

Reaching the Lost (Read Luke 15: 1-10)

I've heard about a little six-year old boy who restlessly struggled to listen to a rather lengthy sermon. After the service, the little boy asked the question that sooner or later most "church kids" ask. "Dad" he said, "what does the preacher do the rest of the week?" The dad replied, "Son, he's a very busy man. He takes care of church business, visits the sick, studies the Bible. . . and he has to take time to rest up. You see, preaching in public is not an easy job." The little boy thought about that and said, "Well, listening ain't so easy either!"

The truth is that listening really is not always easy, especially when the messages are challenging. I will be sharing with you on the subject of the Christians responsibility in reaching the lost. **I know I was troubled in my heart as I studied this text because the more I studied this passage, the more I realized how I and the church have not been responding to the lost the way Jesus taught that we should.**

In these two parables something of value is lost. In the stories the thing lost, whether a sheep or a coin, have monetary value. Nobody, including the religious leaders who valued material things, would ignore such a loss; rather they would put every effort into finding it and would rejoice when they did.

If this is true about things that are lost, shouldn't it also be for people who are spiritually lost?

Shouldn't we respond to people who are lost in the same way or even a greater way than we would to lost things? Shouldn't we exhibit the same efforts, and perseverance in searching for them? Shouldn't we be filled with joy at there being found? I believe that the point of this passage is primarily to remind Christians of how they should respond to the lost. **If God responds a certain way to those who are lost then it is obvious that Christians should follow His example.**

Read [Luke 15:1-2](#)

1. The first thing needed for reaching the lost is compassion.

Jesus had the "tax collectors and sinners" gathering around him. These are lost people who were not running from Jesus but rather running to him. They were not avoiding him, ignoring him, or even hostile towards him. Verse 1 says that they were "gathering around to hear him." Why were sinners so willing and even eager to listen to Jesus? It certainly wasn't because Jesus had an easy message that tickled people's ears.

Why did the "lost" seek out Jesus rather than run from him? I believe the answer is his compassion. Jesus loved them and showed that love with a compassionate instead of condemning attitude. The Bible says in verse 2 that Jesus "welcomes sinners and eats with them." One of the definitions for the Greek word translated as "welcomes" in this verse is to "receive as a friend." This was Jesus attitude toward those who were lost in sin. Jesus was compassionate and accepting of them despite their sins and faults. Jesus had an attitude that lost people were attracted to, do we? **For us as individuals and as a church to reach people we are going to have to show and have that same love and acceptance.**

1. The first thing needed for reaching the lost is **compassion**.

Illustration: When I was a police officer, I responded to several traffic accidents, some of them with very severe injuries. **At the scene of these accidents there are three groups of people, each with a different response toward those involved in the accident.**

The **first group** is the bystanders and onlookers. They are curious and watch to see what happens but have little active involvement.

The **second group** is the police officers, of whom I was one. My response was to investigate the cause of the accident, assign blame, and give out appropriate citation(s).

The **third group** is the paramedics. They are the people usually most welcomed by those involved in the accident. They could care less whose fault the accident was and they did not engage in lecturing about bad driving habits. Their response was to help those who were hurt. They bandaged wounds, freed trapped people, and gave words of encouragement.

Three groups – 1st is uninvolved, 2nd is assigning blame and issuing citations, and 3rd is helping the hurting. Which group are you in?

When it comes to reaching the lost and hurting, we're going to be in one of these three groups. We will be uninvolved and let others do the work. Or we will condemn people for their foolish behavior, or we will be concentrating on helping those who are lost and hurting. I hope we will be those who are showing compassion like those in the last group!

Much of the church is responding to the lost like the police officer instead of the paramedics. This is what the Pharisees and teachers of the law did. They were more interested in condemning and criticizing sinners than in showing compassion. The same attitude is sometimes seen in the modern conservative church, of which we are a part. We're rightfully upset about the current state of moral values, abortion, immoral entertainment etc... in society today. It is fine and appropriate to be concerned about these issues, but we must be careful that our concern about these issues does not turn into condemnation toward the lost. The lost have never flocked to hear those who were condemning and they never will listen to us if we have that same attitude.

