



Lost

Luke 23: 9 NIV

He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer.

What Is Your Question?

One of the first things I did after I got my license and my parents gave me permission to use the family car was to ask a girl out on a date. She was a friend I knew from church and she was the perfect choice for my first date as a licensed driver. Michelle had flaming red hair, bright blue eyes and a sparkling personality. When I arrived at her house to get her, Michelle was wearing more makeup than I had ever seen on her before. I am guessing she was excited about going out with me. One of the most interesting and entertaining restaurants in the Bay Area was in San Francisco. It was relatively new and a number of my friends recommended it to me as a great place to take a date. My only trepidation was that it was in San Francisco, the city of a thousand wrong turns. We had a great time talking on the way and miraculously we got there without any problems. Benihana's was famous among college students for one reason. The cooks put on a show at your table. Food combined with entertainment made it the perfect spot to bring a date. You didn't have to carry a conversation because the chefs at the table did that for you, chopping and flipping and cooking right beside you. You were joined by two other couples and that made the date more relaxed. After dinner we went and walked along Fisherman's Wharf for a while and then started back home. The only problem was I got lost...completely lost. For thirty minutes driving around San Francisco, I could fake my confusion. But after we kept returning to the same streets, I think Michelle caught on to my problem. I got so discombobulated that I turned the wrong way down a one way street and with headlights veering away from me to the left and the right, I somehow pulled off to the side and we headed in the right direction.

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Michelle was very sweet about the entire evening and never let on how scared she was driving with me but we certainly never got married after our trip through San Francisco.

Have you ever gotten lost? So lost you started to panic? Did you ever lose your parents in a crowd and couldn't find them? Have you ever been lost at work? You got a new assignment or were hired by a new company and after a day or two you completely felt over your head? Have you missed time at school because of illness and when you finally returned the class was so far ahead you lost hope of ever catching up with them? Do you remember trying to do your taxes yourself for the first time? Did you feel lost with all the questions and information you needed? How does it feel to be lost? Did you feel lost the first time you went to a church? Or maybe you started attending a new church and it was so big you felt lost in the crowd. Have you moved to a new town, and without a GPS, were unable to get back to your house because you were so lost? Do you find it easier to get lost at night or during the day? Do you like the feeling of being lost? Do you get a "rush" from it or do you hate it altogether?

Jesus had much to say about the experience of being lost. He told three parables that talk about "lostness" in Luke 15. What is often forgotten or perhaps even misunderstood is the purpose behind the stories in that chapter. At the time Jesus was explaining things to a group of tax collectors and "sinners", people who clearly, at least to the normal religious people were messed up. They were the drug addicts of their time, the drunkards and prostitutes and thieves and swindlers and strippers and transvestites. Normal religious people were put off by them, disgusted by them. The religious people, the Pharisees and Bible teachers were stunned Jesus gave them an audience; could not believe He even ate with them. As a result of their attitude, Jesus told the three stories. One alone would have been informative but back to back, the stories made Jesus' point pretty clear and yet we still miss it.

The first story was about a rancher who has a hundred sheep but one turns up missing. The rancher abandons the ninety nine sheep still in the pasture and goes off after the one and only one missing sheep. When he finally locates the sheep, the rancher is so happy he picks up the lost sheep and carries it on his back all the way home. He then throws a wild party and invites all of his friends and neighbors to celebrate his finding the sheep. **Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep."** (Luke 15:6 NIV)

The second story is nearly the same except this time the main character is a woman who has ten silver coins but loses one somewhere in her house. She searches high and low for the coin, sweeping the house and combing through all the clutter until she finally finds the lost coin. The woman exultantly pulls her friends and neighbors over to the house to have a party because the lost coin she found. **And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin."** (Luke 15: 9 NIV)

The third story is more complex with a greater number of twists to it but the plot line is nearly identical. A father's younger son wants to get his inheritance early so the father

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acquiesces and sadly gives it to him. The son takes off and makes his way as far from home as possible where he spends all his money on “wild living”. But after he wastes his inheritance thoroughly and is penniless, he is lost without any friends to help him find his way. Starving, the son takes a humiliating job feeding pigs and his famishment leads to him scooping up the food meant for the hogs and subsisting off it. Finally, the son comes to his senses and decides to return home to his father and beg for his father to hire him as a farmhand. Before though he gets to the house the father sees him in the distance and runs to the son, throws his arms around him and welcomes him home. Again, like the others, the father throws a party because the son that had been lost was back. **For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate.** (Luke 15: 24 NIV) Of course, the older son feels miffed and pouts about the younger son receiving so much love from his father. The father tries to console the older son by reminding him that he still has a super abundance of love for him too and perhaps the older son relented and also celebrated the return of his lost younger brother but we don't know.

