

ADULT STUDY GUIDE

Unit 8: Jesus Saves the World



ADULT STUDY GUIDE

This is the adult component of the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum. This piece follows the **same scope and sequence** as the other levels: **Early Childhood, Elementary, and Youth**. This alignment presents some amazing opportunities.

- First of all, it helps all ages speak a **common theological language**.
- Second, it helps God's people build an understanding of the **lifelong nature of learning God's Word**—that we don't just learn the narratives once or twice before moving on to other matters.
- Third, and critical to this curriculum, it helps **equip households** to teach the faith at home.

If parents and other adults spend time meditating on and discussing the narratives of the Bible while the younger generations in the congregation study the same narratives, then there will be greater opportunity throughout the week to **reflect together** on what the narrative says and what it means. In other words, studying the narratives of the Bible as adults is a blessing in and of itself, but it also helps **equip parents and faith leaders** to be more confident and feel empowered to extend those conversations into the household.

FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

This study guide is meant to provide some guidelines and springboards for discussion in your Bible study groups.

- The **first page** of each lesson provides the central focus statements, not only for the Adult level, but also for the other levels. Use this as a way to orient yourself to the **main themes and goals** of the lessons across all levels. You'll also find helpful **tips for preparation**.
- The **middle two pages** begin with an introductory **"Launch"** section, which provides prompts for beginning the study and an open-ended reflection question to kick off group discussion. The following **"Learn & Live"** section breaks down the text into three to five narrative sections. Each one of these sections has some additional commentary, a reflection question, and some helps to better understand possible answers to the reflection question. The **"Leave"** section provides prompts for a final reflection question and some other considerations to close the lesson. The **sidebars** include leader tips and bonus activities to help you think through options for extending the lesson.
- The **final page** of each lesson is the student piece. Copy one lesson handout per learner, and distribute this at the beginning of class.

TIPS FOR USE

This study guide is designed primarily to help give you, the leader, some thoughts and prompts to help guide and assist facilitation of the class. Below are some tips for how to use it.

- This is meant to be a Bible study, so each learner will need access to a Bible. Encourage your learners to bring their own to class.
- Don't neglect the lesson handout. The primary reason for this page is to create some space for each learner to reflect and engage the questions on his or her own. Often, any given group will have one or two vocal learners and others who may not speak up. Consider using techniques to help engage all learners in the process, such as having each learner write down his or her reflection privately before sharing, having each learner share with a partner before opening up discussion, or changing the seating arrangements to create small groups.
- Use the opening reflection question as a time to build community. Adult learners, generally speaking, desire to share their experience with one another, and this lesson starter provides an opportunity for this.
- For each narrative section, ask volunteers to read the text aloud while the rest follow along. Don't force anyone; adults, like children and youth, may be self-conscious about their reading or public speaking ability.
- Download the Enduring Faith Page from the online digital resource center and hand out copies to your learners. Near the end of the lesson, talk through the prompts, which help the learners extend the lessons in their households throughout the week. Encourage learners to take this page home along with the lesson handout to be used throughout the week.

A WELCOME TRUTH

Mary and Martha
Luke 10:38–42
AD 31

BIBLE TRUTH

God gives us faith in Christ through His Word.

LEARNER GOAL

I can relate the narrative to how God desires that we prioritize our lives as His people today.

BIBLE VERSE

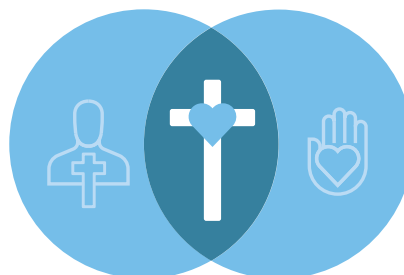
Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. John 6:68

LAW & GOSPEL

I get distracted from focusing on Jesus, my Savior. **God forgives my sins and guides me as I study His Word.**

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Jesus and His disciples visit the home of sisters Mary and Martha. Mary sits at the Lord's feet to hear His words. Martha, busy with meal preparations, asks Jesus to tell Mary to help. Instead, Jesus gently tells Martha that Mary has chosen the more important thing.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God gives me His Word as the Spirit leads me in faith.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can focus on God's Word as I read and hear it.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can relate the narrative to how God desires that we prioritize our lives as His people today.

YOUTH

I can describe the one thing necessary—faith in Christ received through God's Word.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that God gives faith in Christ through His Word.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God wants me to listen to His Word.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

MORE TIME Read the Third Commandment in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2017).

IN DEPTH Read John 11 and 12:1–7 in *TLSB* with study notes for more on the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.



