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Parables

OF THE LOST AND FOUND

In chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke, the Savior uses three parables to teach the worth of a soul, showing us how to find and *return* that which is lost to the fold of faith and family.

In the parables, the sheep wanders, the piece of silver is lost, and the prodigal son wastes his inheritance in riotous living. But the shepherd searches the wilderness, the woman sweeps the house, and the forgiving father watches for his son's return, ever ready with an embrace and a warm welcome home.

The Savior's parables—and the three vignettes by Church leaders that follow—remind us that as His undershepherds, we have the responsibility to “reach out and rescue those who have fallen by the wayside, that not one precious soul will be lost.”¹

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Stand in Your Appointed Place,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2003, 57.

RESCUE OF THE LOST LAMB, BY MINERVA K. TEICHERT; ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT A. MICKAY



Rescuing Lost Lambs

By Elder Donald J. Keyes

Area Seventy, Utah North Area



Years ago in the early spring, my wife and I had occasion to drive through beautiful Star Valley, Wyoming, USA. It

was a wonderful spring morning, and the landscapes and scenery were inspiring.

As Jackie and I drove into Star Valley, we enjoyed seeing an occasional flock of sheep sprinkled with dozens of baby lambs. Few things are more endearing than a baby lamb. As we drove down the busy road, we saw a small lamb outside the fence near the roadside. It was frantically running back and forth against the fence, trying to get back to the flock. I surmised that this little lamb was small enough to have pressed through an opening in the fence but was now unable to return.

I was confident that if we didn't stop to rescue the lamb, it would eventually wander into the nearby road and be injured or killed. I stopped the car and said to Jackie and our traveling companions in the backseat, "Wait here; this will take just a moment."

I naturally assumed with my total

lack of lamb-herding experience that the frightened lamb would be glad to see me; after all, I had the best of intentions. I was there to save its life!

But to my disappointment, the lamb was afraid and totally unappreciative of my efforts to save it. As I approached it, the little soul ran away from me as fast as it could along the fence. Seeing my plight, Jackie got out of the car to help. But even together we could not outmaneuver the quick little lamb.

At this point the couple in the backseat, who had been thoroughly enjoying the rodeo, piled out of the car and joined in the rescue attempt. With all of our efforts we finally corralled the frightened little lamb against the fence. As I reached down to pick him up in my clean traveling clothes, I quickly noticed that he had the distinct aroma of the barnyard. It was then that I began to wonder, is this effort really worth it?

As we picked up the lamb and lifted him over the fence to safety, he fought and kicked with all his might. But within moments he had found his mother and was pressed tightly and safely against her side. With our clothing a little disheveled but with great satisfaction and peace that we had made the right choice, we went on our way.

I have reflected on that experience several times since. I wonder if we would give that kind of effort to save



an unappreciative, less-active neighbor. I hope so! "How much then is a man better than a sheep?" the Savior asked (Matthew 12:12). In every branch, ward, and stake are lost and endangered lambs.

Replacing the word *work* with *rescue* in the hymn "Have I Done Any Good?" I invite you to consider its application in saving lost lambs:

*There are chances for rescue all
around just now,
Opportunities right in our way.
Do not let them pass by, saying,
"Sometime I'll try,"
But go and do something today.¹*

Our neighbors may seem unappreciative, frightened, or uninterested in being rescued. And our efforts to rescue them may take time, effort, energy, and the support and help of others. But this effort will be rewarded with eternal blessings. As the Lord has promised, if we bring "save it be one soul unto [Him], how great shall be [our] joy with him in the kingdom of [our] Father" (D&C 18:15).

NOTE

1. See "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223.



SHE WOULDN'T GIVE UP ON ME

By Sonya Konstans

When I joined the Church in 1990, I was friendshipped by great families, was given a calling, and felt that I belonged. But a year later, after moving to a new ward, I began to drift away. I stopped attending meetings and started dating a man who was not a member of the Church.

