

# Family Lent Devotion: Week 4

LUKE 15:1-32 (NIV)

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

**15** Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. **2** But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

**3** Then Jesus told them this parable: **4** “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he 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.

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

**8** “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins[a] and loses one. Doesn’t she 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.”

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SON

**11** Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

**13** “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

**17** “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ **20** So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

31 “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

## WEEKLY LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRACTICING GRATITUDE



*When you find yourself in a space such as Lent, where life seems thinner than usual and the journey more focused than normal, what do people of faith do to keep journeying on? In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of the promise, as yet unfulfilled, and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible.*

Each time I read this parable, I always ask the question:

**“God, who are you calling me to hear today?”**

This question opens our hearts and minds to all the messages God brings to us in this parable. One message that is revealed over and over again is the father’s love for both of his sons and the father’s gratitude for the youngest son’s return. In this story, one of the lessons the father demonstrates is how to practice gratitude.

Just like the father tells his son, we too are called to pay attention and to give thanks for all that God has done for us. When we pay attention to all that is good in our lives, we can see and feel (even if for a brief moment) God's presence in our lives. By taking note and sharing these moments with others, we document our memory and our learnings; we acknowledge and identify our experiences of the holy. These "stampers," as children I work with have called them, mark our hearts and minds, helping us see, feel, and remember God's promise to be with us. They remind us of God's gift of peace. These stampers, memories, experiences, give us hope that can carry us through the dark places. This week, I invite you to practice the spiritual discipline of gratitude with your family and community:

- Take time at the end of each day to share three things that you are grateful for.
- This might be done alone (writing it in a journal, typing it on your computer, or drawing images in an art pad), or it might be done around the dinner table or perhaps in another dedicated space in your home.
- Make sure to document the things you are grateful for, so you and your family can always remember God's many blessings, even in the midst of sorrow, pain, loss, and/or grief.
- You might do this through a family journal (where everyone can write/draw/etc.; or you might create a family wall for the season of Lent, where family members can add their words of gratitude each day).

## WEEKLY WONDERING QUESTIONS:



- I wonder what you are grateful for?
- I wonder how these things help you see/feel/hear God?
- I wonder how you will prepare for the mystery of Easter?
- I wonder where you saw the color purple today?
- I wonder what the color purple reminds you of?

## WEEKLY FAMILY PRAYER:

*Traveling God, we know that Easter is a big mystery, and entering into it is big work. We thank you for Lent, the time when we get ready for the mystery of Easter. During this season, help us learn how to trust you, love you, and share your love with others. Lord,*

*be with our family as we travel together, preparing our hearts and minds to enter into the mystery of Easter. Bless us in our work. It's in your holy name, we pray, Amen.*

## MUSICAL AND VIDEO REFLECTION:

