



**NURTURING AND RECLAIMING MEMBERS
(Sabbath School Program)**

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Scripture Focus:

Luke 15

Suggested Hymns:

- 362 Lift High the Cross
- 358 Far and Near the Fields are Teeming
- 367 Rescue the Perishing
- 369 Bringing in the Sheaves

Opening Hymn:

373 Seeking the Lost

Divide the Sabbath School program into three groups. Have each group read Luke 15, but assign Group A with Luke 15:3-7; Group B with Luke 15:8-10; and Group C with Luke 15:11-32. After reading discuss the following questions:

- What is similar in all three passages?
- What is different and unique about your particular section?
- What is the main message of Luke 15?
- Who is Jesus addressing these three parables to?
- What would Jesus say to us today?

If you look carefully, these three parables of Jesus in Luke 15 share some similar patterns. They revolve around something being lost, some mention of repentance, and then a joyful celebration at the end. These similarities give evidence the parables are interlinked, trying to convey the same message. This message is clear. God loves the lost and rejoices to reclaim them. It is His exuberant passion to find the lost, as the parables emphasize the shepherd's, the woman's, and the father's rejoicing, all seeking friends and neighbors to share this joy with. All of heaven and its inhabitants are seeking and celebrating over the lost.

At the same time, there are major differences between them, each emphasizing one of three categories of the main message:

1. One type of person is lost and desires to return but is incapable of returning by him/herself. Therefore, someone must go out, search, and rescue and then return together.
2. Another type of person is lost and is unaware of his/her condition. This person must realize their lost status and then be found by another.
3. The last type of missing person is lost and capable of returning. But due to a misunderstanding of the Father's character, this person doesn't initially return, while later resorting to a type of legalistic

transaction of forgiveness. This is the section that is the longest, most detailed, most passionate, and possibly where most of our fellow brothers and sisters outside are today.

People leave the church for various reasons. While some leave because of doctrinal issues, others leave because of differences in interest. But the largest reason why people leave is due to social conflict between members and/or leaders.

If people can push souls away from God, how much more can people, with the Holy Spirit, bring souls back to God? These three parables in Luke 15 plead for individuals to collaborate with God in reclaiming members back into the fold of God. The motivation isn't to "clean the books," increase revenue, or to fill empty seats. It is simply to rejoice with all of heaven!

We must take the initiative to go out and visit with these former members and friends. Since visiting out of the blue will raise suspicion, visiting with a purpose is recommended; for example, visiting on behalf of a Sabbath School class.

Some practical principles of visitation include:

1. Team up an inexperienced/timid/introverted person with an experienced/extroverted person. Two by two was Jesus' teaching.
2. While one speaks, the other should pray. Prayer should be offered before, during, and after the visitation.
3. The objective is not to argue, defend, or to preach. It is simply to visit and listen.
4. Know their name and some preliminary information before you go.
5. Visits should be short, warm, tactful, and gentle.
6. Wisdom will reveal the right timing of words and questions.
7. Smile!
8. View their photos and ask about family. From family, ask about occupation/work. And from work, ask about the Sabbath, rest, spirituality, and religion. Lastly, you can share a short testimony. This follows the F-O-R-T acronym.
9. "Angels of God attend you to the dwelling of those you visit." (9T 41).
10. Follow up with a card, letter, call, gift, invitation to a church event, or another visit, if appropriate.

The main point is not to defend or argue. If there is an underlying conflict, there are instances when the individual did wrong and others where the church was wrong. The objective is to take on the mantle of Christ and even take an empathetic hit for the Lord. The practice of visitation can not only potentially change the heart of the visited but also the visitor!

Won't you team up with the Lord today to seek those who desire to return but cannot, those who don't even know, and/or those who have a misunderstanding of God's character? Won't you be a part of the dynamic process that extends the joy of His Kingdom to others this week?

Closing Hymn:

578 So Send I You