

# Week 4

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AMAZING GRACE - THE LOST AND FOUND

## Introductory Talking Points

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- Today is our fourth and last Sunday of Build Relationships/Share Jesus.
- HOWEVER, while this is the last Sunday dedicated to this study, we are to live out the truth every day. James Merritt, a pastor who has preached at Bellevue several times, recently posted a great quote on Twitter, “We come to church to celebrate the Christian life. We leave the church to demonstrate the Christian life!”.
- Today we will participate in Bellevue Loves Memphis projects during the afternoon and early evening. This particular Bellevue Loves Memphis Workday will provide Life Groups with opportunities to Build Relationships and Share Jesus. Life Groups will have three options: *(Teacher, at this point, you may want to explain what your Life Group will be doing.)*
  - **Build Relationships/Share Jesus visits.** Those who would like to continue to make Share Jesus visits will meet at 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Please register at [www.bellevuelovesmemphis.org](http://www.bellevuelovesmemphis.org) so that we can make sure to have enough bags prepared.
  - **Plan Your Own Event.** If your Life Group has planned your own event to strategically reach out to neighbors to build relationships and share Jesus with them, explain the project at this time.
  - **Participate in a BLM Partner Project.** See a full list of projects at [www.bellevuelovesmemphis.org](http://www.bellevuelovesmemphis.org).
- Continue to emphasize that Share Jesus is one-fourth of who we are as a church.

## AMAZING GRACE – THE LOST AND FOUND

Notes

As we begin this morning, I want us to take a few moments to share about the opportunities we have had to Share Jesus over the past three weeks. It may have been during our Build Relationship/Share Jesus visits or an opening that God gave you to share the gospel with a friend, neighbor, or associate. The person may or not have gotten saved; what is important is that you shared. Who would like to share?

I have also asked \_\_\_\_\_ (*you'll want to make this call earlier in the week to give them time to prepare*) to come up and demonstrate to us what a presentation of the Share Jesus Gospel Outline that we have been studying for the past three weeks looks like. \_\_\_\_\_ will be sharing the gospel and I'll be responding to the questions.

### **Gospel Demonstration.**

See how much easier that has gotten for all of us? I imagine that you could have jumped in at any time and finished the presentation.

As we finish our study on Build Relationships/Share Jesus today, turn in your Bible to Luke 15 as we look at one of the most familiar passages in the Bible. It covers the well-known stories of a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. Most of all, it is a parable that tells of God's amazing love for us!

There is a three-fold theme (vs. 6, 9, 24 and 32) that connects these three parables:

- Something is lost.
- It is found.
- There is great rejoicing!

One of the experiences we all share is that we lose things! Regardless of our level of organization, at some time, some place, we have all lost something.

Sometimes we lose things that are inanimate. Maybe you have lost a set of keys. If you have ever lost your keys, please raise your hand. Perhaps you lost your cell phone. Maybe you've lost

your wallet or purse. Maybe you've lost your passport or a credit card. Maybe the airlines lost your luggage—isn't that an adventure?

At other times, we may lose something that is animate, alive. (*Teacher, this is a personal illustration from my life, feel free to use one from your experience.*) A few weeks ago, my youngest son looked out in the backyard and saw that his dog had nudged open the gate and gotten out. He was in a panic. He called for the dog. He looked all through the neighbor's yard. He got in his truck and drove around. Finally, he found her a few streets over.

Maybe what you lost was not a thing, or a pet, but a person, a family member. (*Teacher, here is another illustration from my life, feel free to use one from your experience.*) When our oldest son, Jonathan, was about 4 years old, late one afternoon he slipped away from our backyard and walked next door to the church where I pastored. For about 5 minutes, my wife and I were utterly and completely consumed with one thing—finding our son! (Who by the way had decided to go and help some people clean the church . . . but that is another story.)

Recently, we saw this concern for human life play out as we witnessed the heroic efforts to rescue the 12 boys and their soccer coach from a cave in Thailand. The cost of this rescue, although extravagant, could not compare to the value of the lives of the 13 people who were saved. Thousands of man-hours, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the life of a Navy SEAL were given to see these 13 lives rescued.

What is our response when we find something that has been lost? With great relief (and probably in a loud voice) we usually cry out, "I found it! I found him/her!"