1. The first thing needed for reaching the lost is **compassion**.

2. The second thing needed for reaching the lost is **effort**.

Read [Luke 15:3-5](#)

Here's the point –For us to reach the lost; it takes a diligent effort in seeking the lost. In these two parables, Jesus emphasizes the effort that went into finding the lost. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus said that the shepherd would "leave the ninety-nine sheep in the open country and go after the lost sheep. . ." In the parable of the lost coin, the woman lights a lamp, sweeps the whole house, and searches carefully for the lost coin.

In both cases the thing that was lost had to be sought after with great effort. The shepherd did not wait for the lost sheep to wander home and the woman did not wait for the lost coin to turn up. In our Christian lives and in the church it sometimes seems that we do the opposite. We tend to wait for the lost to come to us. We're passive rather than active. We're waiting for people to come to Christ instead of putting effort into bringing them to Christ! I know that I have been guilty of doing this. I want people to be saved but haven't went out searching for the lost with great effort. This has to change if we're to reach the lost like Jesus did.

The second thing needed for reaching the lost is effort. How do we practically practice this principle? What do you and I need to do in order to be following Jesus instructions about giving effort to reaching the lost? There are several things we can do.

First, a significant part of our prayers should be for the lost.

Second, making every effort means that a significant part of the ministries of Chandler Acres Church should be directed toward reaching the lost. **There is no excuse** for not seeking the lost as Jesus instructed us to.

Third, making every effort to reach the lost means we must be willing to make outreach a significant part of our personal and church spending.

This is one area where we have been improving. In the last year-and-a-half much more of the church funds have been directed toward missions and outreach than in previous years. These are all practical things we can do to apply this principle that Jesus has shared on reaching the lost.

While it is important that the church corporately make every effort to reach the lost, the most important thing you and I need to do in reaching the lost is to do our best to share Jesus with all those we come into contact with.

So far I've shared two things necessary to reach the lost like Jesus did.

1. The first thing needed for reaching the lost is **compassion**.

2. The second thing needed for reaching the lost is **effort**.

3. The third thing needed to reach the lost its **persistence**.

Read [Luke 15:4, 8](#)

In both these cases Jesus notes specifically that the person continued seeking after the lost item until he or she found it. In other words, **Jesus seems to be pointing out that persistence was a needed quality for success.** After all, lost sheep among spacious fields and hills, and lost coins in the dirt floor of the Jewish home would not have been easily or quickly found.

It's the same way with reaching the lost. It is not easy to reach people's hearts so that they receive Jesus. It is not usually the case there our first efforts meet with success. Sometimes it takes years and years of persistence, but we should not be discouraged or give up. If a sheep or coin was valuable enough to persistently search for, then people who are spiritually lost are too valuable to give up on.

The spiritually lost are too valuable for us to quit trying to reach even though our efforts do not pay off quickly.

2. The third thing needed to reach the lost its persistence.

Read [Luke 15: 5-7, 9-10](#)

Conclusion: The religious leaders of the day had been indifferent toward the lost and even antagonistic toward them coming to Jesus. Jesus uses these two parables to illustrate how wrong their response was, especially when compared to how they would have responded toward recovering something of far less value. Jesus pointed out how joyful they would have been at the recovery of a lost sheep or lost coin, certainly then they should of been joyous instead of angered at the lost coming to Jesus.

Jesus then **pointed out that the one thing that matters most to God is the lost.**

They matter so much to God that when the lost are found, even one of them, all heaven rejoices and throws a party!

There is more joy over one sinner coming to Jesus that over ninety-nine people being right where they're supposed to be with God.

If lost people matter this much to God, shouldn't they matter this much to us?

Shouldn't we be willing to give everything needed in order to reach the lost?

My answer is "yes" and I hope yours is also. What is needed to reach the lost?

1. The first thing needed for reaching the lost is compassion.
2. The second thing needed for reaching the lost is effort.
3. The third thing needed to reach the lost its persistence.

Closing Prayer