

LOST THINGS: THE LOST BOY (1)

BY KEITH GREER

In *Luke 15*, our Lord taught a powerful lesson on what it means to be LOST. In this parable, He used three illustrations of lost things—a sheep, a coin and a boy.

The story of the lost sheep tells of the deep love and concern the Lord has for His own. Christians are His sheep, and when one wanders away, God is very concerned. There is great rejoicing when a lost sheep finds its way home. The second story was about a lost coin. This story shows the value one might place on personal things and the joy he feels when he finds something he values. But the most important part of Jesus' teaching concerns a lost boy—many refer to him as the prodigal son. This story vividly portrays a father's love for his son and the father's willingness to extend mercy and compassion toward his son and receive him back again after he corrects his mistakes and seeks forgiveness. Yet another part of this lesson shows how easy it is to become confused about what brings true happiness in this life. Please read *Luke 15:11-32*. We want to examine the two parts (how he **departed** and how he **returned**) of the prodigal son's story.

How He Departed:

1. Desire. The younger son's uncontrolled desires led him astray. He wanted to be free of his father's oversight. The son rejected his father's love and counsel and expressed dissatisfaction with their present relationship. The son wanted to pursue his own desires.

2. Demand. *"And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood."* (15:12) The younger son didn't want to wait until his father died; he wanted his inheritance now. Please note that the father gave his sons ALL that he had. Even though the son's demand was unreasonable, the father granted his request. God did the same thing for Israel when she asked for a king (1 Samuel 8). He allowed Israel to learn its lesson the hard way.

3. Departure. *"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country..."* (15:13). He got what he requested, and now he was his own boss; he could live as he pleased. The father still loved his son, but he allowed him to leave. The father had not written his son off, and God does not write us off when we bolt and run from Him.

4. Dissipation. *“...and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.”* (15:13) The son traded his father’s love and his home life for prodigal living. What his father had earned, the son wasted on riotous living.

5. Destitution. *“But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.”* (15:14) The son who had fared sumptuously at home was now in need. Now that he needed help, where were all the friends who had partied with him? There was no real help in the far country; there seldom is.

6. Degradation. *“Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.”* (15:15,16) This young Jew had reached the bottom of the barrel—feeding swine for a heathen master, eating with the pigs! He was on his own. This is the inevitable conclusion of those who turn from God after experiencing His love. (2 Peter 2:20-22)

Sadly, the “**lost boy**” plans did not turn out as he had expected. So full of confidence and determination when he left but soon he found himself in very difficult circumstances. Immaturity, greed, selfishness, and lack of understanding; each choice one makes comes with a set of consequences. This would be a terrible story if it were not for the “other part” of his story. Listen, all of us make mistakes in judgments and make poor choices as we travel the pathway of life. Wisdom, experiences and maturity sometimes has to be learned until it can truly benefit us. Follow closely on the next lesson to see how this “lost boy” found his way home. ***