LEADER NOTE

Encourage your learners to break into groups or pairs and make short lists. This question is not meant to turn into a gripe session but to start a discussion about things that cause anxiety in a congregation, including keeping the lights on, the pews filled, or the youth group from making a mess. Give your learners some time, then encourage them to share their anxieties. Finally, have a brief discussion about where your learners put listening to the Word of God on their lists. How do anxieties get in the way of our faithful reception of the Word? Then go into the lesson.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Consider looking over John 11 and 12:1–7 for more information about the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, or encourage your learners to read these passages on their own. What else do we learn about this family from this text?

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

OPENING REFLECTION

What, do you suppose, are the top five anxieties of your congregation right now, and why?

LEARN & LIVE

LUKE 10:38–39

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Jesus and His disciples enter a village, almost certainly Bethany, not far from Jerusalem, and are graciously welcomed into the home of Martha. Here Jesus and His disciples continue the pattern of evangelism begun by the seventy-two whom Jesus sent out into the villages ahead of Him to proclaim the Kingdom of God (vv. 1–12, 17–20). It may seem curious that Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, is not mentioned in this passage. Instead, the focus rests on the dichotomy of the two sisters. Martha welcomes Jesus and His followers, likely including the Twelve but possibly more, into her home. There, Mary sits at the feet of Jesus, obviously signaling her belief that Jesus is a Rabbi. This position, sitting and listening at the feet of a master teacher, is one of humility and openness. Jesus often had many people, including known sinners, sitting at His feet and listening while He taught. Mary and Martha's positions set the stage for Jesus to teach us to listen.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What, do you think, is so telling about Mary's posture in this scene? What does this reveal about her, and what can we learn from her example today?

REFLECTION HELPS

Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus as He teaches, a spot reserved not only for His disciples but also for the crowds of sinners who sit and listen to His voice. This shows Mary's humility and eagerness to listen to God's Word. Today, we can learn from Mary by humbly holding God's Word sacred, receiving it with glad and eager hearts for life.

LUKE 10:40

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Martha, distracted by her work, is indignant with her sister. She is so filled with self-righteous frustration that she rails against Jesus, hinting that He may not care that she has to do the serving alone and demanding that He command Mary to help her. On the one hand, it's easy to see the folly of Martha's words; she has no right to say Jesus doesn't care and should do as she demands. At the same time, we see in Martha a mirror of our own sinful flesh, which turns something good, like serving others, into a way to justify our own biases and priorities in living as God's people.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Looking over the text, is Martha a sympathetic figure to you? Why or why not? Do you think you would respond similarly or differently, and why?

REFLECTION HELPS

Answers will vary. The point is to get people thinking about their own attitude toward listening to God's Word.

LUKE 10:41-42

BIBLE COMMENTARY

One can only imagine the scene. Mary has been listening to Jesus, sitting at His feet like so many of His followers, both great and lowly, had done before. And here Martha furiously comes to Jesus, practically scolding Him for letting her sister listen rather than help with the hosting duties. Jesus has every right to scold Martha in return. But instead, Jesus gives Martha the words she needs. He gently reminds her that her troubles, though seemingly important, are not as important as the one thing necessary: listening to Him. Though Mary could have helped, she knows the most important thing is to heed His words. Jesus does not belittle Martha, but redirects her and urges her to reconsider her priorities. As God's people, we are all called to serve one another. This is a good and beneficial thing. However, that call to serve sometimes overshadows our priority to listen to Jesus, and we forget the one thing needful. In the Church today, we would be wise to continually listen to Jesus' instruction here, never letting any worries, logistical challenges, or programs take priority over our faithfully and joyfully receiving the gifts of God's Word for life.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Look carefully over the text, examining Jesus' words. Then, based on those words and other portions of this narrative, contrast Mary and Martha here. What is one thing you can learn about God's desire for us as His people today from this contrast?

REFLECTION HELPS

Jesus gently prompts Martha to not be so worried about the troubles of life that she forgets the most important thing: listening to Him. Martha, desiring to serve, let the anxieties of hosting a gathering blind her to her sister's need to listen to Jesus. It's true that God calls us to serve one another, but He desires that we never let the anxieties of logistics and management in the church supersede or overshadow our primary need to listen to Him, continually receiving the gifts of His Word for life.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

Relate the narrative to how God desires that we prioritize our lives as His people today.

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Pages.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray as you prepare to leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

A core teaching of this lesson is the Third Commandment. This is a short lesson, so consider taking a closer look at this commandment in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2017). Talk about what living this commandment looks like in your congregation, at home, and in society. Then, brainstorm ways your learners can reinforce this teaching at home, especially if they have children.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ, the Word of God in the flesh, has the words of eternal life. We listen to Him, and He gives us His gifts.



