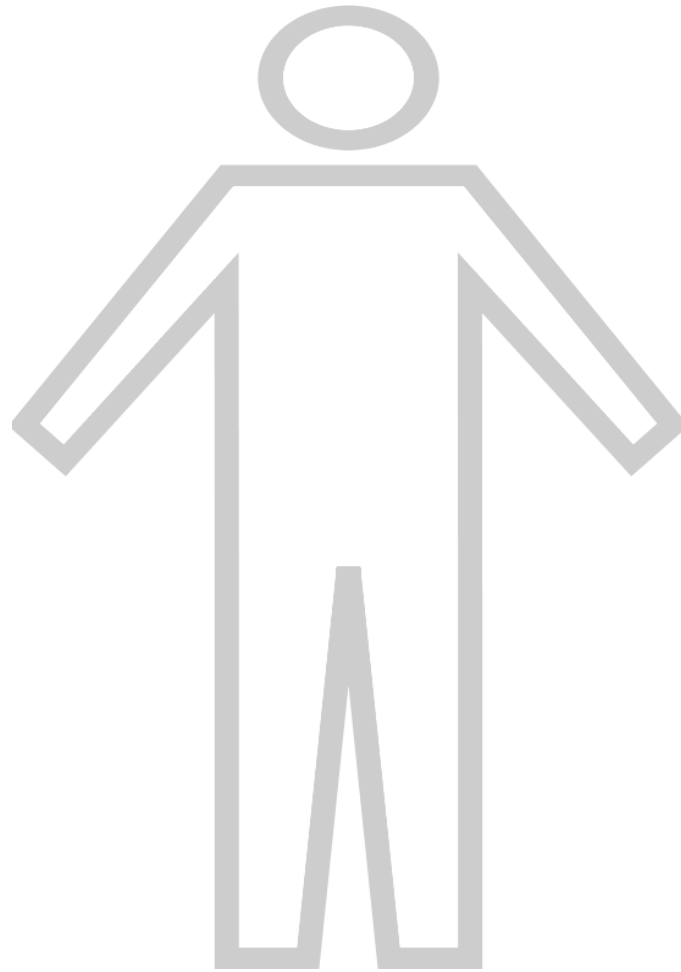


The Value Of One



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

The Value Of One

Learn about the value of a soul, seeking the lost, rejoicing over the ones who are found, and the value of your own soul from Jesus' parables in Luke 15

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW159

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About the author: My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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The Value Of One

How valuable do you consider just one soul? This question is applicable to both your own soul and the souls of others. I am afraid that we tend to get caught up in our own earthly lives and earthly pursuits that we do not place the proper value on each and every soul.

But, we need to carefully listen to Jesus about the value of just one soul so that we can treat it in that kind of valuable way while we live on this earth. For instance, in Matthew 16:26, Jesus said, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

We should listen to Jesus about the value of the soul. Not only is He God and has perfect understanding, but He is also the one who came to earth to die so that each soul can be saved eternally from Hell and spend eternity in Heaven. Surely, then, Jesus knows how bad spending eternity in Hell fire will be. For, He warned, “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched – where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched’” (Mark 9:43-44). Jesus would also warn the same concerning your feet and eyes (verses 45-48). And, Jesus knows how great Heaven is. Remember, He left Heaven in order to come to this earth and provide Himself as a sacrifice (see 2 Corinthians 8:9).

In Luke 15, Jesus taught three parables that demonstrate the value of each and every soul. “Then

all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’ So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

“‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.’

“Then He said: ‘A certain man had two sons. 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. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 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.

“But when he came to himself, he said, “How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’”

“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him

and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

“But the father said to his servants, “Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” And they began to be merry.

“Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, “Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.”

“But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, “Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.”

“And he said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.””

These three parables contain very similar messages about the value of the soul. Two of them (the parables of the lost sheep and lost coin) focus from the perspective of the one seeking the lost. Then, the parable of the lost son focuses more from the perspective of the one who is lost. Both of these perspectives will be carefully considered in this lesson as we try to consider the value of one soul.

Seeking The Lost

The first two of these parables teach us a considerable amount concerning the kind of diligent

effort that must be made to seek the lost. As we study these two parables, we should be evaluating the kind of effort that we make concerning those who are lost. Do we really view those who are spiritually lost in sin and headed for eternal punishment in Hell fire as being so valuable to put forth great effort to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Jesus’ effort to seek the lost

The first two verses of Luke 15 provide the context for Jesus’ parables. In them, Jesus is seen as teaching the tax collectors and “the sinners.” These people had drawn near to hear Jesus. And, Jesus would even welcome them and eat with them.