The point of all three stories is the same. The sole purpose of Jesus leaving Heaven and coming to earth was to find the lost and try to bring them back. In fact He spelled this out in Luke 19:10. **For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.**" (NIV) What was misunderstood by the people of His time and is still misunderstood is that the only reason Jesus existed as man was to gather in the lost to God. Nothing else came close to this. He did not come to teach valuable life principles, He did not come to be the answer to poverty or disease, He did not come to begin a holiness movement . He came to gather the lost to God. Our problem is that we have no idea just how bad sin is or how lost we are. We think of sin as a blip of misbehavior and lost people as the group who do not look good to us. The lost are hopelessly lost and sin is the worst of all terrors. Jesus came to free lost people of sin and to give them God as their Father. That is all He came to do.

There are exactly four types of lost people. The first are Pharisee lost people. They have an ordered life. They understand exactly what they want to accomplish with their lives and they give it their best to reach those goals. Pharisee lost people have developed good habits that make them successful. They floss, exercise, watch “good” movies and save their money. Pharisee lost people send their kids off to the best schools and manage their time well. But they are lost.

The second type of lost people are Pilate lost people. They don't know what they are doing. They are disorganized and irresponsible. Pilate lost people don't know what they should be doing but they are moving straight ahead anyway. When it is time to make decisions, they do so fearlessly without being certain whether what they have done is right or wrong. Pilate lost people are disoriented because they are interested in doing the right thing but they are so confused, it is always a hit or miss proposition. Pilate lost people are not sure who they should try to emulate or what advice to take. If they had a GPS, they wouldn't follow it but would get another one calibrated differently and then waver between which one to let guide them. Pilate lost people don't think of themselves as lost, just careful and unwilling to settle on any one approach to life. They too are lost.

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Sadducee lost people don't value anything above their own comfort and ease. They are not so concerned about what is right and wrong but what is reasonable and sensible. They have reduced life to its most simple components. They care most about having things calm and relaxed. Any idea or concept that vexes them they discard immediately. Sadducee lost people want you to leave them alone and not bother them. They like religion that makes them happy and contented. Easy come, easy go is their motto. Sadducee lost people love the status quo as long as it makes sense to them and is rational.

Matthew lost people are the tax collectors and prostitutes of the world who are desperate for a change. They know they have blundered badly and want a savior to rescue them. Matthew lost people are panicky because they realize if they don't find a way out, they will destroy themselves. Matthew lost people recognize just how hopeless they are and how badly they have acted. No one needs to tell them their lives are bad or that they are living badly. They know that. They realize they are lost and need a savior.

Jesus Christ came for one reason to this world and it was to find the lost and bring them home to God. **For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.**" (Luke 19: 10 NIV) We have lost our way if we think we have more important things to do as Christians than find the lost and bring them home to God. Most don't know they are lost and don't care if they are lost. Some like Pharisee Lost think they have a plan to make themselves good. Others like Pilate Lost don't have any idea really what they are doing and have no idea who is the best person to tell them. There are many Sadducee Lost and they just want to be comfortable and not disturbed. But there are Matthew lost who are desperately trying to find God so they no longer will be lost. It is impossible to tell sometimes what sort of lost person you have come upon but they all are lost and need Christ the Savior. No servant is above his master. So why would you waste your time doing anything more than finding lost people and showing them how to find Christ their Savior? You must search without ceasing and never give up on this task because God was desperate enough to find the lost that He was crucified for them. Is there a nobler task in life than finding the lost and bringing them home to Jesus? Surely you will do this. Surely you will bring someone to Jesus quickly!

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