

“There Must Be More”

Black Sheep week #1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Gospels Jesus used parables to teach His followers important truths. These “word pictures” bring us into a deeper level of understanding by touching emotions through shared experiences. In our new sermon series Black Sheep, we will study the parable of the prodigal son. Although we will find differences between the first century culture and our own, we will also see truth that applies to all of us in our relationship with our heavenly Father.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

If you were given one million dollars today, what would you do with it?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

Q1. Read Luke 15:1-10

The parable of the prodigal son was taught in a gathering of the outcasts (sinners and tax collectors) and those who were highly regarded (scribes and Pharisees). What comment was Jesus responding to when he began teaching in parables (v.2)? The parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin preceded the parable of the prodigal son. (v. 4-10) What do you think Jesus is saying about the heart of God toward the lost in those parables?

Q2. Read Luke 15:11-16; Jeremiah 2:5; Ephesians 2:13

In the parable of the prodigal we quickly see the attitude of the younger son revealed. What does the son’s statement in verse 12 tell us about the value he placed on his father? In Jesus’s day the land belonging to a family represented their inheritance of God’s promise (the Promised Land). Traveling to a distant country broke his relationship with his family and his God. Based on v. 13, what does it appear the younger son was seeking?

How is Jer. 2:5 a description of the prodigal son’s situation? We don’t have to travel to a distant land to seek what we think we need apart from God. Describe what you think the son’s thoughts and feelings were toward his father? What are some examples of how can a longing for a relationship, purpose, or significance draw you far from God? What is the good news of Ephesians 2:13 for those who are wandering far from God?

Q3. Read Luke 15:14-16; James 1:14-16; Psalm 16:2; Ephesians 3:20-21

The younger son acted without regard for the future. He ran after a life without boundaries and without authority and severed relationships with his family and community, but it failed to bring him the “good life” that he was seeking. What was the danger that the son faced in v 14? How does James explain this process by which any of us might follow the same path?

David said of God in Ps 16, “I have no good apart from you.” It is not by following the rules and regulations that we find our God-ordained purpose, relationship and significance. It is only by drawing near to God that we draw from the Father’s love all that we might ask or desire (Eph 3:21-22). Apart from Him we will find no good thing. What do you see as your God-given relationships, purpose and significance?

WRAP-UP

God has hardwired us to seek three things; relationship (with Him and others), purpose (knowing who we are and what we do matters) and significance (knowing why we exist). The challenge is that directed rightly these things lead us to God, but when distorted, as they were by the prodigal son, they lead us to destruction. Give thanks to your heavenly Father who goes after the lost and helps us find our way back to Him.

Memory Verse

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
Ephesians 2:13 ESV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more space) _____

Challenge- If you have a prodigal in your life, reach out this week to let them know they are loved and there is a way back available to them. If you are feeling distant from your heavenly Father or Christian community, share this in confidence with someone to encourage you to “come near.”

Q1

Luke 15:1-10 ESV - 1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." 3 So he told them this parable: 4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' 7 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. 8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Q2

Luke 15:11-16 ESV - 11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

Jeremiah 2:5 ESV - 5 Thus says the LORD: "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?"

Ephesians 2:13 ESV - 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Q3

Luke 15:14-16 ESV - 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