This situation drew great contempt from the religious leaders of the day (the Pharisees and scribes). They complained about this situation saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them” (verse 2). They looked down on these people rather than looking at them in the compassionate way Jesus did. Generally speaking, the tax collectors were viewed as being very lowly sinners. They had the reputation for cheating people by charging them far more than they should in connection with their work for the Roman government.

The religious leaders simply found it unacceptable for Jesus Christ to eat with such people – even though He did so in order to teach them the truths about salvation. Rather than teach these people, the religious leaders wanted to be completely separated from them. However, Jesus recognized that He would not be effective at saving those who were lost if He would not teach them. Remember, Jesus’ mission on this earth was not about being found “acceptable” by those who considered themselves religious. Instead, He came “to save that which was lost” (Matthew 18:11)! Interestingly, this statement is recorded by Matthew immediately before Jesus teaches the parable of the lost sheep (in Matthew 18:12-13).

Jesus knew how to look at people, see the need of the soul, and have compassion on them. For instance, whenever Jesus was going around teaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing people, He saw the multitudes and “was moved with compassion

for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). So, it is in this context of Jesus encountering people who did not consider the value of the lost souls around them that Jesus teaches these three parables. He wanted them to understand how much effort should be made to reach each and every lost soul possible – including the tax collectors and sinners He was eating with.

The lost sheep

In the first parable, Jesus challenges the religious leaders to think about a man who had a hundred sheep. Suppose that a man who owned one hundred sheep lost just one. What would he do?

Jesus knew what a shepherd who cared for his sheep would do – and so did the Pharisees and scribes. They all knew that the shepherd would leave the ninety-nine (presumably in the care of another) in order to find the one that went astray. Jesus said that the shepherd would “go after the one which is lost until he finds it” (Luke 15:4).

So, there is a great amount of diligence that is exercised in looking for the one that is lost. Just think about what this shepherd spent in order to find the one lost sheep. First, it would have cost him time. Notice, again, that Jesus said the man would look for the sheep “until he finds it.” Sometimes this might happen quickly, but other times it might take a very long time. Second, it would have cost him energy. It surely would not be effortless to walk throughout the area and look behind every bush in order to find one lost sheep. Third, it would have required him to overcome his own fears. Perhaps looking for this one sheep would require him to put himself in a potentially dangerous situation. Fourth, it would have required him to make sacrifices. Maybe this man had certain goals in mind that he had to completely suspend until he could find the sheep that was lost. It was certainly not what he had desired to do. Yet, because of the value of the one lost sheep, he was willing to make every sacrifice necessary.

All of this diligence is shown because of the value of the one sheep that is lost. He could have thought about all of the other sheep that he had and think that it was not worth his time, energy, putting himself in danger, or making the sacrifices to find the

one sheep that was lost. After all, it was the fault of that sheep to wander away from the safety of the flock. Yet, the shepherd viewed this one sheep as being of great value.

The lost coin

In the second parable, Jesus challenges the religious leaders to think about a woman who had ten coins. This coin may have been similar in value to a Roman denarius, which was worth about a day’s wage. Regardless, suppose the woman who was in possession of ten of these coins lost just one. What would she do?

Jesus knew what a woman in that situation would do – and so did the Pharisees and scribes. They all knew that the woman would make a diligent search of her house until she would find that one lost coin. Jesus said that she would “light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it” (Luke 15:8).

So, there is a great amount of diligence that is exercised in looking for the one that is lost. Just think about what this woman spent in order to find the one lost coin. First, it would cost her time. Although she would probably have had other things to do with her time, she spent as much time as was needed in order to find the coin that was lost. Second, it would have required her to make an effort. Jesus pictures her as sweeping the house and searching carefully. So, there was work that was involved and sacrifices that were made. Third, it would have required thoughtfulness. Jesus pictures her as making all the necessary provisions. Not only did she sweep the house, but she also lit the lamp in order to see the best that she could.

All of this diligence is shown because of the value of the one coin that was lost. She could have thought about all her other coins and concluded that it was not worth her time, effort, diligence, etc. to find the one coin that was lost. Yet, this woman viewed this one coin as being of great value.

