

Week Two — The Two Lost Sons

“There was a man who had two sons.”

The words, “I’m lost!” usually come with an urgency to find our way. We’ll grab a map if it’s a street we’re trying to locate, sign up with a math tutor if we’re over our heads in algebra, or search the Internet for parenting advice. Spiritual lostness? It often leads to addictions or unhealthy habits because our plan simply involves getting immediate relief from the desperation or hopelessness that fills our souls. We don’t recognize that it’s God we’re hunting for.

Like the two sons in the parable, we sometimes look *in all the wrong places* for what only God can offer. And then we don’t understand why things never seem to work out, or we end up frustrated and angry that God didn’t bless the plan we made. This pattern creates a barrier between us and God. It also keeps us lost.

May we be encouraged to seek God’s plan and make it our own. In fact, this week take time to ask, “Father what is your plan for my life?”

Memory Verse:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

Definitions and Translations from the Greek

In need (*hystereō*)—

- 1) to be left behind in the race and so fail to reach the goal, to fall short of the end
- 2) to be inferior in power, influence and rank
- 3) to fail, be wanting

Was lost (*apollymi*)

- 1) destroyed; ruined
- 2) put out of the way entirely; abolished
- 3) rendered useless
- 4) forfeited, as a lost estate
- 5) was dead
- 6) employed to no good purpose
- 7) metaphor for given over to eternal misery in hell
- 8) Not able to find the right way or the place intended
- 9) Bewildered; perplexed; like being in a maze
- 10) Alienated; insensible; hardened beyond sensibility or recovery

Plan--noun—A *scheme** devised; a project; the form of something to be done existing in the mind

***Scheme**—noun—A plan; a combination of things connected and adjusted by design

Read Chapter Two of *The Prodigal God*.

Highlight thoughts that stand out to you and ideas you'd like to discuss.

From your reading:

1. What are two new insights you have from this chapter about the two lost sons?

1.

2.

2. The *Parable of the Lost Sons* begins with the plan the younger son devised for living his life. It involved claiming his share of his father's estate. In PG pages 17-20, Keller talks about the effects of this on the family. What stands out to you?

3. On PG page 20, Keller notes that when the younger son is "literally down in the mud with the pigs, he 'comes to his senses' and devises a *plan*." What scheme does he come up with now (consider Luke 15:14 and the definitions of "in need.")?

What do you think the motive was behind his plan?

4. The elder son had a plan as well—a plan for getting what he wanted. What was his plan?

What do you think the motive was behind his plan?

5. How is the lostness of both sons evident in their plans?

a) The younger son:

b) The elder son:

6. Which son do you identify with the most? Why?

Read the *Parable of the Lost Sons*, Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32, on SG page 4 or in your Bible.

Digging into the Scriptures:

7. a) In the parable on SG page 3, draw a box around the words “dead” and “lost”.

b) Using the definition of “lost” on SG page 6, describe what it means in Luke 15:24, below.

Luke 15:24 -- “For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was *lost* (_____

_____)

and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

c) Because of an experience in your life, can you identify with the father’s desire to celebrate?

8. **Write out Proverbs 19:21.**

a) Ask the Holy Spirit if there is a place in your life where you are operating out of your own plan.

b) If so, ask the Lord what His plan is for you in this place.

c) Which of the above two plans would be best to go with? Why? (Read Jeremiah 29:11-13.)

d) What changes do you need to make in your thinking to align yourself with God’s plan?

e) **Write out Psalms 32:8.**

Ask God what encouragement or promise He has for you in this verse.

9. **Read Luke 18:9-14.**

- a) What plan did the Pharisee devise?
- b) How does it relate to the plan of the elder brother?
- c) What does the tax collector recognize?
- d) In some ways, how does it relate to the thoughts of the younger brother?
- e) What does Jesus say will be the two different results of these attitudes?

10. **GOOD NEWS**: Our Heavenly Father has devised the “Ultimate Plan” for us—a plan that determines our life on earth as well as our eternal future.

a) **Write out John 3:16-17.**

b) Why might this be considered the “Ultimate Plan” (or *scheme*)? Refer to the word “plan” on the definition page if you’d like.

c) Have you submitted to God’s plan or have you devised your own plan for salvation?

⁹*That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."*
Romans 10:9-11

d) **Perhaps today you realize you’ve been lost.** Perhaps today is the day you choose life instead of death. As in the *Parable of the Lost Sons*, the Father sees you and is filled with compassion. He runs to you, throws His arms around you, and tells you He loves you.

In prayer, tell Him something like:

Father God, I’ve been living my own way for too long. I realize I’ve been lost. Forgive me for making my own plans, for thinking I know better than You, or for simply ignoring You. I’m sorry. Thank you for Jesus. I believe He is Your Son and that He died for me and was raised back to life. I want You to be my plan-maker, my Lord and my God. I trust in You.”

If you prayed this prayer, **you can be assured the Father celebrates with you.** Ask Him how He’s celebrating and what He wants you to know. Close your eyes and see if anything comes to mind. Write down what you sense in your spirit.

. . . for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:13)