

Read: Luke 15:1-10

Love Looks for the Lost

Luke 15:4

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?

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It was one of the most horrible, terrifying experiences of Sam's young life. He was with his parents in a huge store with elevators between the three levels. His parents were deep in conversation with each other about buying something. Sam quickly got bored. So he looked around and started to wander in his own little world of adventure. When he looked up, his mom and dad weren't there. He walked down the aisle a little quicker and glanced around each furniture display. But he still couldn't see them. His heart began to beat a bit faster. Did they get on the elevator to go to a different level? He didn't know what to do. And then... there they were walking toward him! Oh! Phew!

There was a time when you were completely and utterly lost. You were buried under a pile of sinfulness and totally separated from God. You didn't know or understand it at the time. But God did. Maybe you had just been born, but that was plenty of time for your parents to hand down to you what is in every family—imperfection, separation, and lostness.

So God sent out the search and rescue team to find you. God uses Christian parents who love and care for you and wanted you to be a part of God's family. They didn't want you to be lost. Maybe they brought you to a church where God used a pastor who poured water on your head and dripped God's promises on you in Baptism. You once were lost, but now were found. And every time someone who is lost is found, the angels in heaven cheer!

Each of us has a similar story. We have imperfect, sinful parents, so we are born as imperfect, sinful people. Along the way we fall and fail. Sometimes we stray so far away, it's like we are on a different planet. Sin separates us from God. We were all at one point lost. But like the shepherd who left the 99 to find the one lost sheep in today's story—Jesus sent out the search and rescue team for us.

We all were lost, but now we are found. That love of Jesus that found us spills over and does the same thing Jesus did for us. Love looks for the lost. It leads us to talk to other people about Jesus. It does anything and everything. It never gives up. So what if they don't listen to you? So what if they don't believe in Jesus right away? They are lost and need to know they can be found in Jesus.

Love looks for the lost. Why? Because we were lost but now are found. Now we get to be a part of Christ's love finding others!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Have you ever been lost? Describe how you felt.
- When the shepherd lost a sheep, he searched until he found it. What does God promise to do when we get lost?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Today's devotion is about being getting lost. What exactly were we "lost" in?
- Today's devotion talks about being found. How exactly did God "find" us?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- *True or False:* I can blame my parents for my lost spiritual condition when I was born.
- Love looks for the lost is the title of today's devotion. But whose love? Name at least three different sources of love who are able to look for the lost.

Closing Prayer:

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, but yet in love he sought me and on his shoulder gently laid and home, rejoicing, brought me! (*Christian Worship* 552:3) Dear Lord, may our greatest joy be in the finding of the lost. Amen.