

Growing Deeper
Ride the Air

State of the Mission
Luke 15

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. To begin the week, read Luke 15:1-7, The Parable of the Lost Sheep. Notice who Jesus was speaking this parable to (verse 1). But who else was listening to Jesus (verse 2)?
2. Who do you think Jesus really intended this parable for?
3. Does this parable make sense to you? Suppose you are a shepherd. Does it seem wise to you to leave 99 of your sheep to go after the one lost sheep?
4. In verse 7 Jesus says, “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” How does that make you feel? Comforted? Disappointed? Something else?
5. Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN in prayer today. Thank God for his love and his endless pursuit of each one of us. Ask him to always remind you that his ways are not our ways; we cannot understand how he works or why he does what he does.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

6. To start your FIFTEEN for today, read Luke 15:8-10, The Parable of the Lost Coin. This parable comes right after the previous parable. It’s part of the same conversation Jesus is having with the tax collectors and Pharisees. Why do you think Jesus wanted to tell what seems to be the same story, but in a different context?
7. Why do you think the woman who found her lost coin called her friends and neighbors to rejoice with them? Doesn’t one coin or one sheep sound pretty insignificant?
8. It’s often easy for us to see the one lost sheep or the one lost coin as insignificant, and then we use that to express how much God loves each and every one of us, no matter how insignificant we may feel. But likely, that one lost sheep or that one lost coin was a huge deal in Jesus’ day. That one lost coin was likely ten percent of all the money that woman owned. Now does it seem a little more significant?
9. Knowing how much one coin would have meant to the woman who lost it helps us understand how much God values each one of us. When we go astray or are lost, that’s a big deal to God!

10. To close your FIFTEEN, spend time in prayer again. Ask God to help you better understand how much he hurts when we wander from him. Ask him to fill you with more of his Spirit to give you the power to better follow and serve him.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

11. Today, read Luke 15:1-10 again. Remember that Jesus was spending time with people who Luke describes as “tax collectors and sinners” when he told these parables. Who are the “tax collectors and sinners” in your community who you may avoid or look down on in your day-to-day life?

12. Also remember that Jesus said in verse 7, “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” Do you often view those “tax collectors and sinners” in your day-to-day life like Jesus does?

13. Think of two to three specific people in your life who you view as “tax collectors and sinners.” Maybe it’s someone you always see at Starbucks or a parent of someone on your child’s soccer team.

14. It can be so easy to compare ourselves to them and act as if we are more important to God than they are because we go to church regularly or we give an offering regularly, can’t it? Why or why not?

15. Now spend some time in prayer, being honest and asking God to reveal those times in your life, maybe every now and then or maybe often, when you have looked down on others because you think God loves you more than them. Also, ask God to forgive you for those times and forgive you for those thoughts.

16. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Thank God for loving each and every one of us SO much. Ask him to empower you to view and treat others more like he views them.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

17. To start your FIFTEEN for today, read Luke 15:11-32, The Parable of the Lost Son. When the younger son asked for his share of the estate in verse 12, how do you think the father felt? Do you think he expected it? Was he surprised? Hurt? Angry?

18. Especially in those days, for a son to ask his father for his inheritance before the father’s death was worse than a slap in the face. It was as if the younger son was saying, “Dad, I wish you would die. I don’t want any kind of relationship with you, just give me my inheritance so I can leave.” And still, the father gave his son exactly what he asked for!

19. Verse 13 tells us that the younger son “squandered his wealth in wild living” in a distant country. After running out of money, he had to look for a job just to eat. In fact, he was so hungry that he wanted to eat the food he was feeding to the pigs in order to keep from starving to death. Do you think that sounds a lot like us? How often do we choose to do

things our own way and end up needing someone to bail us out? Can you think of a time when something like that happened to you?

