



Discussion Guide Missing Jesus – Easter LEADER GUIDE

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Hey leaders! We hope you had a joy-filled Easter and were reminded to say “yes” every day to God’s invitation of amazing grace! We are excited to begin a NEW sermon series this week called “Off Limits”. In our faith journey, we often encounter areas of our lives that remain untouched by the transformative power of God because we deem them “off limits.” Together, we’ll dive into the necessity of opening up every aspect of our lives to God’s grace and how we can invite God into every corner of our existence.

Thank you for shepherding a group of people to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent!

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or discipleship@rockbridge.cc

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“The resurrection of Jesus means the worst thing is never the last thing.”
[Frederick Buechner]

LEADER RESOURCES || Leader Note We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!

- **Passage Summary**
 - In this passage, Jesus responds to a challenge to his ministry: Why is he hanging out with sinners? He answers this challenge with three parables, each ending in a party. In the parables, Jesus highlights God’s action and the people’s response. God acts in grace and mercy, invites in love, and awaits our response. The parties are a celebration of people’s response to God’s grace and mercy
- **Luke Ch. 15 Commentary & The Prodigal Son**
 - Use the commentary and short video for background and encouragement. These would be good resources to share with your group before you gather.
- **The Crisis of Decision**
 - This Bible Project podcast would be a good resource to share with those who want to explore Jesus’ use of parables to force a choice for his listeners.

ICEBREAKER || Leader Note The goal for the icebreaker is to build joy and gratitude together. If you’d prefer, you can ask this question: What are you grateful for or how have you experienced joy this week?

Describe the best invitation you’ve ever received. What impact did it have on you?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || Leader Note Begin your time together by thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, beginning in a posture of humility and dependence!

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

*“But I have trusted in your faithful love; my heart will rejoice in your deliverance.
I will sing to the Lord because he has treated me generously.”*
[Psalm 13:5-6]

BIG IDEA || Leader Note Read this aloud so your group knows what the theme of today's discussion is.

Our "with" problem is solved when we see who God is and how much He wants to be WITH us, at great cost to Himself.

PASSAGE || Leader Note Have a few people read portions of the passage aloud slowly. Consider using [Dwell](#) (or another audio app) to listen to the passage read aloud.

- Luke 15:1-31

DISCUSSION || Leader Note Your role is to FACILITATE the conversation, so keep your group moving and encourage multiple people to share, looking for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two REMINDERS: 1) Every question does NOT have to be answered ... there is freedom to go where the Spirit leads! 2) The answers do NOT have to be read aloud ... they are simply there for guidance!

1. In the sermon we heard, "*When we break our connection with God, we end up attached to something else.*" How have you seen that be true in your own life? *This is a great opportunity for you to go first and lead with vulnerability!*
2. How does the parable of the lost sheep reflect God's character and His relationship with humanity? *The parable illustrates God's deep concern for every individual. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine sheep to search for the one lost sheep, demonstrating God's relentless pursuit of those who have strayed. It emphasizes God's love, compassion, and willingness to go to great lengths to bring back even a single lost soul into His fold.*
3. In the parable of the lost coin, why does the woman diligently search for the lost coin? What does this teach us about God's attitude towards us? *The woman's search for the lost coin highlights the value God places on each individual. Just as the woman diligently searches for the lost coin, God diligently seeks out those who are lost in sin. This parable emphasizes God's desire for reconciliation and restoration, regardless of our perceived worth or value in society.*
4. In the parable of the prodigal son, why does the father run to meet his returning son? *The father's act of running to meet his son signifies his unconditional love, eagerness for reconciliation, and willingness to restore the relationship. In Jewish culture, it was uncommon for elders to run, but the father's action shows his extraordinary love and compassion towards his lost son. This reflects God's attitude towards sinners; He eagerly awaits their return and welcomes them with open arms.*
5. The older brother's reaction to his brother's return is one of resentment and anger. What can we learn from his attitude? *The older brother's attitude reveals the danger of self-righteousness and spiritual pride. He feels entitled because of his obedience and fails to understand the depth of his father's love and forgiveness. His resentment towards his brother mirrors the attitude of the Pharisees and scribes, who looked down upon sinners. This serves as a warning against judgmental attitudes and emphasizes the importance of humility and compassion towards those who have gone astray.*
6. In the sermon we heard, "*The common struggle is for each son to let the father love them. God loves us no matter what we've done and not because of what we've done.*" How has that been a struggle for you at times? What helped you truly embrace God's love for you?
7. How does the parable of the prodigal son challenge your understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation? *The parable challenges us to extend forgiveness freely, just as the father forgave his repentant son. It reminds us that forgiveness is not based on merit but on grace. It also encourages reconciliation and restoration of broken relationships, reflecting God's desire for unity and harmony.*

8. In Luke 15:7, Jesus says, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." How does this display God's priorities and values? *This emphasizes God's heart for the lost and that God values repentance and reconciliation above religious rituals or outward righteousness. It also underscores the depth of God's love and the lengths He is willing to go to bring back those who have strayed. It challenges us to align our priorities with God's and to actively participate in His mission of seeking and saving the lost.*
9. How does the parable of the prodigal son illustrate God's grace? *The parable illustrates God's grace through the father's response to his wayward son. Despite squandering his inheritance and living a life of rebellion, the son is welcomed back with open arms and restored to his former position in the family. This act of grace is undeserved and unmerited, highlighting God's unconditional love and willingness to forgive even the most prodigal of sinners.*
10. What can we learn from the father's response to his prodigal son? How about his older son? *The father's response teaches us about the depth of God's love and His desire for reconciliation. He extends grace and forgiveness freely, regardless of the actions or attitudes of his sons. His example challenges us to love others unconditionally, to forgive as we have been forgiven, and to seek reconciliation in broken relationships.* Who is God inviting you to extend this same grace to?
11. The father says, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours." What does this reveal about God's abundance and our inheritance as His children? *This reveals the abundance of God's blessings and the richness of our inheritance as His children. The older son failed to recognize the privileges and blessings he already had as a member of the father's household. Similarly, we have access to the fullness of God's kingdom and all its blessings. It challenges us to live in gratitude and to steward God's blessings wisely, knowing that we are heirs to His kingdom and recipients of His abundant grace.*

STEP OF OBEDIENCE || Leader Note *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

The beautiful truth for us to behold is this: God loves us no matter what we've done and not because of what we've done. Based on the Holy Spirit's prompting today, ***what is a step of obedience that you can take to accept God's invitation to be "with" Him more purposely and consistently?***

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 3-4 for this question.

PRAYER FOCUS || Leader Note *We want to commit to praying for OTHERS as a unified church who is dependent upon God for everything. Be intentional about saving at least 5-10 minutes for prayer at the end of your small group each week to pray for the focused area below.*

Resurrection Momentum

- How will the empty tomb impact your life and actions this week? Let's pray that the *power of the resurrection* would continue to fuel us to live sent as we move beyond Easter weekend.
- It's human nature for our hearts to grow cold towards God's grace and goodness to us. Let's pray that the Holy Spirit will help us truly *treasure the goodness of God* with all of our hearts.