus as savior, a close family member or a scavenger in the Guatemala City Garbage Dump? (Be honest!)

[As with the pervious parable, note that older Roman Catholic Bibles say, "there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance."]