

Knowing who is lost . . . Principles of evangelism

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Text: Lamentations 4:1-3, Luke 15:1-31

Song: "Seeking the Lost" #373

When we think of the word lost we think of an action or something that is final, beyond reach, gone, gone. I checked the dictionary for the meaning of lost and here is what I found:

- No longer in the possession, care, or control of someone or something: *a lost pen.*
- No longer in existence; vanished or spent: *lost youth.*
- No longer known or practiced: *a lost art.*
- Beyond reach, communication, or influence: *The expedition was lost to the world for two months.*
- Beyond recovery or redemption; fallen or destroyed

These definitions of lost gives the impression that "lost" it is a state of hopelessness. That is there is no hope it is impossible to find it. It does not exist any more.

When Jesus is in the picture no one is beyond hope. No one.

There is an interesting passage of scripture that talks about God's people in the Old Testament. Lamentations 4:1-3. Let us read from the screen.

1. How the gold has lost its luster,
the fine gold become dull!

The sacred gems are scattered
at every street corner.

2. How the precious children of Zion,
once worth their weight in gold,
are now considered as pots of clay,
the work of a potter's hands!

3. Even jackals offer their breasts
to nurse their young,
but my people have become heartless
like ostriches in the desert.

When gold has lost its luster you cannot get it back. It is gone. But when it comes to Jesus he can do anything.

Are God's people are beyond hope? No. Jesus comes to redeem us. He can see what we cannot see. He knows our hearts. He knows our conditions. He keeps on reach out to us.

Isaiah 49:15

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!

This reminds me of something else. The title of the book written by Barak Obama. "Audacity of Hope"

"The title of The Audacity of Hope was derived from a sermon delivered by Obama's former pastor, Jeremiah Wright. Wright had attended a lecture by Dr. Frederick G. Sampson in Richmond, Virginia, in the late 1980s, on the G. F. Watts painting Hope, which inspired him to give a sermon in 1990 based on the subject of the painting - "with her clothes in rags, her body scarred and bruised and bleeding, her harp all but destroyed and with only one string left, she had the audacity to make music and praise God ... To take the one string you have left and to have the audacity to hope... that's the real word God will have us hear from this passage and from Watt's painting."

All was not lost for her

Let us share some concepts about lost

1. Not everyone we think is "lost" is really lost.
2. Not everyone wants to know that he or she is lost.
3. Not everyone who does not believe what we believe is lost.

This brings me now to our stories for today. They are found in Luke 15: The lost sheep, son, and coin

I am going to present some principles and concepts to help us understand this parable and help us apply them to real life situations today.

Turn to Luke 15:1-7

THE LOST SHEEP

1 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.

What can we learn from this parable about the lost sheep?
HERE IT IS:

The lost sheep WONDERED AWAY unknowingly

1. The sheep did not realize it was getting lost.
2. The sheep did not make a decision to get lost.
3. The sheep did not keep its eyes on where he was going. Instead he was focused on pleasing its own appetite as it nibbled in the grass.

Life Application

How can this happen?

FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

Going to bed consistently late and at separate times.

Going on separate vacations.

Sleeping in separate beds.

Neglecting to affirm each other everyday.

Neglecting to cherish each other publicly.

Having a negative and critical spirit.

Being too busy with Church activities.

CHILDREN

Screaming and shouting

Neglecting to say "I love you."

Neglecting to say "thank you" and "I'm sorry."
 Devaluing their opinions and thoughts.
 Neglecting to listen and accept children's pains and joys.
 Setting a poor example.

The lost sheep syndrome represents those individuals who are neglecting to care for their spiritual and social needs. When they feel the pain as a result of their neglect, then they cry for help.

THE LOST SON

Luke 15:11-31

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.’”

The lost son made a DELIBERATE DECISION to leave his family.

1. The lost son was restless and bored at home.
2. He was no longer happy with his simple home environment.
3. He wanted to be free of family influence.
4. He MADE A CHOICE to leave the protective home environment and follow his passion, his desires.

I am getting lost. I am out of here. Now at first he did not realize he was lost. But he did admit it when things got tough.

LIFE APPLICATION

1. This married partner justifies his or her behavior by pointing to the deficiencies of the other partner.
2. This married partner eventually feels that the joys outside of the marriage is much better than the joys in his or her marriage
3. Some parents push their children out of their hearts and home.
4. Some children for apparently no reason decide to run away from home.

The lost son syndrome represents those individuals who compromise with sin. They question the relevancy of Biblical principles in today’s world.

THE LOST COIN

Read Luke 15:8-10. This is the shortest of the stories but the toughest and most sensitive one.

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 coin DID NOT KNOW it was lost.

1. The coin is unaware it is lost
2. The coin is unable to help itself.

LIFE APPLICATION

1. An individual refuses to have an open mind towards learning and adjusting to new ideas.
2. Individuals who are rigid and inflexible in their beliefs and practices.
3. A partner places tradition over his/her spouse's opinions and feelings.
4. A spouse refuses to have an open mind towards learning and adjusting to new ideas.
5. Couples are rigid and inflexible in their beliefs and practices.
6. Partners place tradition over their spouse's opinions and feelings.

Happy Marriages *Based on research (Equality in marriage)*

Both partners are equalitarian - 90% happy

Husband is traditional and wife is equalitarian - 50% happy

Wife is traditional and husband is equalitarian -37% happy

Both partners are traditional - 18% happy

CONCLUSION

The lost coin syndrome represents those individuals who refuse to learn. They blindly hold on to tradition.

The lost son syndrome represents those individuals who compromise with sin. They question the relevancy of Biblical principles in today's world.

The lost sheep syndrome represents those individuals who are neglecting to care for their spiritual and social needs. When they feel the pain as a result of their neglect, then they cry for help.

Commons points in the three stories

1. They are all lost
2. Someone took the time to search for them.

Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost.

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrated his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

1 John 4:10 "This is love: not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

Principles of Evangelism

1. Avoid having a judgmental attitude
2. Avoid appearing self-righteous and holy
3. Try to understand the person
4. Remember that salvation is a choice
5. Be a contagious Adventist Christian
6. Make the gospel attractive by your lifestyle

Seeking the Lost #373

Seeking the lost – yes, kindly entreating
 Wanders on the mountain astray;
 "Come unto Me," His message repeating,
 Words of the Master speaking today.

Refrain

Going afar upon the mountain,
 Bringing the wand'rer back again,
 Into the fold of my Redeemer,
 Jesus the Lamb for sinners slain.

Thus I would go on missions of mercy,
 Following Christ from day unto day,
 Cheering the faint and raising the fallen,
 Pointing the lost to Jesus, the Way.