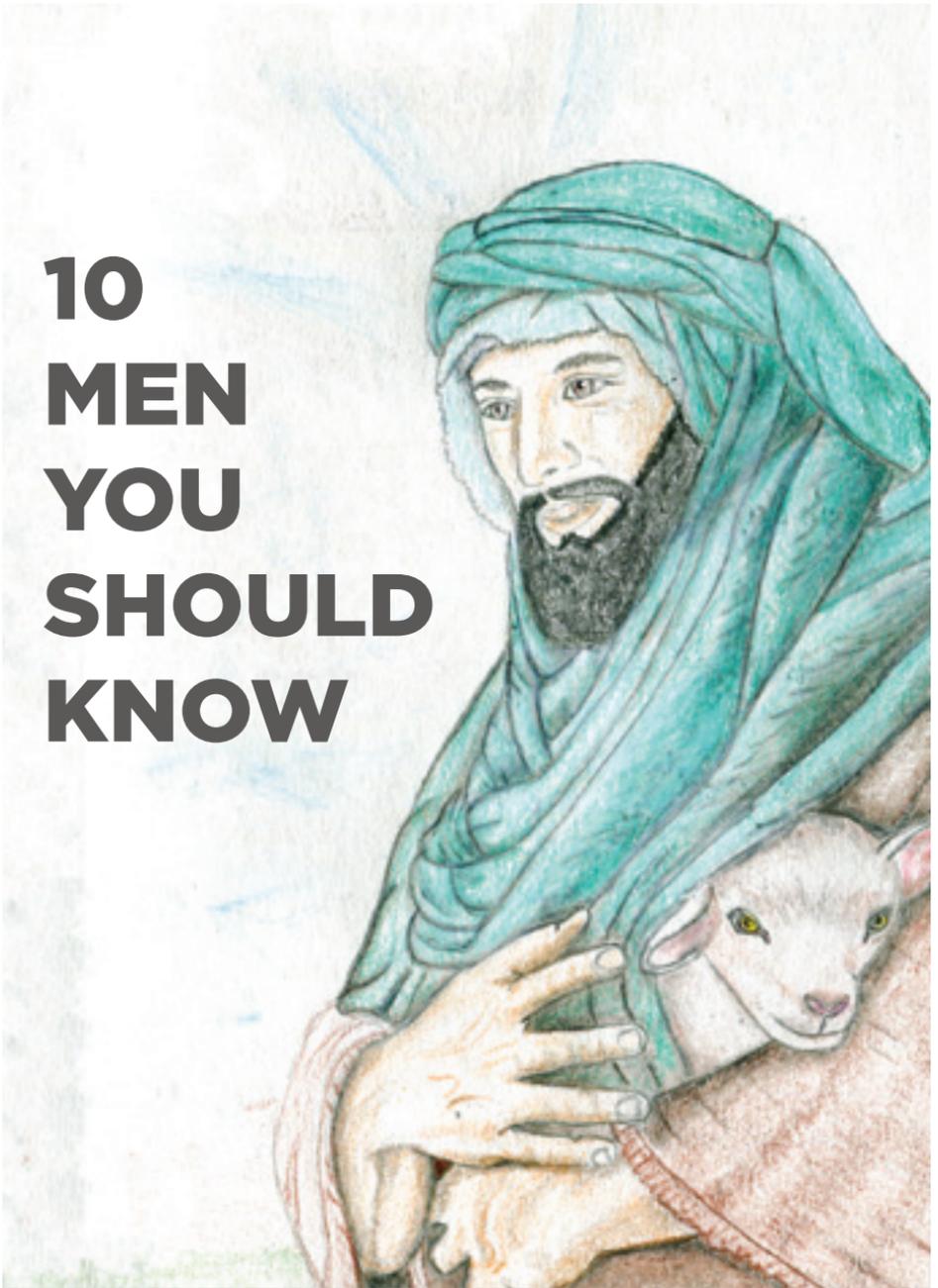


10 MEN YOU SHOULD KNOW



Cover artwork by Anthony W., Crossroads student

LESSON 1

Lost and Found



CROSSROADS

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An Introduction to TEN MEN YOU SHOULD KNOW

This course deals with ten men you should know. Nine of the ten got into big trouble. One didn't. Of the nine men who got into trouble, eight found a way out of it. One didn't.