20. The son eventually realized he needed to return to his father. Verses 18 and 19 tell us what he planned to say: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants." He understood what he had done to his father and all he hoped for was a chance to work for him to make some money. Think of a time when you really messed up and knew you were going to be punished severely. How did that feel? Was it scary?
21. To finish your FIFTEEN for today, pray for faith and trust. Pray that God would help you better trust him and be confident that his way is best. Also thank him for continually watching over you and welcoming you back again and again.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

22. To start your FIFTEEN for today, read Luke 15:20-32. Verse 20 says that while the son was still a long way from his father's house, the father ran to his son and kissed him. Then, in verse 21, the son apologizes to his father. How does the father respond? Does he punish him? Is he angry?
23. The father tells his servants to prepare a feast, "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Does it make any sense for the father to respond this way, especially after his son essentially wished for him to die?
24. Verse 25 mentions the older son for the first time. He was coming in from the field and heard the party. When he found out what was happening, how did he respond?
25. The older brother became extremely angry and refused to join the party. He wanted his younger brother to pay for what he had done and he wanted his father to give him what he thought he had earned. And how does his father respond?
26. This parable ends similar to the previous two. Verse 32 says, "We had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Isn't it amazing that no matter what's happened in the past, no matter how many times we've run away, no matter how bad we've messed up, God is always ready to welcome us back? Isn't it amazing that even when we don't love him, he still loves us? How does that make you feel?
27. Use this prayer to end your FIFTEEN, "God, it's so hard to even try to comprehend how much you love us. Even the best love we can show to one another cannot compare to the love you show to every single one of us. Help us to better appreciate that love and live in that love. And help your love to lead us to love others more like you do. Help us to also do whatever it takes, whatever you call us to do, to reach the lost. We also ask that you would empower us to rejoice as you do when the lost is found, when those living apart from you finally return to you. And when possible,

allow us to be used by you to return the lost to you. We ask this all in your precious name. Amen.”

Week One - Dying to Live
Matthew 4:1-11

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Life is full of paradoxes and oxymorons like “jumbo shrimp.” What are some paradoxes or tensions that you’ve learned from experience?
2. Read John 12:23-36. What metaphor does Christ use for his death and resurrection?
3. Does Jesus seem to consider his death a bad thing or a good thing?
4. What (or who) is Jesus talking about with his mention of the “harvest”?
5. How does Jesus’ teaching about death apply to our lives today?
6. What comfortable things make it hard to “give up” the pleasures of your own life?
7. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to reveal to you the glory of eternal life with him, so that the comforts of earthly life pale in comparison.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Which relationships do you prioritize more than any other? And how do you show that priority?
9. Read John 12:1-11. What was Judas’ reaction to Mary’s wasteful offering?
10. Who was right, Judas or Mary? Why?
11. If taking care of the poor is a worthy cause, why would Jesus rebuke Judas (besides Judas’ insincerity)?
12. What does it look like in your life to prioritize human relationships more than your walk with God?
13. How can you keep your focus on Jesus, even in the midst of relationships that require a lot of emotional energy?

14. As you finish your FIFTEEN, use this prompt to begin your prayer, “Dear Jesus, help me to prioritize the important things in my life, including my relationships by...”

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Have you ever experienced or witnessed a person who is a blatant suck-up? Why do suck-ups bother people?

16. Read John 12:12-19. Why were most of the onlookers there to see Jesus? What were their motives?

17. How much do you think Jesus trusted their motives and praise? (For a hint, see an extra detail in Luke 19:41-48.)

18. When it came to Jesus’ life, what was the praise of the crowd worth?

19. What are some ways that other people’s opinions sway your own actions?

20. What could you do to minimize the influence of others’ judgment for the sake of following Christ’s commands in your life?

21. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, use this prayer as your own. Lord, help me to hear only your pleasure and your praise of me. Help me to ignore the fleeting approval of the crowd, for the sake of your eternal glory.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. Is it possible to “dabble” in skydiving? What are some hobbies you can think of that you really need to commit to all the way if you’re going to do them at all?

23. Read John 12:20-36. The Passover was for Jews or converts to Judaism. But who else was curious about Jesus?

24. Do you think Jesus agreed to the Greeks’ request or not? Why?

25. Jesus says some really hard (and confusing) things. What picture does he paint of the level of commitment required to believe in the “Son of Man”?

26. In what ways do you find yourself “dabbling” in Christianity?

27. How would it look for you to find new ways to “walk in the light” instead of the darkness?

28. Prayer: Holy Spirit, please fight my daily battle against the easy pleasures and comforts of this world. Fill me with your power and help me to be “all-in” on my commitment to Jesus.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. Sociologists say that emotionally, one negative comment outweighs ten positive comments. Why do you think that is?

