

# SEEKING THE LOST LIKE JESUS

Those who desire to be Jesus's disciples must endeavor to learn Jesus's teachings and ways and imitate Him by walking as He walked (1 John 2:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:1). One aspect of Jesus's life that must be imitated is the way Jesus sought those who were spiritually lost in sin. Therefore, we must consider the Scriptures that give us insight into the way Jesus sought the lost so we can learn how to walk in His footsteps in the way that we seek the lost.

## LUKE 15:1-10

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Jesus's earthly ministry was not spent in isolation with the few who believed in and followed Him. Rather, Jesus actively spent time with people who were spiritually lost in sin – including those who were considered far from God. This text illustrates that Jesus would even be criticized by religious leaders for His desire to seek the lost. For, Jesus saw every soul in this world as valuable enough to spend time, energy, and effort seeking! Then, when any lost one would be found, He saw it as a great cause for rejoicing! Therefore, Jesus's followers will also have the heart that sees the value in each lost soul around them to do what they can to seek them (Matthew 9:35-38)!

## LUKE 19:1-10

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Jesus characterized His mission on earth as being about seeking and saving the lost (v. 10; Mark 1:38). Zacchaeus was despised among the other Jews (as a tax collector and sinful man), but was valuable enough to Jesus for Jesus to spend time with Zacchaeus, focusing on his salvation! In doing so, Jesus demonstrated that His mission was not about earthly things (e.g. possessions, property, wealth, pleasures, comfort, popularity, etc.). Although Jesus certainly accomplished this mission in ways that only He could (i.e. giving His life on the cross), He does expect His followers to do what they can to accomplish this same mission (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 1 Peter 3:14-16) rather than making their lives about earthly things!

## MATTHEW 4:18-22

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When Jesus sought the lost, He did not offer a message of easy believism (where people just needed to mentally accept the truth about Him). Instead, Jesus called for people to follow Him so He could transform their lives and put them to work in His mission field. This would involve great change in the lives of people like Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Interestingly, Jesus's mission did not focus on the high and mighty in society (though they could be saved), but saw the value in four fishermen and the impact they could have in God's kingdom after spending time with Him (Acts 4:13)! Similarly, Jesus's followers will follow and spend time with Jesus so they can then be useful and sent out to work in Jesus's mission field to find others who can then do the same (2 Timothy 2:2)!

## MATTHEW 4:23-25

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A key piece of Jesus's mission was proclaiming the gospel (good news) of the kingdom of God throughout various regions (Mark 1:38)! He would often use parables to accomplish this, helping those who were truly seeking to understand the spiritual nature of His kingdom that would soon be established (Matthew 13:10-17, 34-35). Today, Jesus's followers must also do what they can to help proclaim the good news from King Jesus (as a herald) about the kingdom that has now been established and we are all invited into!

## LUKE 5:27-32

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This passage demonstrates Jesus's care for the lost in a few ways. First, Jesus saw Levi (Matthew), a tax collector, and invited Levi to follow Him. As a tax collector, this Jew served the Roman government and was typically seen as betraying his own people. Furthermore, tax collectors would often collect more than what was due and enrich themselves. Despite others seeing Levi as a lost cause, Jesus saw his value and called Levi to follow Him! Second, Jesus saw Levi as a gateway to reach other lost people. For, after Levi followed Jesus, he hosted a banquet for Jesus, where other tax collectors and sinners (who would have been in Levi's circle of acquaintances) were also exposed to Jesus. Third, Jesus spent time with lost people because He wasn't there to help the righteous (who did not need His help), but the sinners who needed Him. In reality, none who have sinned are righteous apart from

Jesus, and all need the salvation He brings (Romans 3:9-18). Similarly, Jesus's disciples should value the outcast and spend time with those who are spiritually sick to help them come to repentance!

### **JOHN 4:1-30, 39-42**

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Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well demonstrates another example of Jesus's concern for the outcast and His willingness to overcome social barriers to reach her. For, she was a woman, a Samaritan, and an adulteress. Yet, Jesus spoke to her. In His conversation with her that began with Jesus seeking a drink of physical water, Jesus helped her consider deep spiritual truths about living water, marriage, worship, and the Messiah. Through this, the woman was convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and spread that message to others! Likewise, Jesus's followers should be willing to overcome barriers to reach those who are spiritually lost, who can then bring even more lost people to Him!

### **MATTHEW 23:37-39**

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Jesus had spent around three years trying to seek the lost, particularly among the Jews who should have been most prepared to accept Him as the Messiah. However, many rejected Him. This was especially evident in Jerusalem, where Jesus had now come, knowing He would be put to death. He wanted and had tried to save them, but they had not been willing. Therefore, Jesus grieved over their lostness, knowing the terror they would experience as a result of their rebellion against God (Matthew 24-25). In the same way, Jesus's followers should not seek the lost merely out of a sense of duty or obligation, but out of genuine care for the spiritual condition of lost people (Romans 9:1-3; 10:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23)!

### **CONCLUSION**

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Imitating Jesus requires that you seek the lost like Jesus sought the lost. Although there is much more that could be discussed, we have seen Jesus's mission as being focused on the salvation of those who were spiritually lost. Ultimately, His efforts to seek the lost were deeply sacrificial and selflessly focused on the spiritual needs of others. Therefore, disciples of Jesus must sacrificially and selflessly devote themselves to seeking the lost and pointing them to Jesus!

## **DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS**

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How did Jesus view those who were spiritually lost?

How did Jesus commit Himself to seeking the lost?

What did Jesus do to seek the lost?

How did Jesus view His mission on earth?

What message did Jesus preach to those He wanted to save?

How did Jesus use lost people to reach even more lost people?

How did Jesus respond to people rejecting the salvation He offered?

What does Jesus's example teach you about seeking the lost?

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