

Reflection Questions

Love for the Lost and Hope for the Found

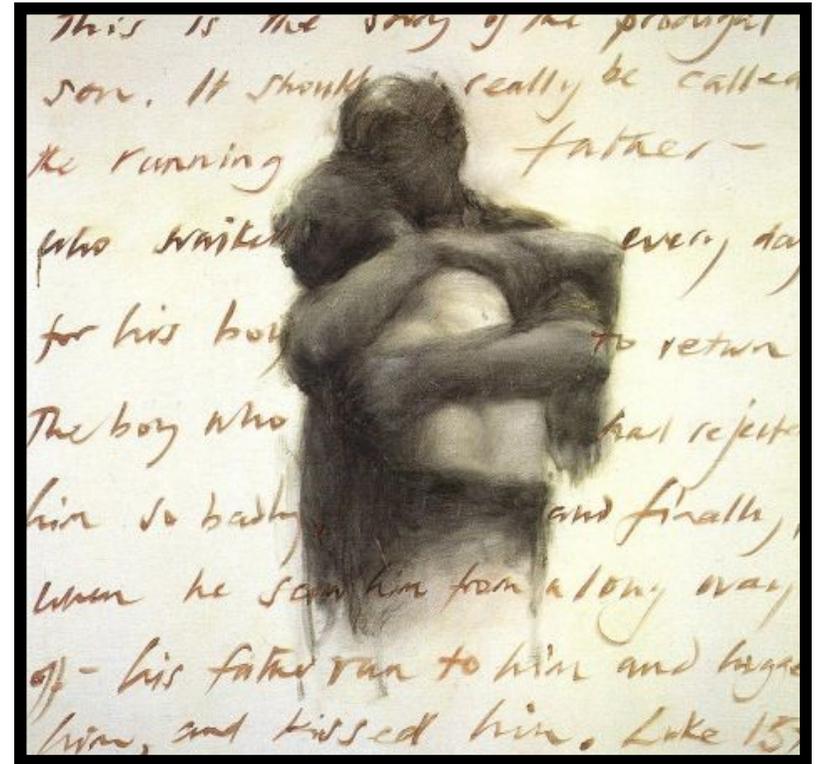
1. *The Parable of the Lost Sheep—Key Themes:*

Security, Value of the Individual, Priority of Saving “the lost”

- Who are the lost sheep?
- Why did he seek for the lost sheep?
- How did the sheep get back?
- Did Jesus simply lead them back?
- How much effort did the sheep have to make to return to the flock?

2. *The Prodigal Son—Key Themes represented in the characters of the wayward son, the resentful brother, the redemptive father.*

- What was the younger son's attitude towards his father when he left?
- Who does he represent in real life?
- What made him come to his senses?
- Recall another event in the Bible where difficult circumstances had a similar affect.
- Have there been such circumstances in your life that caused you to come to your senses?
- What do you suppose was the son's expectation of his father's reaction?
- How would you characterize the father's actual reaction?
- Did the older son behaving in accordance with the spirit of his father?
- Who does he represent?



UU Christian Fellowship Parable Study

Love for the Lost and Hope for the Found

Lost sheep, Matthew 18: 12-14/Luke 15: 4-7

Thomas 107; Gospel of Truth 31-32

The Lost Coin, Luke 15: 8-10

The Prodigal Son, Luke 15: 11-32

ORDER OF SERVICE

Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship

Lighting of the Chalice

In the freedom of the truth
And in the spirit of Jesus
We unite for the worship of God
And the service of all—Charles Gordon Ames. (Ames Covenant)

Joys and Concerns i.e. “*How goes it with Thy Spirit?*”

Prayers of the People

Didactic on The Parables

Parable Study

1. **Read** the Parable out loud, sharing text if it is long.
2. **Reflect in silence** on the parable
3. **Respond** to the Parable, allowing space for silences, for more deliberative thinkers, for new insights
4. **Rest** with the Parable—which may be read a 2nd or even 3rd time.

Closing Words (unison)

Love is the Spirit of this Church and service its law.
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
to seek the truth in love
and to help one another.—James Vila Blake (Blake Covenant)

understanding. It is a day in which it is not fitting that salvation be idle, so that you may speak of that heavenly day which has no night and of the sun which does not set because it is perfect. Say then in your heart that you are this per-

Luke 15: 11-32: The Story of the Lost Son

¹¹⁻¹²Then he said, "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.'

¹²⁻¹⁶"So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any. That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father.

²⁰⁻²¹"When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

²²⁻²⁴"But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time.

²⁵⁻²⁷"All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef—because he has him home safe and sound.'

²⁸⁻³⁰"The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!'

³¹⁻³²"His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'"

Lesson Two

Love for the Lost and Hope for the Found November

Lost sheep: Matthew 18: 12-14 & Luke 15: 4-7

Thomas 107; Gospel of Truth 31-32

The Prodigal Son, Luke 15: 11-32

¹**Lost sheep:** Matthew 18: 12-14 (NIV)

²"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? ¹³And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. ¹⁴In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

⁴"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it?

Luke 15: 4-7

⁵And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, `Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say unto you that likewise more joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.

