

# THE REAL JESUS: HIS MISSION

Week Six | August 12, 2018 | How to Talk about Sin

## PREPARATION

### GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's text, Luke 15. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

## THIS WEEK

### KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Salvation requires repentance.

### THEOLOGY APPLIED

We cannot talk about salvation without talking about sin. Jesus teaches us to be honest about sin and to talk about the joy that comes from repentance.

### MEDITATE

*"Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).*

## GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

“Jesus didn’t die for your sins. He came to show you the way.” This is another common misconception about the Real Jesus. We don’t like to talk about sin as something that deserves judgment. We think it is healthier to view ourselves and other people as inherently good. To support this idea, many people have tried to recast Jesus into the image of Buddha or another guru who says we are all ultimately good. While denying sin might be more pleasant, it also leads to a dishonest and inauthentic way of life.

Talking about sin is not necessarily a pleasant conversation. However, if you think about it, it’s an honest one. It’s not hard to convince those who have been around the block once or twice that people can be corrupt, self-serving, egotistical, and cruel. We know we have to keep our defenses up and make sure we read the fine print. We look at institutions and other power structures with a level of suspicion, knowing there is probably something fishy somewhere. We have endured horrific wars, experienced terrorism, witnessed catastrophic genocide, and seen the growth of the sex trafficking industry. We have had ample opportunity to witness the dark side of humanity. Talking about this reality isn’t a refusal to be “positive,” it’s a refusal to be false, shallow, naive, and inauthentic.

As we saw last week, Jesus is a realist. He doesn’t ignore the way things are in the world. He goes to the heart of them, addressing them head on. That is what Jesus does in these passages, and it’s what He calls His witnesses to do as well.

## ▣ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

In this lesson we will look at the way Jesus addresses the issue of sin. We will see that He doesn’t skirt around it, but speaks honestly about it. When Jesus talks about sin, He doesn’t heap condemnation on us, but points us to the joy that comes through repentance. We should learn to speak about sin the same way.

### 1. WHY WE SHOULD REPENT OF SIN

### 2. WHY WE MUST REPENT OF SIN

## GOING DEEPER

+ This next section will help show what God’s Word says about this week’s particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week’s biblical truth.

## WHY WE SHOULD REPENT OF SIN

### ▣ LUKE 15:1–10

Q: *In these verses, Jesus tells two stories. What are they? What is the common theme between them?*

Q: *Who is Jesus telling these stories to?*

The Real Jesus is often unlike what we expect Him to be. That was certainly the case for the Pharisees. They couldn't imagine God coming to earth and eating with sinners, a common practice for Jesus throughout His ministry. It was also something the Pharisees could never get over. In verses 1–2, we learn that tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to Jesus. How incredible is that! A revival was going on! People who were used to being shunned and marginalized, staying away from the “holy” people, knew they could draw near to Jesus. They knew He was what they needed and that what He had was available to them.

As wonderful as that thought is, the next sentence is shameful. Rather than rejoicing over the fact that sinners were being drawn to Jesus, the Pharisees were upset. They looked down on Jesus, condemning Him for getting anywhere near immoral people. Someone recently posted on Twitter, “Satan’s true masterpiece is the Pharisee, not the prostitute.” Sinners are aware of their need for Jesus, Pharisees are oblivious. Sinners know they are broken, Pharisees have no idea. Sinners look for salvation and invite others to come along. Pharisees keep people from coming to God. Sinners see their sin as a reason to repent. Pharisees see the sin of others as a reason to judge.

In response to their complaints, Jesus told two parables. The first is of a man who had a hundred sheep. If this man lost one of his sheep, he would leave the others to find it. When he found it, he would rejoice and bring it back with him to the fold. The second parable communicates a similar idea. A woman who lost one of her ten coins turned her house upside down looking for it. Then, when it was found, she rejoiced with her loved ones.

Both stories share two common messages. First, we are worth much to God. While the Pharisees said sinners were not worthy to come to God, Jesus says they are worth so much to God that He diligently seeks them out. Each lost soul is of such high value to Him that He can do nothing less than pursue them until He finds them. He sees each sheep as individually valuable. He doesn't lose the single sheep for the herd. He knows them each by name and goes to great lengths for each one of them.

Second, Jesus talks about how much joy our repentance brings to God. When the shepherd finds his sheep and the woman finds her coin, the text says they rejoiced. But it's not just God who rejoices. Verse 10 says even

the angels celebrate when someone who was once lost in their sin repents. Verses 6 and 9 mention friends and neighbors who also celebrate with the shepherd and the widow. Thabiti Anyabwile explains, “Who are these friends and neighbors? It must be the Christian, the evangelist. Christians are not only the *means* of bringing heaven joy through evangelism but also the *invited guests* who share in that joy! Our God will one day call us into the halls of his banquet and bid us delight in the miracle of those once-lost, now-found repentant sinners brought home on the shoulders of Christ Jesus. *If heaven is happy at the repentance of sinners, Christians will share in that happiness too.*” At the end of the story, what is obvious is that God, angels, and Christians rejoice over every repentant sinner. Pharisees, however, do not.