In Luke 15, we see this drama of "lost, found, and celebrating," being played out in three episodes. Let's begin reading in verse 1, "*Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them'*" (Luke 15:1-2). In other words, they thought Jesus was hanging out with the wrong people.

The Pharisees were shocked and upset that Jesus spent so much time with these "lost causes." They had a tremendous

amount of contempt for “tax collectors and sinners.” That may mean little to us today. Perhaps we think our taxes are too high and April 15 is not your favorite day of the year, but if you work at the IRS, you aren’t going to be shunned at the next ice cream fellowship. But in Jesus’ day, these folks were looked down upon.

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Who are the people the world (and often the church) wrongly looks down on, who are treated with contempt? Think about that, but don’t answer out loud. Perhaps each person has his or her list of people.

Some might look down on the person on welfare—“Come on, get a job keep it.” Another person might look with contempt at the person who is worth millions of dollars and lives an extravagant lifestyle —“Come on, how can you be so selfish and self-centered to hoard all that money?” The areas of pride are endless and if we are honest, we all probably have more in common with the Pharisees than we want to admit.

One person may look with contempt at the individual who is hooked on alcohol or drugs. Another person may look down on the person who is overweight. Still another may look down on both of these people, wondering why others aren’t more disciplined like he or she is—self-righteous and proud of it.

These prideful attitudes require repentance. The parables we are about to look at explain Jesus’ attitude towards those who are lost and teach us what our attitude should be also.

All three parables teach us that God has a heart for “lost causes.”

### **The Lost Sheep**

Let’s look first at the Lost Sheep in verses 3-7:

*So He told them this parable, saying, “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 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 which was lost!’ I tell you that in*

*the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance"*  
(Luke 15:3-7).

This story is about a shepherd who owns a hundred sheep and when he counts them, he comes up one short. The faithful shepherd then leaves the ninety-nine and goes to look for the one that is lost.

We are not told if he leaves the ninety-nine in the care of a friend or a neighbor. I think that could be implied, but the care for the ninety-nine is not the focus of the story; the compassion for the one is the focus.

The point is not about property ownership, but about comparing the passion and compassion of the shepherd with the Great Shepherd. The parable demonstrates Jesus' passion and compassion for reaching the lost.

Note the great celebration when what is lost is found. The shepherd calls his friends and neighbors together and they have a party, "*I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance"* (vs 7).

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Let me ask a question. I just want you to answer to yourself. It comes to mind because of the shepherd's compassion for his sheep. It may be a silly question to some of you. It will be a troubling question to others. What would cause more emotional pain and turmoil in your life, losing a pet, or having your lost neighbor or co-worker dying and going to a Christ-less eternity? If we are honest, some of us, might shed more tears over our dog dying than we would over a lost neighbor or friend who died.

Has anybody here ever had a dog or cat run away, or had one get out of a fence and get lost? What type of emotions did you experience? (Great sadness, loss, concern for the pet, anxiety, etc.) When is the last time you knew someone who died and did not know Christ? What did you feel? How did you feel about them when they were alive? Did you have compassion for them? Does our love for lost people reach into our heart and soul?

**The Lost Coin**

The parable of the lost sheep is similar to the parable of the lost coin.

Let's look at verses 8-10:

*Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:8-10).*

In Jesus' day, the silver coin was a drachma and was equivalent to a day's wages for an average worker. While it was a sizeable amount, it was not a fortune. Nevertheless, she goes to a lot of trouble to find it:

- She lights a lamp.
- She sweeps the house.
- She searches carefully.

The woman is as passionate in her search as the shepherd. She puts forth a lot of effort; she is investing a lot of energy into this search.

Then when she finds the coin, she calls her neighbors together to celebrate with her. I think it is fascinating that every time something lost is found in this passage, there is public and community celebration. It's like the Don Francisco song, "Got to Tell Somebody." Good news has to be shared! It has to be celebrated!

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We are called to build relationships. The Pharisees didn't do it because they thought they were better than others. Perhaps they thought they were exemplifying God by distancing themselves from sinners. I don't think most Christians in Memphis think that. However, I think we distance ourselves from those without Christ for other reasons. What are some of those reasons? (*The thoughts below are some answers you can use to "prime the pump."*)

- We are already so busy. Someone thinks, "You want me to invest time in my lost neighbors. I have a hard

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enough time investing time in my kid's lives, or my wife's life!"