Evaluating our efforts

As you consider the way Jesus is challenging the Pharisees and scribes to consider the value of a single soul, you should evaluate yourself. Put

yourself in the position of the shepherd. Would you care so much about each one of your sheep and view each one as being valuable that you would search for one lost sheep until it was found? Put yourself in the position of one who has lost money. Would the lost money be valuable enough to you that you would search for it carefully until you found it? If neither of these would be valuable enough for you to seek, then consider something in your life that is so valuable to you that you would not rest until you had found it!

Now, evaluate how valuable you view a soul. How diligently will you sacrifice in order to seek for one soul who is lost and headed for an eternity in Hell? Are you willing to sacrifice of your time whenever there are other things you had planned to do or would like to do? Are you willing to sacrifice of your money in order to help someone learn the gospel of Jesus Christ even though there are other things you could use your money for? Are you willing to sacrifice of your energy whenever you feel tired or have other things that need to be done? Are you willing to sacrifice your liberties in Jesus Christ in order to keep from offending someone you are trying to lead to the Lord? Are you willing to sacrifice your recreational activities in order to spend time and effort looking for those who are lost?

How long would you be willing to spend time and make sacrifices looking for just one soul who is lost in sin and headed for eternity in Hell fire? Would you be willing to spend countless hours or even your entire lifetime seeking just *one* lost soul?

Then, what would it take to convince you to stop looking for that one lost soul? Would persecution keep you from teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ? Would fear about being alienated from your family or friends keep you from teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ? Would the fear of stepping outside of your comfort zone prevent you from teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ? Would your general busyness in life be enough to stop you from teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ until you think you have “more time”?

You see, all of the efforts that we will make in teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are lost are dependent upon the value we assign to a single soul. If we do not view each soul as being all

that valuable, then we will be much more easily convinced not to overcome the obstacles and difficulties to teaching the gospel of Christ. In addition, we will be much quicker to allow “life” to get in the way of teaching the gospel.

Now, as we consider the reality that there are lost souls all around us, we must realize the responsibility that we have all been given to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ. For instance, Romans 10:13-18 demonstrates how those who are lost need to call on the name of the Lord to be saved. And, in order to call on the name of the Lord, they must believe; to believe, they must hear the word of God; to hear the word of God, someone must preach the gospel to them; and, to preach the gospel, they must be sent. Now, each one who has been saved through Jesus Christ must recognize that there are many who are lost all around them and determine to make the most of opportunities to preach the gospel so that they can hear, believe, and call upon the name of the Lord by being obedient to Him.

Acts 8:4 demonstrates that this is the responsibility of each and every one who is a Christian. “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Even when they faced the threat of experiencing persecution, each Christian was involved in this work in whatever way he/she could. Certainly, this only happened because they really recognized the value of each and every soul who was living around them.

Therefore, they did their part to get the seed of God’s word out of the barn and into the hearts of those who are lost (see Haggai 2:19 and Luke 8:11). The responsibility that is involved in this is planting and watering. God expects nothing more from us than this (see 1 Corinthians 3:5-8). As much as we want the lost to be saved, we cannot control their responses to the gospel. All that we can do is to be diligent in teaching the word of God by exposing them to God’s truths for the first time – and then to keep building on those truths through subsequent teaching.

But, in order to do this as effectively as God desires, you must have compassion and love for those who are lost. You cannot be just partially interested or committed to seeking the lost. Instead,

Rejoicing Over The One Who Is Found

you must be fully invested, like Jesus, to seeking the lost! Like Jesus, you should learn to look at the spiritual conditions of everyone who is around you. And, like Jesus, you should have compassion on their souls to the point that you will try to teach them!

There are many ways you can plant and water the seed of God's word in the hearts of those who are around you. You should view every opportunity to interact with people as an opportunity to plant and water. Watch and listen carefully for the door of opportunity for the word of God and be bold enough to use it whenever it is opened. For, there are many doors of opportunity to teach God's word that are opened all around us every day that we simply do not make good use of. So, since there is no shortage of lost souls around us, we should have no trouble trying to find someone to talk to about Jesus Christ!

Then, we will need to make a full commitment to dedicating our time to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Whenever you make out your schedule for the week, don't just think about the things you need to do with your family, your work schedule, your hobbies, your entertainment, and such things. But, you should also think about how you can commit time every single week just to the work of teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to others! Surely, if something that was of great value to you was lost, you would spend as much time as you needed to find it. Therefore, if you really view lost souls as being valuable, you will commit time from your weekly schedule to search for them!