I still believed the Church was true. I just didn't think I was good enough for it anymore. Then Kathy was assigned as my visiting teacher.

Kathy called every month for the first few months to try to schedule an appointment. Because I always dodged her visits, she started mailing me the Visiting Teaching Message instead. Every month the message would arrive like clockwork. This went on for four years, even after I married my boyfriend and we had two children.

Exercising Compassion

By Elder Robert D. Hales

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd went after the lost sheep and searched until he found it. He then returned, rejoicing (see Luke 15:4–7).

In the parable of the lost coin, the widow lit a candle, which gave light,

Some months I would throw the message away unread; other months I would read it and then throw it away. When my marriage failed, I found myself with a toddler and an infant to raise alone. I suddenly needed answers. When my monthly Visiting Teaching Message arrived again, I decided to attend church for the first time in ages.

I felt so awkward, as if all my sins were written upon my sleeve. A sister I had known in the young single adult program welcomed me, and we sat down together. Suddenly here came Kathy. I looked away, embarrassed that I had not answered any of her kind notes. She smiled at me, chatted with my neighbor for a moment, and then sat with her husband.

When I got home from work the next day, there was a message from Kathy on the answering machine. I couldn't call her back. I just knew she wanted to tell me that I wasn't allowed

to come to church anymore, that my sins had been too great. I felt bad that Kathy had to convey this message to me, but I knew it was true. I had no place among the righteous. I couldn't call her back, but the next evening she called me again.

"I want to apologize," she said.

Why would Kathy possibly need to apologize to me?

"I didn't recognize you when I saw you at church on Sunday," she said.

"After sacrament meeting, I asked the sister you were sitting by who you were. By then you had already left. It was so good to see you."

I was dumbfounded.

"I hope we can sit together the next time you come to church," Kathy added.

"I'd like that," I said, suddenly feeling overcome with emotion.

We did sit together the next Sunday—and for many Sundays after that. She served as my inspiration to be



a better mother, a better member of the Church, and a better visiting teacher. She always listened patiently, without judging, just as I feel the Savior would.

Kathy sat beside me the day I received my endowment and the day I married my new husband in the temple. She remained my visiting teacher until we moved from the area. Her service blessed my family in ways I'm sure she never could have imagined—all because she wouldn't give up on me.

and swept every corner to find the coin. She rejoiced upon finding it (see Luke 15:8–10).

Both of these parables are examples of action taken to search, light up the darkness, and sweep until a treasured possession or lost soul is found and returned to a rejoicing home.

A good example of compassion and service making a difference is the example of Don and Marian Summers. While serving in England, they were asked to serve the last six months of their mission in the Swindon Branch to teach and assist

in activating members. For 80 years Swindon had been a branch with a faithful few and with many good members becoming less active.

Don and Marian wrote: "Our first visit to Swindon Branch was a bit disheartening as we met with the Saints in a cold, rented hall. The congregation numbered 17, including President and Sister Hales and 4 missionaries. Still wearing our winter coats, we all huddled around a small, inadequate heater while we listened to a Sunday School lesson."

The letter continued: "A branch



SOULS TO SAVE

"Along your pathway of life you will observe that you are not the only traveler.

There are others who need your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save."

President Thomas S. Monson, "How Firm a Foundation," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 68.



member approached me one day: ‘Elder Summers, can I give you a bit of advice? Never mention the word *tithing* to the Swindon members; they really don’t believe in it, and all you will do is upset them.’”

Brother Summers said: “We did teach tithing and all the other gospel principles. With example and the encouragement of a branch president, there was a change of heart, and faith and activity started to increase. The membership records were completely updated as we visited every member’s home. When the leaders started caring, the members began to respond, and a whole new spirit pervaded the branch. The members became excited again about the gospel and helping one another. . . .