- I'm not Jesus; I don't have all the answers. "Sure, Jesus did that, but that's who He was. Me, I'm trying to stay close to my spouse, my kids, and perhaps a few folks at church. I have a hard enough time finding answers for my questions, much less solutions, truth for somebody who is struggling with other stuff!"
- Folks don't want to my help; they don't want to be found. "It's one thing to search for a lost coin, it won't continually roll away from you. It's another thing to search for a sheep that is lost and will follow you back to the fold. It's yet another thing to search for somebody who hates you and the Jesus you represent."

Now we come to the third parable in Luke 15.

### **The Lost Son**

This is the parable you are probably most familiar with. You know it as the Parable of the Prodigal Son, or the Lost Son.

It is a story about a son who renounced his relationship with his father by asking for his inheritance. The son basically said to his father, "I wish you were dead." He then squandered his inheritance in record time and ended up in a pigpen (which is pretty much rock bottom for a Kosher Jew). But then the son came to his senses, decided to go home, and begged his father for forgiveness. Verse 20 tells us, "*So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*" I love what happens next.

(v. 21) "*And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*"

But then the father speaks...

(vv. 22-24) "*Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this*

*son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.”*

*“And they began to celebrate.”*

No lecture. No required penance. The father immediately reestablished his relationship with his son. And then the party began. Luke 15:7 summarily explains the reason for the celebration: *“There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents”* (NIV). And what a party it was! No expense spared. Why? Because what was lost had been found!

Like the shepherd searching for a sheep and the woman looking for a coin, evangelism requires time, effort, and energy. The coin wasn't going to find the woman, the sheep wasn't going to find the shepherd. In his book, *Everybody Always*, Bob Goff says, “We don't always get to pick the parable we're living, but we get to pick who we are in the parable.” We have to be willing to work at seeing the lost found. We have to be willing to engage with those who are far away from God. We will have to be willing to befriend those who are different from us. And we can't do that from the safety of our comfort zones. If your comfort zone doesn't include you talking and building relationships with lost people, you need a new comfort zone.

The divers rescuing the boys in Thailand invested a lot of time and energy to get them safely out of that cave. The rescue effort required lots of preparation. The SEALs who led the way didn't just walk up and say, “I'd like to help.” They had gone through rigorous training to equip themselves to do this. Their training combined with their experience qualified them for the job.

Whether you have been saved for five minutes or five decades, you can share your testimony and lead someone to faith in Christ. However, you will usually be more likely to engage someone in a gospel conversation when your experience is coupled with training. Last week we handed out a Testimony Outline Sheet for you to use in developing your 3-4 minute testimony. Let's take the next few minutes and take turns sharing your short testimony with the person next to you.

## Conclusion

## Notes

It has well been said that the anthem of Christianity is *Amazing Grace*. Certainly, no other song is better known. Even people who don't know Christ and have no love for truth appreciate this song. No other song captures the power or the image of "lost, found, and celebrating" quite like *Amazing Grace*.

John Newton wrote over 300 hymns, but the one that touched the world for centuries was written in Olney, England in 1779.

Newton's childhood was greatly impacted by his godly mother. However, after her death, his father remarried and Newton was seemingly "lost" in this new marriage. His early adulthood was wretchedly sinful. He was employed in the most repulsive of all jobs; he was a slave trader.

On March 21, 1748, at the age of 22, Newton's life took what he called, "the great turning day." The slave ship he was on was caught in a sudden turbulent storm. Newton stood at the wheel of the ship for eleven hours, not knowing if they would live or die. The entire time he was crying out, "Lord, have mercy on us." For the rest of his life, Newton would set aside that day each year as a day of "humiliation, prayer, and praise."

Newton became a minister and had deep friendships with John Wesley and George Whitefield. Perhaps the most influential friendship Newton developed was with William Wilberforce, the man used by God to end the slave trade in England, and eventually, the United States.

That grace that transformed the slave ship captain who "once was lost but now is found" still changes lives! As long as there are people in need of a Savior, that grace will have no end.

I pray that the past four weeks have impacted your life as much as they have mine. From here on out, may we see the people we cross paths with as Christ sees them and engage with them to bring hope and love and grace and peace into their lives. And may His kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

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## Amazing Grace Lyrics

## Notes

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my Shield and Portion be,  
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
The sun forbear to shine;  
But God, who called me here below,  
Will be forever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.