

Unit I: Our Holy God and the Holy Scriptures

Safe and Secure

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Luke 2:11, 30-32; 15:3-7; John 3:14-17;
10:9-11, 14-16, 27-28; Acts 3:1-18; Romans 5:1-11; Philippians 2:5-11; 2 Timothy 1:9-10

PRINT PASSAGES: Luke 15:3-7; Romans 5:6-10

Key Verse

If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Romans 5:10, KJV)

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If, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Romans 5:10, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Explain the differing images of Jesus as both “shepherd” and “sacrificial lamb.”
- Express gratitude for the ways in which you have experienced Christ's rescue.
- Address and resolve conflicts by actively receiving Christ's power of reconciliation.

*Key Terms

Died (Romans 5:8)—Greek: *apothnésko* (apoth-nace'-ko): perished; decayed.

Find(s) (Luke 15:4)—Greek: *heurisko* (hyooris'-ko): learn(s); discover(s).

Joy (Luke 15:7, KJV)—Greek: *chara* (khar-ah'): delight; gladness.

Parable (Luke 15:3)—Greek: *parabole* (par-abol-ay'): a comparison, figure, proverb (often of those uttered by our Lord); an adage.

Rejoicing (Luke 15:5 [KJV]; 15:7 [NIV])—Greek: *chairó* (khah'-ee-ro): being joyful; being glad.

Righteous (Romans 5:7)—Greek: *dikaíos* (dik'-ah-yos): correct; by implication, innocent; just (in the eyes of God).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



Overview

Luke, a Gentile Christian and physician, stands out as the only known Gentile writer in the New Testament. His scientific background likely influenced his value for accuracy and detail. Luke portrayed Jesus as both compassionate and perfectly human—someone who welcomed everyone.

Paul was an expert in Jewish Law, having been trained in Jerusalem by renowned Rabbi Gamaliel (see Acts 22:3). Paul's spiritual encounter on the Damascus Road led him to embrace the Christian faith (see Acts 9:1-19). In Romans, Paul presents the facts of the Gospel, declared allegiance to it, and builds a solid case that man was lost but God intervened. Paul tells us that because of God's love for us, salvation is free and available to all. We stand before God justified. Luke and Paul were friends and traveling companions. Others abandoned Paul during his imprisonment . . . but Luke did not.

In today's lesson, Luke presents Jesus' description of a shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to find one that is lost. Paul—ever the persuasive theologian—gives a compelling argument for the Gospel that is clear, honest, and direct. Both remind us of one deep truth: *We are loved, sought after, and saved by God.*

Life Happens

We've all had moments in our lives when we felt isolated. Nelson Mandela knew that feeling intimately when prison doors clanged shut behind him on June 12, 1964. The South African apartheid government branded him a terrorist and enemy of the state because of his leadership in resisting racial segregation and advocating for equal rights for Black South Africans. Mandela would spend the next twenty-seven years confined on Robben Island, evolving from a vibrant forty-six-year-old activist into an elder statesman, shaped deeply by isolation and sustained by resilience.

In those years of confinement, Mandela had every reason to feel abandoned and alone. Yet, instead of letting bitterness consume him, he chose to understand his captors. He read their literature, studied their history, and learned about their fears—not to excuse them, but to recognize their shared humanity and common need for reconciliation. When Mandela was finally released in 1990, many expected him to respond with anger or revenge. Instead, he chose to extend forgiveness, demonstrating to a watching world what genuine reconciliation looks like. "If you want to make peace with your enemy," Mandela explained, "you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner."

This is exactly what Christ does for us. No matter how lost, isolated, or estranged we may feel, Christ reaches out to us. Through His sacrifice, Christ not only brings us back home to God but also restores our sense of belonging. Like the shepherd who seeks out the one lost lamb, Jesus pursues each of us, offering security, acceptance, and love.

Questions

1. Who in your life feels like an "enemy" or someone you struggle to understand? What would it look like to "read their literature" like Mandela did?
2. When have you felt most isolated or abandoned? How did Christ meet you in that place?
3. Think of one relationship that needs reconciliation. What's the first small step you could take toward becoming a "partner" instead of an opponent?

Oh, What Love! (Luke 15:3-7)

KJV


3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,
4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?
5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.
6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.
7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

NIV

3 Then Jesus told them this parable:
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?
5 “And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders
6 “and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’
7 “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

Jesus told the parable about the lost sheep in response to the Pharisees and religious teachers, who were complaining about His teaching and eating with people they labeled as undesirables (verse 2). The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to rescue the lost sheep, knowing that the others will stay in the fold. They will heed the instructions voiced by the shepherd. Sheep who stray either never learned to recognize the shepherd’s voice or have wandered out of hearing range of his voice. Whatever the case, the shepherd is committed to finding the lost sheep and keeping the fold intact. Jesus tells us that the man did not stop searching for the lost sheep until he found it (verse 5).