“One young couple had a difficult adjustment to make as their customs, manners, and dress were different. They became offended at suggestions for changes. The couple twice wrote to the bishop [since by then it was a ward] and asked to have their names removed from the Church records. In the last letter they forbade any of the members to visit them, so [we] went to the florist and purchased a

beautiful plant of chrysanthemums and had it delivered to the young couple. It was a simple note: *‘We love you; we miss you; we need you. Please come back.’* Signed, Swindon Ward.

“The next Sunday was fast and testimony meeting and our last Sunday in Swindon. There were 103 members in attendance, compared to 17 six months before. The young couple was there, and in bearing his testimony, the husband thanked the Swindon Ward for not giving up on them.”

Each of us can have similar experiences in our local wards and branches by working with and loving those who are less active. What a joy it is to give “compassion, making a difference” (Jude 1:22) to those who may be ready to find themselves and then want to come back.

From “Some Have Compassion, Making a Difference,” Ensign, May 1987, 77; spelling standardized.

Welcoming the Prodigal



By Elder Spencer J. Condie

Served as a member of the Seventy from 1989 to 2010

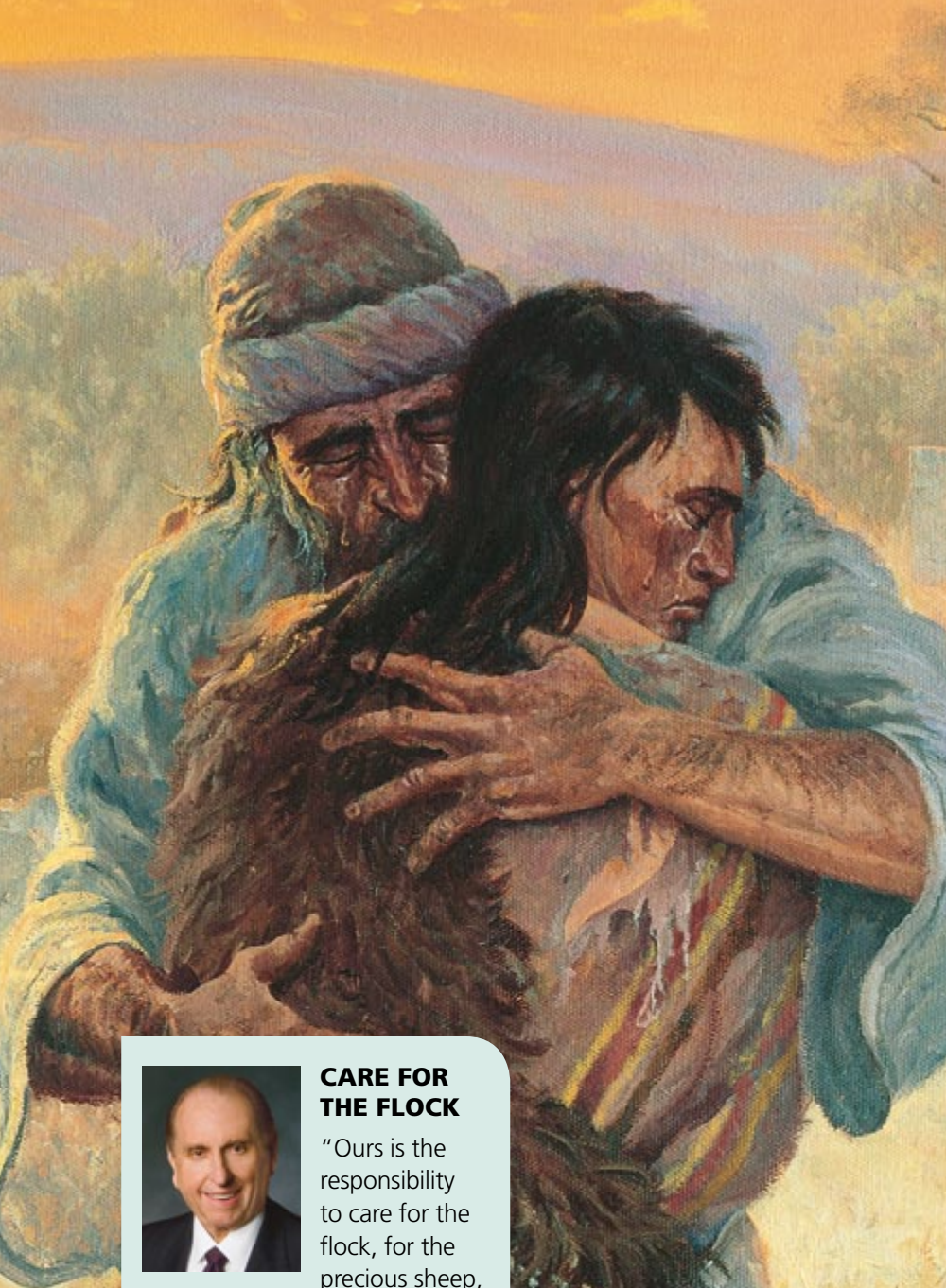
The parable of the prodigal son illustrates in bold relief a wide variety of human dispositions. First, there is the self-centered prodigal son unconcerned with anyone or anything but himself. But, alas, after riotous living he discovered for himself

