

**The Character of Jesus 55**  
**Parables about the Lost**  
**Luke 15:1 - 32**

- **Characteristic: Valuing Potential**
  - (1 – 2) These parables were given in response to the attitude of the Pharisees and scribes who objected to Jesus’ treatment of “tax collectors and sinners.”
    - Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them, although He never implied that their sins were of no importance. In the parables, He still called them “lost.”
    - The Pharisees and scribes refused to acknowledge sinners and certainly would not dine with them.
    - These parables are about losses, so represent those who were part of the group but left, as opposed to the majority of the world who never cared about God in the first place.
  - (3 – 7) The Lost Sheep
    - The shepherd takes a risk to seek out the lost.
    - When found, the lost sheep is carried, not driven.
    - The result is rejoicing, not harshness or guilt.
    - Focus on the joy of returning, not the pain of being lost.
  - (8 – 10) The Lost Coin
    - Coins often were worn as jewelry, so the loss was not uncommon.
    - The woman expends resources to find the coin, which was worth about a day’s wage.
    - Focus on the recovery, not the potential loss or the energy used in recovery.
  - (11 – 32) The Lost Son
    - Estates often were divided before the death of the owner since the elder son, who received a double portion, was responsible for the upkeep of the parents. In this case, the younger son would receive a third.
    - The younger son, after squandering his inheritance, decided to go back and beg his father for a job as a servant.
    - The father did not take anything away from the elder son (v 31). The younger son lost his inheritance. But, the appropriate response was rejoicing over the return, not hashing out the details.
    - The elder son was jealous of the attention given to the younger..
- **Application: Valuing Potential**
  - Various churches treat sinners in different ways.
  - Seeking the lost
    - In the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, effort was expended to find that which had been lost. In the Lost Son, the son decided to return; the father did not seek him.
    - Effort and risk are benchmarks for seeking that which is lost.
    - How should Christians today seek those who have left their fellowship?
  - Accepting the returning
    - The status of the returned son is not addressed. Perhaps he became a servant. Perhaps family members invested in him (to be paid back) so he would have the chance to recover his fortune through hard work.

- The point in all three cases is to rejoice over the recovery. What happens after that is not addressed.
- How should Christians today go about rejoicing over a recovery?
- What good options are available for what happens next?