What is most amazing, however, is that the one man who didn't get into trouble is the one who helped everyone else who did! He is the one man, therefore, that you simply must get to know! If you miss Him, you will miss everything.

You'll learn a little bit about this special man in some of the first stories you will read. However, you won't really get to know Him well until the last story. So keep reading—we promise you it will be worth it!

If you read all ten stories and thoughtfully answer all the questions, you will learn a lot about life. You will also learn a lot about God. And you will probably learn something about yourself! You will certainly learn from the men who got out of their trouble. You may even learn something from the one man who didn't. Best of all, you will learn about the one person who can help *you* get out of trouble.

So, sit back, do some easy reading, and then get down to some serious thinking. For most of us there's a lot of life to be lived yet. Don't waste the rest of your life away!

LESSON 1. Lost and Found—A Parable

LEAVING HOME

There was once a wonderful father who had two sons. Both sons lived at home with their dad. The younger son, however, got restless and wanted to get out of there. So he decided to leave home and head out for the big world. But before he left, he thought he would see how much money he could get from his dad. So he went up to him one day and said, "Dad, give me the money I have coming as one of your sons. I want my share of the family inheritance—and I want it now."

Well, this dad knew his boy wasn't up to any good. But he decided not to argue with him. After all, he knew it wouldn't do any good anyway. So the dad gave his son what he asked for—and sadly watched him go off on his own.

LIVING IT UP

And off he went! He got out of there as fast as he could and went to a land far away. He was happy with his freedom and in a hurry for some "real living." And what a fantastic time he had! If there was something he wanted to get, he got it. If there was anything he wanted to do, he did it. He found himself some good buddies and some women, ate and drank whatever he wanted, and lived life on the top. There was nobody out there that was going to stop him. No mom, no dad, no wife, no preacher, no teacher, no cop. Nobody. He never had so much fun in his life.

GOING DOWNHILL

Now everybody knows that it's easy to get "friends" when you have lots of money to spend. When you pay, they stay! When you share, they care. But when your money is gone, so are your friends. When your purse is empty, you need really good eyes to find any friends. At least, that's the way it usually goes. And it surely was the way it went for the man in our story.

Within a fairly short time—a lot sooner than he expected—he ran out of money. So he started to look around for somebody to help him out for a while. But nobody did. Though he was hungry, no one gave him anything to eat. Though his pockets were empty, nobody seemed to have anything to spare. And then it suddenly dawned on him—his "friends" never did really care about him. They only cared about his money. When the money ran out, so did they. He was in TROUBLE. Deep trouble. And he knew it. There was no place he could go. And there was nobody he could turn to. He had become a stranger in a strange land.

HITTING BOTTOM

To make things even worse, there came a time of famine in the land. So he did the only thing he could think of. With no money, no friends, no food, and no future, he decided to look for a job. Maybe he could earn a few bucks and get himself some food. It wasn't easy, but he finally found someone who was willing to give him a job—feeding pigs.

Now feeding pigs was a messy job. And even worse, feeding pigs was against his religion. None of his people back home would even think of feeding pigs. But when you're starving, you'll do almost anything to get some food. So he did what he had to do. He fed the pigs. He had sunk lower than he ever thought possible. His "good" buddies were history. The women were gone. A sloppy pig pen had become his new dance floor, but he was dancing all by himself. He was totally alone. But at least he had a job. And he figured he would soon have something to eat.

But he was wrong. Though he went out and fed the pigs, no one was willing to feed him. He couldn't even eat what the pigs were eating. He was starving, and nobody cared. He had no place to turn. There was nothing he could do.

LONGING FOR HOME

As he thought about all this, he began to think about home. And when he thought about home, he thought about his dad. He remembered that his dad had lots of servants who had plenty to eat. Nobody ever went hungry at his dad's place. If he hadn't mindlessly rushed away from home, he would have everything he needed. And now he had nothing.

That was an awful situation to be in for someone who had been king of the mountain for a while. And it was humbling for him to go back home. But he had no

choice. He would either die in the pig pen or go back and face his father. So he chose to go home.

A NEW ATTITUDE

But he was smart enough to know that he just couldn't go back and act like nothing had happened. He knew he had messed up—big time! And he knew he wasn't worthy of putting his feet under his dad's table anymore.

