



On your marks

Luke loved people and he also loved telling stories. In the central chapters (13-16) of Luke's Gospel, there are stories - unique stories to Luke - that explore how inclusive and generous God's love is, which was something that shocked the religious people of his day. Famous among these stories are the lost-and-found parables including that of the lost coin.

Get set

You will need:

- a box of Liquorice Allsorts
- bag(s) containing ten 5p coins - perhaps one bag per group of four or five to work with

Before your service/session, remove one of the 5p coins from the bag(s) and hide it/them nearby so that each bag(s) only has nine coins to start with.

There is another fun way of telling this story as a game in [The Gospels Unplugged](#) (The lost coin, p. 93).

Go!

1. Perhaps the 'central' verses of the central part of Luke's Gospel are those found in Luke 15:1-2. These verses sum up all that is going on at this moment in Luke's story of Jesus:

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering round to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them.' Luke 15:1-2 (NIV)

See also this version from The Message:

By this time a lot of men and women of doubtful reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, 'He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends.' Their grumbling triggered this story.

2. People are beginning to be either for Jesus or against him. Those increasingly for him are the outsiders, the marginalised, the ones who have messy lives and are hanging on his stories and want to be close to him. The leaders - the ones who know their scriptures - can't get their heads round it. God in Jesus is behaving wrongly. He seems to be careless about people's morals. It doesn't seem to appreciate how sinful are those who have latched on to him.
3. Here's a fun way to try and fix this central verse and theme of Luke. Hand round a plate/box of

Liquorice Allsorts. Liquorice Allsorts can divide people – some people just hate them while some love them. Have a show of hands – for and against. The very name may also be a way of connecting with what this story is saying because ‘all sorts’ were now coming to Jesus, and a number of people didn’t like it.

4. In Luke 15, there are ‘all sorts’ in the stories of the lost and found:
 - The silly sheep who wandered off is rescued – this ‘all sort’ is important to God.
 - A coin goes missing and is looked for because nothing should be lost in God’s kingdom and heaven rejoices when anything lost is found. Interestingly, this ‘all sort’ didn’t even know it was lost!
 - And of course the wasteful son returns from the pigsty to be welcomed back – another ‘all sort’ that God loves.
5. It boils down to this: some people can’t quite get the generosity of God; the big heartedness of God’s love; the amazing grace he has for all of us in this broken and messy world.
6. One of the ways in which Jesus tries to get through to people, to help them think again, to turn around and start walking in a different direction in their lives – what is known as repentance – is by telling stories. In Luke 15, we have the three great lost-and-found stories. Two of them are completely unique to Luke. Today, we will focus on just one of these – and it involves money!

Hand out the bag(s) with the coins.

7. How much have we got here? In the story, the silver coin would have been a day’s wages. In today’s money, about £60 after tax is an average day’s wage. So how much have we got here? There should be ten coins, but one of the coins is missing!
8. Each of the lost-and-found stories tries to open up a new understanding about who God is and who we are. None of the stories alone gives the whole picture but together they paint an amazing portrait of God. It’s also typical of Luke to have a balance in his stories between the different sorts of people who lose and the different sorts of things that are lost, which means that everyone can relate to the story in some way. Read the story together: Luke 15:8-10.
 - You should have ten coins but one is missing!
 - Tell the story again but involve your group this time with some role-play by moving the coins around to create some objects and people from the story,
 - *Suppose a woman*- can you make the letter W with your nine coins?
 - *Suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one*- can you make a picture of a person (arms, legs, head, body) with the nine coins?
 - *She searched with a lamp*- can you make a lamp with the nine coins?
 - *And she sweeps the house*- can you make a broom with the nine coins?
 - *She searched and searched*- can you make a face with two eyes looking this way and that?
 - She must have been sad and anxious – can you make a face with eyes and no smile?
 - *She searched carefully until she finds the coin.*
9. Now, can you look around the room/church to find the missing coin somewhere?



- *And when she finds it she's happy*- can you make a face with a smile?
 - *She calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Be joyful with me; I found my lost coin'*- can you make a line of three friends holding hands with the ten coins?
 - Can you make a picture of the biggest smile ever? This is the joy of heaven.
 - I wonder what heaven will be like - can you make a picture of the beauty and joy of heaven with the ten coins?
10. Next, pause for a moment to read the story one more time and talk about it using some of the following wondering questions:
- I wonder which part of the story is the most surprising.
 - I wonder which part of the story is most puzzling.
 - I wonder why Jesus chose to tell this particular lost-and-found story.
 - I wonder what the Pharisees and the leaders/teachers of the law thought about this story.
 - I wonder what this story is saying about God.
 - I wonder what this story is saying about Jesus.
 - I wonder what the story is saying about us.
 - I wonder what this story is saying about you.
 - I wonder what the story means for you today and in the week ahead.
11. Of course, the traditional interpretation of the story is that it's a picture of God searching with all his heart for you and me - a God who shows extravagant love and unstoppable generosity and relentless unwillingness to give up on us. But I wonder if the story might just have said something else to us today.