

FINDING THE LOST

By Dana Chau

Do you ever lose things? I do. My kids have the same problem. I have their genes.

Most of us think God can't identify with us in this area. After all, He doesn't lose things. No one can take anything from Him. No one is strong enough.

But the Bible tells us that God searches for lost people. People who are unaware of Him. Unaware of His love and His involvement. People who disregard Him and His ways. We've all been there. Many times.

How does God respond to lost people? Agitated? Angered? Apathetic?

Check out Luke 15.

These are three parables Jesus brings to a mixed crowd. Here's the context: The religious elites saw Jesus with the outcasts of the Jewish society. And they asked Jesus, "How could you, a religious teacher, be a friend to sinners?"

In other words, "Jesus, if you were really a man of God, you would disassociate with sinners. Certainly, God would."

And Jesus, the Son of God, replies with three parables. ***These parables reveal the true heart of God.***

First, we see God's focus on the lost. (Vs. 4, 8, and 20a)

The lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son are symbols of people living life without God. Yet, they are the focus of the parables.

The sheep that strayed is in danger. The coin not accounted for reduces the value of the Owner's asset. The lost son breaks his Father's heart. Does it make sense that a compassionate God is concerned for these?

Most think God focuses on Christians. God is busy answering our prayer for parking spaces or great deals on vacation packages. But if you were God, where would you focus?

Jesus said, *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Luke 5:31-32).

Jesus also said, *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you (John 20:21)."* Our focus is to help the lost return to God.

Second, we see God's fondness for the lost. (Vs. 5-7; 9-10; 20b)

It's true, God hates sin. Here's why: Sin separates the sinner from God. Isaiah 59:2 reads, *"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."*

But God doesn't hate sinners. He loves sinners. Paul wrote, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)."*

Jesus modeled for us the priority of cultivating friendship with non-Christians. And according to Paul, God is fond of the lost.

Third, we see God's forgiveness for the lost. (Vs. 7, 10, 21-24)

Most lost people don't know what to do when they have the urge to seek God. Most think they're in trouble with God. They've ignored God all of their lives. They've messed up the life God gave them.

Lost people need to know that God forgives them when they return to Him. That God wants to receive them as His children. That God has His arms wide open. That Heaven throws a party at their return to God.

I believe one of the reasons why the lost son waited so long to return to his Father is because he had the wrong picture to Whom he was returning. Jesus corrected that picture when He told these parables.

Lost people matter to God, and God wants them found.