But he also knew something about his dad. He knew his dad was a person you could talk to and reason with. And he was also good and kind. So he decided to take his chances and tell his dad how sorry he was. He would tell him that he knew he didn't have a right to come back as a son. He would tell him that he would come back as a servant and do whatever his dad wanted him to—just so he could eat again and have a place to stay!

WELCOME HOME!

So, off he went. And before he even got anywhere near home, his dad saw him coming. As soon as his dad saw him, he ran to meet him, threw his arms around him, hugged him, kissed him, and acted like the happiest man in the world. The son tried to tell his dad how sorry he was. He tried to explain how unworthy he was. He tried to tell him that he was willing to be one of his dad's servants. But he never had a chance! His dad just didn't want to hear it.

His dad knew how tough it was for his son to come back home after what he had done. He could tell how sorry his son was without even listening to a word he said. This was a time for celebration, not for judging. The father knew very well what his son had done. But he also knew what was in his son's heart. And the father was as happy as could be.

So the father said to the servants, "Quick, get a robe for my son. Get some sandals for his feet. Get a ring for his finger. Get the best calf you can find and make a feast. This son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost, and is found." *And the feast began.*

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

This story is found in the Bible. It's one of the parables or stories Jesus told. It's sometimes called the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*—the story of a young man who lived a sinful and foolish life and threw away everything he had before he came back home. You can read the story for yourself in the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament. It's found in chapter 15. The story begins in verse 11.

Let's think about the story together. Read the following questions and share with us your answers. We'll read your answers carefully and then share with you some thoughts of our own.

1. Do you think this story (or something like it) could really have happened? Give a reason for your answer.
2. What do you like best about this story?
3. Is there anything in this story that you don't like?
4. If you had to give this story a title of your own, what would you call it?
5. What are some words you would use to describe the son who left home? (For example: foolish, happy, etc.)
6. What words would you use to describe the father?
7. In the story, the son spent all his money foolishly and sinfully. Who was responsible for that—the father, the son, or somebody else? Give a reason for your answer.

8. At one point the “lost” son didn’t like the way things were going at home, so he went away. Later he went back. Why did he decide to go back? See Luke 15:14-17.

9. What did he plan to say to his father when he got home? Read Luke 15:18-19 and fill in the blanks:

“Father, I have _____ against heaven and against you. I am no longer _____ to be called your son.”

10. Do you think he was serious when he said that he was willing to be a servant in his father’s house? Or was he just trying to impress his dad with a good story so that he could get something to eat and a place to stay? Please explain your answer.

11. How did the father respond to his son when he came back home? Read Luke 15:20-24 and fill in the blanks.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with _____ for him...the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the _____ robe and put it on him...Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was _____ and is _____ again; he was _____ and is _____.’”

12. If you were this son’s older brother and had stayed home, how would you feel when your father forgave your brother and gave him all those gifts? Circle the words that express **your own** feelings.

happy angry jealous thankful afraid sorry bitter disgusted

13. Now read in the Bible how the brother **did** feel (see Luke 15:25-32). Circle the words that express **his** feelings.

afraid happy sorry jealous bitter thankful angry disgusted

14. Do you think the older brother responded in the right way when his dad invited him to the banquet? Circle either **Yes** or **No**. If you answered *No*, how do you think the brother *should* have felt?

15. Try to put yourself in the *father's* place and then answer the following questions.

a. Would you have given the son the money he asked for? Why or why not?

b. Would you blame yourself later when you saw how your son wasted all the money you gave him? Why or why not?

16. Does God sometimes let us go our own way, even if He knows the kind of trouble we're going to get into? If your answer is Yes, why do you think God does that?

17. What would *you* do if *your* son wasted everything you gave him and then wanted to come back home to live with you?
18. If you have lived a sinful life and wasted many of the “gifts” God gave you, do you think God will forgive you and accept you “back home”? Why would He do that? Read John 3:16 and Romans 8:6-8 in the Bible for your answer.
19. If *you* have wandered away from God, what do you think you must do in order for *your* heavenly Father to welcome you back?

20. If you feel like the son in this story and would like to get back to God, but don't know what to do, write us and tell us about it. We'll try to help you if we can. (If you have already come back "home" to your Father, please write to us and tell us what happened!)

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