♀: *Knowing the joy that repentance brings to God, how does this change your perspective on the sin in your own life?*

♀: *Discuss how sin affects others and how repentance brings joy to others.*

## WHY WE MUST REPENT OF SIN

### ☐ LUKE 15:11–32

♀: *How are the older brother and the younger brother different from each other?*

♀: *How is the way the father treats both sons similar to both the shepherd and the woman in the earlier two parables?*

In the third parable Jesus tells, He continues to teach on repentance. But rather than showing repentance from God’s perspective, as He did in the first two parables, He discusses the human experience of sin and repentance. He shows the destructive nature of sin and the way it devours our lives. This story is an illustration of the gospel. There are those who want to be their own God by making their own choices, doing whatever they want. There are others who want to be their own God by doing all the right things in order to earn their salvation. Both, Jesus says, are lost and in need of grace.

The story of the prodigal son is one of the most famous stories of all time. But as we look at the text, we learn there are actually two prodigal sons. The younger brother wants to be a self-made man by overthrowing his father's authority and taking all the riches for himself. The older brother wants to be a self-made man by his own efforts and good works to earn his position and favor. And we see a father who is willing to extend forgiveness joyfully and lavish his children with good things.

The story begins with a young man who wants to be his own man, free to live his own life without being under his father's authority. So, he asks his father for his inheritance. In a culture that greatly respected fathers, Jesus' audience would have been shocked by this request. The son was effectively telling the father that he couldn't wait until he died because what he really wanted was money and independence. Shockingly, the father didn't respond by beating the son for making such an audacious request. Instead, he gave him everything the son asked. The son gathered up all his belongings, clearly cutting all ties and never intending to return. He was finally "free," or so he thought. He spent money recklessly, showing no restraint, prudence, or wisdom.

His dream was soon exposed as a delusion. He squandered his money just as a famine hit. Sin is always deceitful. It paints a bright, shiny picture that soon rots away. Sin degrades image-bearers. It enslaves them, causing them to lose all sense of orientation and leaving them in places they never imagined being.

The younger son found himself resorting to work as a hired hand to a stranger. His job was not respectable, like plowing fields or managing resources; he was hired to feed the pigs. Not only did the younger son have to do such a humiliating job, he also experienced hunger. His hunger was so great he wanted to eat the food the pigs were eating. *That's* hunger unlike any of us have likely experienced. The young man experienced what Isaiah describes when he writes "the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low" (Isaiah 2:17).

The son recognized the position he was in. He "came to his senses" and saw that what he thought would liberate him had only enslaved him. He recognized that a life of seeking to be your own master and sustainer is really slavery. So, he decided to go back to his father and repent, hoping his father would at least let him live in his house as a slave. Better to be a slave in his father's house than where he was now.

In that culture, running was not something a dignified older man did. It would have been especially offensive for the head of the family to run to greet a wayward child. But the father set aside all custom and ran to meet his lost son. His son began his rehearsed speech, but you'll notice the father interrupted him! Before he could even finish, his father ordered for him to be given a robe (a symbol of status), a ring (a symbol of authority), and sandals. Only slaves had bare feet. Sons had sandals. He not only forgave his sin, he lavished riches upon him.

Instead of insulting his father and going rogue with an inheritance he then squandered, the older brother had faithfully served the father, working hard day in and day out. He had done everything right while his brother had

done everything wrong. Imagine how he felt when he heard a big party going on when his brother returned! What kind of injustice is this? He had chosen not to run wild with his passions and do whatever he wanted, and yet his brother was the one who got the party. He was so angry, he refused to go inside where the party was, a decision that would have been disrespectful to his father.

Instead, the father goes to the older son, leaving the party to find him. When he does, the older son's response is not contrition or humility, but arrogance and anger. He held all his good works in his father's face and accused him of being unjust by treating his younger brother better. He was the one who deserved the party. His father's grace offended him.

In both the older and the younger brothers, we see the destructive impact of sin on our lives and the reason we need to repent. In both, we also see the loving patience of the father and his great joy when his son repents, another reason we should repent.

**Q:** *Discuss the wisest way to evangelize in light of this passage. What is problematic about inviting people to come to Jesus so they won't be miserable anymore? What is a better invitation?*

**Q:** *Do you identify more with the older or the younger brother?*

## NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

**Q:** *How do you respond when you see evidence of God's grace in another person's life? Are you jealous? Do you question why God would answer their prayer and not yours? Are you resentful of the favor they are given when you "deserve" it*

*more than them?*

Q: *In what ways have you seen sin be destructive in your own life?*

Q: *What is the Spirit leading you to repent of?*

## PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- Father, thank You for being patient with me. Thank You for calling me to release the burden of my sin to find great joy.
- Jesus, thank You that because of Your work on the cross I have the ability to repent of sin and find forgiveness.
- Holy Spirit, please reveal the sin in my heart that I am stubbornly holding onto. Remind me of who I am in Christ and how much the Father rejoices when I run from sin and cleave to Christ.

## COMMENTARY

**LUKE 15:5** The shepherd puts the sheep on his shoulder to carry him home because he is too weak to walk on his own. This picture portrays the destructiveness of sin and the care of the Father.

**LUKE 15:13** By “gathering all,” the text means that the son converted his inheritance, which would have included livestock and property, into cash which he then squandered.

**LUKE 15:15** The Jewish people viewed pigs the same way Muslims do today. For them, pigs were one of the most unclean animals. To be the one feeding them places you in a degraded place in society.

*\*All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes, the Christ Centered Exposition (Luke), and Preaching the Word (Luke).*