



LOST AND FOUND: What does it mean to be spiritually lost? Facilitator's Guide

OUTREACH

🎯 OVERVIEW:

How do you know if you're lost? Usually, you can determine whether or not you're lost just by looking around. Don't recognize your surroundings? That means you're lost. But it's harder to know if someone is spiritually lost—mainly because most people don't know what it means to be spiritually found. A person can be confident, happy, and good, but still lost. This lesson reminds students that salvation (being found) is about an intimate relationship with Jesus, not just “being good.” Jesus takes joy in welcoming lost people into his presence once they're saved. We, too, should find joy in sharing the hope of Christ with others.

? OPENING QUESTIONS:

- How do you know if someone is a Christian?
- How do you reach out to someone who doesn't know Christ?

LEADER'S NOTE: This first question is especially hard to answer and is designed to put the students' beliefs and even misconceptions on the table. See the two Leader's notes in the “What the Bible Has to Say About It” section for more info and biblical insight on this.

💬 WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT:

Perhaps you've seen the quote framed on a wall, “Find the one thing that makes you happy, and go do it.” Or maybe you've heard that, to live a good life, you should do good things. Have you heard about Karma? Some people think Karma is an invisible force that makes good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. These two principles feed into the way many think about the world. They think the way to go to heaven or to have a good life is to do whatever makes you happy and to do good to other people. Once you've checked those things off your list, you're all set.

LEADER'S NOTE: This worldview, called moralistic therapeutic deism, comes from a couple of sociologists who interviewed teenagers to figure out what they really believe today. They discovered that many students believe that God is out there somewhere, but we can't know much about him (that's called “deism”). They believe people should be good and happy (“moralistic” and “therapeutic”), and if they act this way, they'll go to heaven when they die. To be clear: people whose worldview is based in moralistic therapeutic deism alone are lost.

But does that really match with reality? You can't always be happy. Bad things happen, and it's okay to feel bad when they do. In the darkest parts of life, pretending to be happy doesn't help. And bad things happen to good people all the time. Karma may sound good in theory, but in the end, it just doesn't explain why the world is the way it is. People who live their lives this way think they know where they are, but in reality, they're lost. God's told us the key to a good life, to reaching heaven, to salvation. It's not pretending to be happy or doing good things. It's following Jesus as Lord and developing a personal relationship with him. Without that, all those other things are worthless.





Who are the lost? It's not as simple as asking whether or not someone goes to church. In fact, Jesus condemned those who appeared religious but didn't care about a true and radical relationship with him. Luke 7 tells the story of two approaches to Jesus. On one hand, you'll see the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day. They did everything right and seemed to have it all together. On the other hand, you'll see a sinful woman, someone who messed up in a big way. Who does Jesus treat as lost? Whose faith does Jesus truly value?

LEADER'S NOTE: People have many false ideas about who is lost and who is saved. Going to church does not make anyone a child of God. Neither does living a good or moral life. On the other hand, repeating a few words when you are five years old, then forgetting about it forever doesn't necessarily make you a child of God, either. Many people think salvation is about checking items off a list. But it's more than that. It's about surrendering your heart. There's also no way you or I can tell if someone is saved or not. That's between that person and God. But we shouldn't assume someone is saved just because they do or say all the right things. We should take note of evidences (or fruit, Galatians 5:22-23) of true faith—a person's words, actions, and attitudes. But ultimately, we can only tell if someone is lost or not by looking beyond the superficial, at a person's heart. That's what God does (1 Sam. 16:7). To go deeper into the topic of salvation, take a look at the studies in the "Rescue" root of Deep Discipleship.

Read: Luke 7:36–50

Discuss:

- Who is lost in this story? Who gets it right?
- Why does Jesus prefer the faith of the sinful woman to that of the Pharisees?
- Why isn't happiness enough to have a good life?
- Why isn't being a good person enough to get to heaven?

*** A SECOND LOOK:**

Enuma Okoro has a hard time answering when people ask her where she is from. She has lived in four countries and moved every three years (at least). She was born in the United States to Nigerian parents, lived in West Africa for a while, and then went to boarding school in England. She has experienced many different lifestyles and has seen people practice many types of religions. This broad range of experiences has helped Enuma Okoro grasp the truth about who is lost and who is found. She understands that the difference between being lost and found doesn't have anything to do with saying or doing the right things. Instead, it's about whether or not a person knows Jesus and how passionately that person is pursuing God. Interestingly, she admits her problems and quirks—she calls herself a drama queen and a self-indulgent introvert. But people like her often experience God in a deeper way than those who seem to have it all together on the outside. She says, "God's light shines especially bright through the multiple and endless fragmented slices that exist in broken people."¹

Being found has little to do with looking like you have it all together. Enuma explains one of the major changes a person experiences when going from lost to found: "It's so much less about 'what's in it for me' and so much more about the transformation that happens in us and between us that helps us spill our lives, somewhat clumsily, outside the boundaries we've comfortably drawn around ourselves." Salvation involves an inner transformation and an intimate, passionate relationship with Jesus. When the



inner transformation happens, the outward transformation will follow. Unless a person has experienced this inner transformation by following Jesus as Lord, that person is lost.

