



THE PROBLEM OF CHURCH

THE PROBLEM OF CHURCH, PART 1: WHO THE CHURCH IS FOR

Most people don't have a problem with God. After all, plenty of people show up for church on Christmas and Easter. But unfortunately people do have a problem with the church. As you read through the accounts of Jesus' life you can't escape this simple but often overlooked question, *Why would Jesus spend so much time with religious outsiders?* As we explore Luke 15 to find the answer to this question, we'll uncover the driving force behind our church's past, present and future direction.

BIG IDEA: The church is for everyone—insiders and outsiders.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

** Remember the goal is to use the questions to generate discussion, not to complete every one.*

1. Have you ever been a part of an exclusive organization (perhaps a secret club as a kid or a fraternity in college)? Who did you let in? Who did you keep out?
2. How were you introduced to Christianity? Did it seem simple or complicated at the time?
3. Why do you think people have connected with this idea of creating a church where the unchurched and the dechurched love to attend? Why do you think many people don't go to church, or leave the church? What are some apprehensions one could have about getting on board?
4. [With your Bible or Bible App, read Luke 15:1-2.](#)

¹ Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

[Luke 15:1-2 \(NIV\)](#)

5. Jesus spent most of His time in the company of sinners and tax collectors—those who were relationally lost from their Heavenly Father. How often do you spend time with those who are disconnected from God? How could you spend more time around those who are lost?
6. [With your Bible or Bible App, read Luke 15:3-7.](#)

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 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."

[Luke 15:3-7 \(NIV\)](#)
7. In this parable the shepherd focused on what was lost and not on what was secure. How can you keep your focus on those who are disconnected from God instead of being satisfied with the company of Christians?
8. [With your Bible or Bible App, read Luke 19:10.](#)

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

[Luke 19:10 \(NIV\)](#)

9. Should our church's focus be any different from Jesus' while He was on the earth? Why?
10. Too many churches have been building walls instead of bridges. Too many churches have turned in their search lights for security lights. How can we keep the focus on those outside the faith?
11. Who do you know that is a religious outsider, disconnected from God? How will you engage them for the purpose of introducing them to their Heavenly Father?

THINK ABOUT IT

Can you think of a time that you felt like sharing your faith, but felt intimidated or unsure if you should? What stopped you? How can we move past this fear that prevents us?

Now think of others in your larger sphere of influence (neighbors, co-workers, family) that are struggling and not connected into community. Write their names down. What is going on in their life that makes them come to your mind? How can you begin to move into their life and invite them into your own?

MOVING FORWARD

The object of our mission is people. The only thing we can do here on Earth that we cannot do in heaven is reach out to people who are far from God. We are inviting others to what God has invited us to encounter: to see, experience, trust, believe and walk. Reaching involves identifying who is within your reach.

When reaching people, there is a key element that is often taken for granted. That is the issue of *relationship*. When you have a relationship with someone, you know whether person has placed their hope on a shaky foundation and can speak truth into these areas. Realizing you have their best interest at heart, they trust that your words are coming out of a place of love.

Reaching people is not a passive activity, and many times it is messy. Helping someone walk with God requires taking the time to get to know them. The challenge before you is to start somewhere with someone. Just begin to move in. Outside your front door is an entire neighborhood of hurting people waiting for someone to engage them.

We need to regularly see and experience church through the eyes of the unchurched person. Why? So that we don't begin to turn inwardly and begin wanting what happens in church to be only about us. Becoming a 'we' doesn't make this about 'me.' *If we don't regularly remind ourselves of this, we'll drift into the mindset that the church is here to meet my needs and we'll forget all about the hurting and lost people who live all around us.*

Commit to pray for one disconnected person every day this year. Pray that God would open up opportunities for you to be a part of their life and for the opportunity to talk with them about your faith.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

Luke 19:10 (NIV)