that “wickedness never was happiness” [Alma 41:10], and he “came to himself” (Luke 15:17). He eventually realized whose son he was, and he yearned to be reunited with his father.

His arrogant, selfish disposition gave way to humility and a broken heart and contrite spirit as he confessed to his father: “I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luke 15:21). Gone were the adolescent rebellion, immature selfishness, and relentless pleasure seeking, and in their place was an embryonic disposition to do good continually. Now, if we are completely honest with ourselves, we will each confess that there is or has been a bit of the prodigal son in every one of us.

Then there is the father. Some may criticize him for having been overly indulgent in granting the younger son’s request to “give me the portion of goods that falleth to me” (Luke 15:12). The father in the parable was undoubtedly sensitive to the divine principle of moral agency and freedom of choice, a principle over which the premortal War in Heaven had been waged. He was not inclined to compel his son to be obedient.

But this loving father never gave up on his wayward son, and his unrelenting vigilance is confirmed in the poignant narration that when the son “was yet a great way off, his father . . . had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). Not only was there an open display of



CARE FOR THE FLOCK

“Ours is the responsibility to care for the flock, for the precious sheep,

these tender lambs, are everywhere to be found—at home in our families, in the homes of our extended families, and waiting for us in our Church callings. Jesus is our Exemplar. Said He, ‘I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep’ (John 10:14). We have a shepherding responsibility. May we each step up to serve.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Heavenly Homes, Forever Families,” *Liahona*, June 2006, 70; *Ensign*, June 2006, 102.

physical affection toward his son, but the father requested his servants to give him a robe, shoes for his feet, and a ring for his hand and instructed them to kill the fatted calf, joyfully declaring, “He was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:24).

Throughout the years, this father had developed such a compassionate, forgiving, loving disposition that he could do nothing else but love and forgive. This parable is a universal favorite for all of us because it holds

out the hope to each one of us that a loving Father in Heaven stands in the roadway, as it were, anxiously awaiting the arrival of each of His prodigal children back home.

And now to the older, obedient son who protested to his forgiving father: “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

“But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf” (Luke 15:29–30).

Just as there may be an element of the prodigal son in each of us, it may also be the case that every one of us is tainted with traits of the older son. The Apostle Paul described the fruit of the Spirit as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). While it may well be that the older son had, indeed, been obedient to his father, beneath the obedient surface was seething subterranean self-righteousness and a disposition to be judgmental, covetous, and totally lacking in compassion. His life did *not* reflect the fruit of the Spirit, for he was not at peace but rather greatly distressed at what he perceived to be a gross inequity of treatment. ■

From a Brigham Young University devotional address given on February 9, 2010; punctuation standardized. For the full text of the address in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.