30. Read John 12:37-49. What kind of response from people did Jesus receive?

31. Do you think Jesus was prepared for this?

32. Why didn't people believe Jesus?

33. What keeps you from believing and trusting in the promises of Jesus?

34. What would you need from God to protect you from the negativity of enemies around you?

35. Prayer: Lord, fill my heart with your love and grace and truth. Protect me from the scorn or disbelief of the people in my life who are against me. Always remind me that you are for me. Amen.

Week Two - Gaining by Losing
Luke 12:13-21; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. When you think about your overall financial situation, how do you feel: peaceful, satisfied, anxious, or something else?
2. What are the factors that inform your attitudes about your financial situation?
3. Read Luke 12:13-21. Judging by the words of the man in verse 13, how would you describe the man's attitudes about money?
4. To gain some insight, scan the passages preceding this section in Luke 12:1-12. What had Jesus been talking about when the man asked his question? What does this add to our picture of this man?
5. Do you ever find yourself so focused on what you want to talk about that you don't hear what someone else is saying? How about when God is speaking to you?
6. How does it feel when you realize that you have done this?
7. Close your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you stay focused on what matters, whether that is listening to a friend talk, listening to God, or simply staying focused on the task in front of you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Look again at Luke 12:13-21. Where was the man's focus in verse 13?
9. In Jesus' day, the oldest son usually received a double portion of his father's estate, compared to his younger brothers. Does this tradition seem fair to you? Can you think of a reason why this might be a good idea?
10. Look again at how the man phrased his question. Did the man seem concerned about the fairness of the law?
11. Judging by Jesus' response, it's pretty safe for us to assume that this man was a younger brother and felt he was being treated unfairly. This man was not focused on what he was inheriting, but what his brother was. Describe a time when you have allowed feelings like this to creep into your thoughts.

12. How did this affect how you felt emotionally, physically, and spiritually?

13. Another interesting thing about Hebrew inheritance laws is that while the oldest son received a double portion of the inheritance, his sisters would typically have received nothing at all. How might this man's attitude have been different if he had not been focusing on how much more his brother received but instead how little his sister received?

14. Does focusing on others who have less than you instead of those who have more help you feel more grateful? Why or why not?

15. How does giving to those who have less help you stay focused on their needs instead of your own?

16. End your FIFTEEN by asking God to give you eyes to see those in need instead of focusing on those who have more.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

17. Look again at Luke 12:13-21. How did Jesus answer the man's seemingly out-of-left-field question?

18. How would you describe the attitude of the man building barns in the story?

19. Yesterday we looked at how giving to others helps you feel grateful for what you have. How does gratitude affect how tightly you hold on to things?

20. This is true in everything — money, relationships, etc. How does gratitude for the relationships in your life affect how you feel about them?

21. Are you the kind of person that is jealous when your friends make other friends, or are you happy that your friend has made relationships that add fullness to his or her life?

22. Just like the man building the barn, the tighter we hold on to people or things, the more they will elude us. What steps can you take to hold on to people more loosely?

23. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God to give you the courage to hold on to people and things more loosely.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

24. How often would you say you worry about money? Daily? Weekly? Maybe you do an annual review or only think about money when a disaster strikes?
25. Do your attitudes towards money affect your peace of mind? In what way?
26. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6. What is the antidote to letting money control you? In other words, how can you control your money?
27. The fool who built bigger barns represents a kind of thinking that plagues all of us. His folly is demonstrated in Jesus' parable and in 2 Corinthians 9:6, where Paul elaborates the key to real abundance. How easy is it for you to embrace this kind of thinking?
28. What steps can you take to trust God at his word that it is in letting go that you will receive?
29. Finish your FIFTEEN by confessing those times when you have doubted God's provision for you. Ask him to give you the courage to fully trust him in every way.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

30. Missionary Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." What comes to mind when you think of these things? What things can you lose? What things can't you lose?
31. Read Luke 12:33-34. How does the Bible answer this same question — what can't you lose?
32. Just like we looked at yesterday, God actually gives us a way to gain control over our hearts. How does verse 34 say we do that?
33. We can free our hearts and minds from the grips of things that we hold too tightly, whether that's people or possessions. Read Acts 20:35. How did Jesus describe the effect of living generously?
34. Holding on loosely lessens our need to hold on. It's so counterintuitive to the way most of us live. Brainstorm a list of the things and people to which you have been holding on too tightly. (Ex. your kids, control, etc.)
35. Spend the rest of your final FIFTEEN this week committing those things to God in prayer.