There are many things that you can do to accomplish this. You can invite someone to attend the assemblies of the local church with you. You can invite someone to study the Bible. You can give someone Bible study material. You can use your influence to demonstrate good works. You can look for opportunities to serve someone. You can work with other Christians. You can use the internet to spread the gospel's message. You can go door-to-door in your community. You can send someone a note. You can invite someone to your house and talk about Jesus. You can spend time in prayer for the lost who are around you. There are many opportunities to teach the gospel each and every day. And, you can repeat each one of these things to continue planting and watering the seed of God's word.

What do you do whenever you find something that was very valuable to you? You breathe a sigh of relief. You tell everyone who knew of your great concern that the lost thing has been found. The bottom line is that you rejoice! So it should be whenever one who was spiritually lost and headed for eternal punishment in Hell is found by coming to Jesus Christ for salvation!

The lost sheep and coin

After all the diligent searching for the lost sheep and the lost coin, we need to consider what happened next: The thing that was lost was found! Isn't that an interesting statement. Whenever the lost sheep and coin were considered to be so valuable that careful search was made for them, they were both found.

Now, this is certainly no guarantee that we will always convert the people we talk with about Jesus Christ. In fact, there are many examples in the Scriptures that demonstrate the complete opposite. But, my point is simply this: We will never be successful at converting the lost until we view them as being valuable enough to diligently seek them!

Then, whenever the lost sheep and coin were found, consider the responses of their owners. The one who found the lost sheep laid it on his shoulders, rejoicing. When he came home, he called his friends and neighbors together, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6). In the same way, whenever a lost sinner is obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Jesus says, "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

The same thing can be seen in the parable of the lost coin. After the woman had searched carefully for the coin, she found it and rejoiced over it. She called her friends and neighbors together, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost" (Luke 15:9)! In the same way, whenever a lost

sinner is obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Jesus says, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).

The lost son

In the third of Jesus’ parables in Luke 15, Jesus spoke of a man who had two sons. One of those two sons demanded his inheritance early and left his father’s household, wasting all his inheritance and living to please his own earthly desires. Then, whenever he had wasted it all on reckless living, he found himself in desperate need. So, he determined that he would return to his father and ask if he could be one of his father’s hired servants (knowing that even they had enough to eat).

Now, whenever this son did repent and return to his father, you should consider how his father received his son. When the father saw the son coming a great way off, he had compassion on his son, ran to him, fell on him, and kissed him. Then, the father instructed his servants to bring the best robe and put it on his son. Also, they were to put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And, they were to take the fatted calf, kill it, and eat it in celebration. He said, “let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Luke 15:23-24).

However, whenever the other son (who had remained with his father this entire time) heard the celebration, he started asking the servants what was going on. Whenever he was told about his brother returning, “he was angry and would not go in” (Luke 15:28). Whenever his father came to him and pleaded with him, he answered his father, “Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him” (Luke 15:29-30).

Despite the jealousy of the older son, the father recognized the value of the one who had been lost. And, he said to his older son, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for

your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (Luke 15:31-32).

Your response to one being found

The response you will have to a lost soul turning to the Lord will depend on how valuable that one soul is to you. If you do not think it is all that valuable, then your response will demonstrate that. However, if you recognize that each lost soul is more valuable than everything that is on this earth, you will experience great rejoicing whenever someone comes to Jesus Christ (whether to be baptized and become a Christian or to return to God).

Unfortunately, there are many people who are like the older son. Rather than rejoicing over the lost one returning to a safe condition, many are focused on themselves. Perhaps they are unwilling to forgive the sins that the one who was lost had committed. Perhaps they choose to remain bitter. Perhaps they choose to be jealous of how others are rejoicing over him/her.

Yet, you must recognize that your response to one who returns to the Lord matters! You see, Satan does not give up just because someone is baptized or returns to the Lord. Instead, that individual will continue to face struggles and difficulties. In fact, now that he/she is trying to live a godly life, he/she may even have a more difficult time. So, this individual will need your full support and encouragement. For instance, Jesus even taught that many who begin to follow Him will not remain faithful to Him (see Luke 8:11-15). And, your responsibility toward the lost does not stop at the moment he/she is saved. Instead, the “Great Commission” gives the instructions to go, make disciples, and then continue teaching (Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore, you should have such joy over the one who has turned to the Lord that you continue trying to teach that individual the ways of Jesus Christ, encourage him/her, and correct him/her whenever he/she goes astray.