Gospel of Thomas 107

Yeshua said, "The Kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One of them, the largest, went astray. He left the ninety-nine and looked for the one until he found it. After so much trouble he said to the sheep, "I love you more than the ninety-nine."

Gospel of Truth 31-32

He is the shepherd who left behind the ninety-nine sheep which had not strayed and went in search of that one which was lost. He rejoiced when he had found it. For ninety-nine is a number of the left hand, which holds it. The moment he finds the one, however, the whole number is transferred to the right hand. Thus it is with him who lacks the one, that is, the entire right hand which attracts that in which it is deficient, seizes it from the left side and transfers it to the right. In this way, then, the number becomes one hundred. This number signifies the Father. He labored even on the Sabbath for the sheep which he found fallen into the pit. He saved the life of that sheep, bringing it up from the pit in order that you may understand fully what that Sabbath is, you who possess full

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

(TWO PARABLES PER SESSION)

	Month
Forgiveness and Grace	October
The unforgiving slave, Matthew 18: 23-35	
The workers in the vineyard, Matthew 20: 1-6	
Love for the Lost and Hope for the Found	November
Lost sheep, Matthew 18: 12-14/Luke 15: 4-7	
Thomas 107; Gospel of Truth 31-32	
The Lost Coin, Luke 15: 8-10	
The Prodigal Son, Luke 15: 11-32	
Parables of Exemplary Behavior	December
The Good Samaritan, Luke 10: 25-37	
The Rich Fool, Luke 12: 16-21 Thomas 63	
The Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16: 19-31	
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Luke 18: 10-14	
Wisdom Parables	January
The Wise and Foolish Builders Matthew 7: 24-27/Luke 6: 47-49	
Building a Tower, Luke 14: 28-30	
The King Going to War, Luke 14: 31-33	
The Unjust Manager, Luke 16: 1-8	
The Faithful and Wise Slave, Matthew 24: 45-51/Luke 12: 42-46	
The Ten Maidens, Matthew 25: 1-13	
Parables of Life before God	February
The Sower and its interpretation: Mark 4: 3-8, 13-20	
Matthew 13: 3-8, 18-23//Luke 8:5-8, 11-15, Thomas 9	
Children in the Marketplace Matthew 11: 16-19/Luke 7:31-35	
The Two Debtors, Luke 7: 41-43	
The Two Sons, Matthew 21: 28-32	
The Friend at Midnight, Luke 11:5-8	
The Father's Good Gifts, Matthew 7: 9-11/Luke 11:11-13	
The Barren Fig Tree, Luke 13: 6-9	
The Slave at Duty, Luke 17: 7-10	
The unjust Judge, Luke 18: 2-8	
The Waiting Slaves, Mark 13: 34-37/Luke 12: 35-38	
The Talents, Matthew 25: 14-30	
The Pounds, Luke 19: 12-27	

Parables of Final Judgment

The weeds in the wheat and its interpretation

Matthew 13: 24-30, 37-43, Thomas 57

The Dragnet and its interpretation, Matthew 13: 47

The Final Judgment, Matthew 25: 31-46

March

Allegorical Parables

The Great Banquet, Luke 14: 16-24, Thomas 64

The Wedding Feast, Matthew 22: 1-14

The Wicked Tenants, Mark 12: 1-12//Matthew 21: 33-46/
Luke 20: 9-19; Thomas 65-66

April

Parables of the Kingdom

The seed growing secretly, Mark 4: 26-29; Thomas 57

The Mustard Seed, Mark 4: 30-32//Matthew 13: 31-32

Luke 13: 18-19; Thomas 20

The Leaven, Matthew 13: 33//Luke 13: 20-21; Thomas 96

The Treasure in the Field, Matthew 13: 44; Thomas 109

The Pearl of Great Price, Matthew 13: 45-46; Thomas 76

May

ABOUT THE Gnostic GOSPELS & THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

DIDACTIC

1. The Gnostics were religious mystics who proclaimed *gnosis*, knowledge, as the way of salvation.
2. Historical roots go back to Greeks, Romans, 2nd Temple Jews. Influence from 2nd century CE to next several centuries.
3. All sacred texts disclosed truth
4. Created a dualistic theology; transcendent, spiritual vs. the creator of the world, who is incompetent and possibly malevolent. Transcendent god vs. creator of the world.
5. Possible reason for rise of Gnostic thought: destruction of 2nd temple in 70CE;
6. Elaine Pagels: believes that Gnostics formulated teachings on the spiritual resurrection of Christ that subverted the emerging orthodox church's hierarchy of priests and bishops.
7. Claimed spiritual resurrection & spiritual authority.
8. Gnostics formulated teachings on the multiple manifestations of God, father & mother. Free thinking advocates of mystical spirituality.
9. **Book of Thomas**-Jesus is "just" Jesus; wisdom sayings; no doctrine; offers hidden words of wisdom. Reflects early traditions about wisdom and the life of the soul; **Gospel of Thomas is a wisdom gospel.**
10. **Qualities of Book of Thomas**—no miracles, no fulfillment of prophecy, no apocalyptic kingdom, dies for no one's sins; does not rise from the dead on Easter Sunday. "Power lies in his enigmatic sayings, which are pregnant with possibility and power."
11. Editor is said to be Judas Thomas, Judas the Twin, twin brother of Jesus.