Once the sheep is found, the shepherd shows it love by picking it up, putting it on his shoulders, and carrying it home. The shepherd’s display of love did not stop there. When he returned, he asked his friends to celebrate with him because he had found the lost sheep (verse 6). Jesus continues by telling the crowd that just as the shepherd celebrated finding his lost sheep, heaven rejoices when one lost sinner repents and returns to God (verse 7). God does not want to lose anyone. He is not abandoning the ninety-nine for one; they are already in the kingdom, so He looks for the one that is lost. This is the kind of love that prompted God to send Jesus to the earth—to seek and save lost sinners.

 **What Do You Think?** Has there ever been a time in your life when a decision you made left you feeling lost and alone? How did Jesus rescue you?

Helpless and Sinful (*Romans 5:6-8*)

KJV

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

NIV

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

At Creation, God made human beings and placed them in an ideal setting—a truly abundant life. Their only responsibility was to care for His creation. In this original state, humanity lived without worry. God supplied every need, and fellowship between God and humanity remained unhindered. God also gave humanity the gift of free will. This freedom allowed the first man and woman to choose, yet they used it to disobey God, resulting in the Fall (see Genesis 1–3). Humanity fell out of alignment with God’s will, and sin entered the world. With sin came physical hardship and moral weakness—a helpless condition that created separation from God. Humanity became powerless to repair the damage and unable to save itself (or even fully comprehend the depth of the spiritual separation that had occurred). At just the right time, Christ came and died for the ungodly. God is never too early or too late; His actions always arrive on time. He sent His only Son to die for all humanity before anyone realized they were in “sin trouble” (see verse 6).

Paul draws attention to a challenging truth: most individuals would not give their lives for an honest person, thought perhaps someone might die for a truly good person (verse 7). Stories often circulate about soldiers’ giving their lives for fellow soldiers or for those to whom they feel a deep sense of duty. Yet, God made the ultimate sacrifice: He sent His only Son to die for sinners—not after they changed, but while they were still sinners (verse 8).

 **What Do You Think?** How often do you intentionally pause to give God the glory when recalling the good things He has allowed in your life?

The Human Condition (*Romans 5:9-10*)

KJV

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

NIV

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!

10 For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Sinful nature shapes every human life. Everyone enters the world with it, and no one can escape it without God's help (verse 9). Paul makes it clear that no matter how hard someone tries to be "good," God's standard of perfection cannot be reached through human effort. Every person falls short (see Romans 3:23-24). Sin is more than just doing wrong things; it runs deep, affecting the very core of who we are. Because of this, no one can make things right with God by relying solely on good behavior. Human "goodness" will never be enough.

God stepped in with mercy and provided a rescue plan through the sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus Christ. "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:25, NIV). This means God fully accepted us—not because He ignored or excused sin, but because Jesus paid for it completely.

On the Cross, Jesus took our place. His death covered the cost of sin, and His resurrection secured forgiveness once and for all. Because of His sacrifice, believers no longer live as enemies of God but as people reconciled to Him and safe from His judgment (verse 10). Without Christ, life is hopeless, and in Christ, hope is secure. His grace gives what human goodness cannot—right standing with God, complete forgiveness, and lasting peace.

What Do You Think? When looking back at times you ignored God's kindness, how likely is it that anyone would be willing to die for you?

Your Life

God's love wakes you up every morning with new mercy, even after a day filled with mistakes in thought, word, or action. Yesterday's failures don't stop His love from giving you another shot to follow His will. Every day holds a fresh chance to turn things around and grow stronger in faith.

Your World!

Even when the world feels dark and hopeless, God's greatest act of love still stands. That love proves that hope wins, no matter how bad things get. Faith keeps believers grounded, reminding them that God's love is stronger than anything life throws their way.

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for the ultimate sacrifice in which You gave Your Son so that humanity might live. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, December 22	"The Spirit Accomplishes God's Will"	(Zechariah 4:1-7)
TUESDAY, December 23	"The Spirit Bestows Gifts"	(1 Corinthians 12:1-13)
WEDNESDAY, December 24	"The Spirit Gives Wisdom and Understanding"	(Isaiah 11:1-9)
THURSDAY, December 25	"The Spirit Works in Jesus' Birth"	(Matthew 1:18-25)
FRIDAY, December 26	"The Spirit Reveals God's Glory"	(Acts 7:51-60)
SATURDAY, December 27	"The Spirit Creates and Renews"	(Psalm 104:24, 29-35)
SUNDAY, December 28	"The Spirit Affirms Our Adoption"	(Romans 8:12-17, 26-27)