Recognizing The Value Of Your Soul

Up to this point in this lesson, we have been primarily focused on the value of the souls around us. But, in recognizing the value of those souls, we must also recognize the value of our own souls. You see, at some point, we were all the one soul who was lost and needed to be saved. And, perhaps, you still are that soul who needs to come to Jesus Christ for salvation.

The lost sheep

At one time in your life, you were that one sheep who had gone astray. Therefore, you were the one who was weary and scattered. You were the one who was wandering helplessly without a shepherd. You were without protection (spiritually). You were the one who had chased after something or demonstrated carelessness to get yourself lost in sin. You were the one who was headed for eternal punishment in Hell fire.

And, perhaps you still are this lost sheep. Perhaps you are lost in your own wilderness of sin. Perhaps you recognize that if you died right now, you would have no hope of Heaven. Instead, if you died right now, perhaps you recognize that you would spend eternity in the fires of Hell in torment. Perhaps you recognize that you are separated from all the safety and security that is in Jesus Christ.

The lost coin

At one time, you were the coin that became lost. Therefore, like a coin that is taken out of circulation and has no useful purpose, you were not fulfilling your true purpose. You were just wasting your existence on this earth, like a lost coin. You had no hope of anything that was good beyond this physical life.

And, perhaps you still are this lost coin. Perhaps you are still not living to fulfill your true purpose in life. Perhaps you are still wasting your life on your own earthly pursuits rather than serving God.

And, perhaps you still have no hope of anything good beyond this physical life.

The lost son

Then, at one time, you were like the lost son. You took everything that God has done for you and wasted it on your own desires. Rather than living your life to demonstrate your love and gratitude toward your Heavenly Father, you were only focused on your own earthly enjoyment. So, you wasted your life – until you finally recognized that you had made some horrible mistakes and really did need Him in your life.

And, perhaps you are still this lost son. Perhaps you are currently living to please yourself rather than God. Perhaps you have taken all of the blessings that God has given you and decided to use them on your own pleasures rather than God's. However, you need to recognize that your reckless way of treating your soul will catch up with you one day. Therefore, you need to determine to return to your Heavenly Father while you still can!

You are the valuable one!

In all three of these parables, you are the valuable one! Sometimes it is easy to forget how valuable our own souls are to God and to those who are God's people. First, you must remember that God loved you so much and believed that your soul was so valuable that He gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross so that you could have your sins forgiven (John 3:16). And, although He died so that *everyone* could be saved, I sincerely believe that God loved each and every one of us so much that He would have done this same thing to save just one soul who was lost!

Then, you are valuable to those who serve God. Just think about the people who may have been involved in teaching you the gospel of Jesus Christ because they believed your soul is valuable. And, if you are still lost in your sins, think of the people who are currently trying to teach you the gospel. Maybe it's a parent, grandparent, Bible class teacher, friend, neighbor, co-worker, preacher, elder, a complete stranger, etc.

Regardless of who it is, recognize that you are valuable to them! But, what if these people did not view your soul as being valuable? What if they had allowed other things in their lives to have been given priority so that they did not teach you the gospel of Christ? What if they had made excuses as to why they would not teach you? What if they had said they were too tired? What if they had said they were too afraid? What if they had been unwilling to step outside of their comfort zones? What if they had chosen to relax instead? What if they had chosen to watch their favorite TV shows? What if they had said that teaching you was someone else's responsibility?

Conclusion

Every single soul is so valuable to God that He sent His Son to die on the cross to save each one. Now, the question is: How valuable do you consider each and every soul – including your own? Do you consider your own soul so valuable that you will do anything and everything you can to be right with God? Then, do you consider each and every soul around you to be so valuable that you will do everything you can to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ? If not, why not? One Day, your soul and every other soul will be judged by Jesus Christ! So, don't be like the Pharisees and scribes who ignored the lost. Instead, be like Jesus who sought them – and live your own life to please God in all things!

Study Questions

How valuable do you consider just one soul? Why should you listen to Jesus about the value of just one soul?

1. Seeking The Lost

What were Jesus' efforts to seek the lost?

What kind of effort did the shepherd make to seek his lost sheep?

What kind of effort did the woman make to seek her lost coin?

What kind of efforts are you making to seek the lost?

2. Rejoicing Over The One Who Is Found

How did the owners of the lost sheep and lost coin rejoice when they were found?

Contrast the response of the father and older brother whenever the lost son returned.

What should your response be to one lost soul being found?

3. Recognizing The Value Of Your Soul

How were you like the lost sheep?

How were you like the lost coin?

How were you like the lost son?

What is the value of your soul?