

# SUNDAY STUDY | church on the drive

Scripture: Luke 15



**Socially distant, spiritually connected** - During this time when we have to keep a safe distance from each other, we want to be socially distant, but spiritually connected. In order to do that, we as a body of believers are all studying the same thing today! You are invited to take out a journal and record your thoughts through this bible study and share them with members of your community group and/or family, whether via telephone or in person. (Our kids are studying the same thing!)

## 1. Prayer

- a. Thank God for today and all that you get to enjoy as part of it
- b. Pray for people you love
- c. Pray for people you have trouble loving
- d. Ask God's help - for you, for our city, for our world
- e. Pray for our leaders - government and church
- f. Ask God to help you minister to those around you in the best possible way

## 2. Reflect: Do you ever disagree with God or struggle to understand God?

## 3. Read Luke 15:1-2

- a. This scene sets the stage for three parables that Jesus will tell in succession as a response to the attitude of the Pharisees and teachers of the law.
- b. In Luke 14 Jesus is invited to eat at a Pharisee's home and teachings flow out of that moment. Here, Jesus is eating with people on the other end of the spectrum and new teachings will flow from this moment.
  - i. Those called "sinners" by the Pharisees weren't just people who broke moral laws, but also people who didn't keep the ritualistic purity the Pharisees did.
- c. The scandal was that Jesus was willing to come to the table with anyone, no matter what. The question the following parables force us to ask ourselves is, "**Are we willing to let go and celebrate with God when someone finds their way to Jesus no matter who they are?**"

## 4. Read Luke 15:3-7 | The Parable of the Lost Sheep

- a. Tending sheep in biblical Palestine was a large part of the economy. Sheep and shepherds were everywhere. This was a story all of Jesus's hearers would have known something about.
  - i. In contrast to the positive image of shepherds in the Old Testament, by the first century shepherds had gotten a bad reputation as thieving hirelings who frequently trespassed. Shepherding was even listed among the despised trades by the rabbis, right along with camel drivers and tax collectors, among others.

**1. What do you think the Pharisees' reaction was when Jesus told a story that cast God as a shepherd?**

- b. There is as much rejoicing in heaven over one "sinner" who comes to repentance as there is for the shepherd and his friends. In fact, there's more rejoicing in heaven over a repentant sinner than over righteous people, like the Pharisees. By taking offense at Jesus welcoming sinners, the righteous have shown their heart is far from God. Their "righteousness" doesn't make God rejoice; it causes God to recoil.

**5. Read Luke 15:8-10 | The Parable of the Lost Coin**

- a. This parable is the twin of the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Instead of a shepherd and sheep, we are told of a woman who loses a silver coin worth the equivalent of a day's wages. The woman, here, represents God who searches for those who are lost.
- b. The value of the coin was not a great amount of money. Most people would not have searched as long and hard as the woman did, nor celebrated the way she does when she finds it. But in the same way God celebrates the lost who become found, the woman celebrates with great joy what may seem insignificant to others.
  - i. **How valuable are lost people to God? What would you be willing to do (or not do) in order to bring the lost to God?**

**6. Read Luke 15:11-32 | The Parable of the Lost Son**

- a. As in the two previous parables, the main character of this story is one who has experienced loss: the father. The father, then, also represents God.
- b. By asking for his inheritance before his father passes away, the son is doing something disrespectful and irregular; especially since he cuts ties and treats his father as if he is already dead. By indulging in wild living, he makes it clear he wants a completely different type of life with different values than the one his father has provided. Essentially, the son breaks all the rules and ends up paying dearly for it.
  - i. **Do you ever find yourself glad when you see people "getting what they deserve" in situations like this? Why do you think that is?**
- c. Because the son falls so far, he comes back with extreme humility, but the father will have none of it. He wants to celebrate his son's life! Sure, there are things they are going to have to talk about and work through later, but now is the time for rejoicing.
- d. Like many of us might find ourselves, the other son who was good and did what was asked is angry about all the celebrating over a person who had turned their back on the family. The father, though, says that nothing has changed in his feelings about the son who stayed. He just wants to celebrate that his lost son is back.
  - i. **Have you ever felt pushed aside, even when you did everything right? How can we grow our hearts to have compassion for the lost, even if it means we have to share the party when we've done everything right?**

- 7. **This week:** Think about the people in your family, in your neighborhood, and in our world who are far from God. Think about those you might refer to as "lost". Ask yourself this week, "What am I willing to do to make sure they are found?" Ask God to prepare you to do your part so that

heaven may rejoice over those people eventually being found! Think of ways you and our church can be part of bringing the lost back to God.