Discuss:

- According to Enuma, what does a “found” person look like? What does that tell us about those who are lost?
- Does this mean doing good things and pursuing what makes you happy are always bad? Why or why not?
- How can you tell if someone has experienced what Enuma calls “the transformation that happens in us”?
- If the world’s understanding of being lost and being saved is so different from what the Bible says, what are a few ways we can start correcting the misunderstanding?

LIVE IT OUT: Dirty Old Rat Game

Read all the instructions before you start.

Have the students stand in a line. Across from the students, mark a finish line. In between the students and the finish line, place an object, perhaps a shoe, that you’ll call the “rat.” The rules to get to the finish line are hidden to the students but not to the leaders. The objective is for students to correctly guess the rules and make it to the finish line by watching others interact with the “rat.”

The secret rules:

- Each player must say these words: “Rat, rat, dirty old rat.” (This rule will be obvious and easy to guess.)
- Each player must discretely clear their throat at some point before saying the words. (This is the rule that most students won’t notice.)

Say something like:

This game is simple. You’re trying to cross a bridge to get to the finish line. But you can’t cross because there’s a dirty, old rat guarding the way. There’s only one way to make it past the rat to the finish line, but I’m not going to tell you what it is. Instead, watch me and do what I do. If you figure out how to make it past the rat, don’t tell anyone else.

Clear your throat, walk up to the “rat,” pick it up, and say, “Rat, rat, dirty old rat.” Set it back down and walk to the finish line. Let other leaders go after you. Tell the next leader to do exactly the same as you: clear their throat, pick up the rat, and say the words. Ask the third leader to change it up, while still following the hidden rules: pet the rat on the ground, clear their throat, say the words. Make sure the leaders downplay their throat clearing—don’t make it obvious. Let students try to make it across. If they perform the two rules correctly, invite them to join you at the finish line (but still keep the rules a secret). If they don’t perform the rules correctly, tell them to go back.

Some students may get frustrated. Others may perform the two rules accidentally. Either way, don’t give away the rules to anyone. After a while, offer to let the leaders cross again. This time, change it up even more. Here are a few fun ways you can confuse students to get them off the trail (just be sure to always perform the two rules: clear your throat and say the words):

- Serenade the rat by singing the words in a song.
- Smell the rat before saying the words.



- Dance over to the rat.
- Walk past the rat without touching it at all.

If none of the students can correctly guess the steps, secretly whisper the rules to one student. As they start to figure out the steps, a few students still may not guess them. Let the students who've done it correctly secretly share the steps with one who hasn't. Or, demonstrate again, but this time clear your throat loudly and obviously. Continue until everyone has crossed.

Discuss:

- How did you feel when you didn't know the rules?
- How did it feel to finally figure out the rules? Was it hard to keep it from the other students when you saw them getting frustrated?
- When we know the best thing for someone else, is it better to keep that information to ourselves or to share it?
- Do any of you know other people who are lost, who don't know the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection? What keeps you from sharing that good news? Why shouldn't you keep it to yourself?



APPLY IT:

Now that you know more about who the lost are, and what it means to be found, what are you going to do about it? What is something you can do this week in order to reach out to the lost and help them be found?

Be specific:

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

LEADER'S NOTE: Whenever students make applications, challenge them to be specific. It's one thing to say, "I'm going to trust God more." The truth is, our students won't really know if they did this, or if they grew in trust over the week. It's another thing to say, "Every morning this week before I eat breakfast, I'm going to tell God that today is his and that I trust him, and I'm going to ask him to give me the strength to replace worries with trust." Challenge your students to answer the questions under the "Be Specific" section. You can even have them pair up, share their applications, and ask for accountability from their partner.



THINK ABOUT IT:

"Did becoming older bring me closer to Jesus?" – Henri Nouwen²

"Going to church...doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger!" – Keith Green³

***Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreks is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreks; neither does LeaderTreks vouch for their content.

¹ Enuma Okoro, *Reluctant Pilgrim: A Moody, Somewhat Self-Indulgent Introvert's Search for Spiritual Community* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2010), Kindle edition.

² Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 19-20.

³ Keith Green, quoted in Melody Green, *No Compromise: The Life Story of Keith Green* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2008), 255.