LEADER NOTE

Though service is good and important, God desires that we prioritize listening to His Word. We should let no distractions, anxieties, or worries tempt us away from faithfully receiving God's gifts for life.

A WELCOME TRUTH

BIBLE TRUTH

God gives faith in Christ through His Word.

LEARNER GOAL

I can relate the narrative to how God desires that we prioritize our lives as His people today.

BIBLE VERSE

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. John 6:68

ADULT
Unit 8
LESSON HANDOUT
Lesson 1

Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38–42

REFLECTIONS

OPENING REFLECTION What, do you suppose, are the top five anxieties of your congregation right now, and why?

LUKE 10:38–39 What, do you think, is so telling about Mary’s posture in this scene? What does this reveal about her, and what can we learn from her example today?

LUKE 10:40 Looking over the text, is Martha a sympathetic figure to you? Why or why not? Do you think you would respond similarly or differently, and why?

LUKE 10:41-42 Look carefully over the text, examining Jesus' words. Then, based on those words and other portions of this narrative, contrast Mary and Martha here. What is one thing you can learn about God's desire for us as God's people today from this contrast?

FINAL REFLECTION Relate the narrative to how God desires that we prioritize our lives as His people today.

NOTES

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LOST-AND-FOUND WONDERS

Jesus Seeks the Lost
Luke 15
AD 31

BIBLE TRUTH

Jesus seeks lost sinners.

LEARNER GOAL

I can analyze the text to understand what it means that Jesus seeks lost sinners like me.

BIBLE VERSE

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Luke 19:10

LAW & GOSPEL

Because of my sin, I am lost from God. **My heavenly Father does not abandon me, but seeks me out, forgives me completely for Jesus' sake, and keeps me safe in faith.**

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

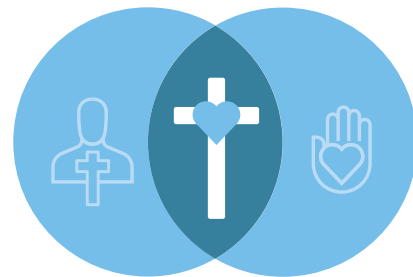
Jesus shares three parables demonstrating our heavenly Father's concern for the lost. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine sheep to seek one that was lost. A woman sweeps the house to find one of ten silver coins. In the parable of the lost son, a young man squanders his inheritance, ending up in squalor. Determined to plead for his father's mercy and beg to return as a servant, the son instead receives a celebration. Angered at his father's welcome for the prodigal, the older son confronts his father. The father's gentle response reassures the young man of the father's everlasting love and care.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

MORE TIME Read the notes on religious groups in *TLSB* pages 1556–57.

IN-DEPTH Read the articles in *TLSB* pages 2230–2231.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God seeks all who are lost and separated from Him.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I have been sought and redeemed by Christ, my Savior.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can analyze the text to understand what it means that Jesus seeks lost sinners like me.

YOUTH

I can give biblical examples to show how Jesus seeks lost sinners.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that Jesus comes to find lost sinners like me.

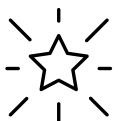
EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God is my loving, forgiving Father.



LEADER NOTE

For many, the experience of being temporarily separated from a parent or child is all too real. Parents and children can easily lose each other in a public place, and even a short separation can feel like an eternity. Encourage your learners to briefly share, in pairs or small groups, any experience they have with this. The point is to get them thinking about the experience of desperately seeking after a lost loved one. The text today deals with three parables that are all related to God's desire to seek and save the lost in Christ. Point your learners to this as you move into the text.



BONUS ACTIVITY

It may be useful to take a few moments to orient or reorient your learners with the religious groups in Jesus' day, notably the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees. Information about these groups can be found in *TLSB* pages 1556–57 and 719–720.

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

OPENING REFLECTION

Have you ever temporarily lost a child (or been lost as a child) in a store? What did you feel like and why?

LEARN & LIVE

LUKE 15:1–7

BIBLE COMMENTARY

As Jesus continues His ministry of proclaiming the Gospel, many tax collectors and sinners draw near to Him. Tax collectors are reviled for their apparent betrayal of their people, while sinners include a variety of people who have committed openly sinful acts. Jesus' meal with them does not indicate His condoning of their behavior; rather the opposite. These are those who have heard the Gospel message and have repented of their sins. They acknowledge their sins and their need for forgiveness. This is in contrast to the Pharisees and the scribes, or leaders, who grumble at Jesus' prolonged and intentional interaction with these wicked, though repentant, people over a meal. Jesus, in response to the Pharisees, tells three successive parables, all aimed primarily at the Pharisees, pointing out their hypocrisy and their need for repentance just like the sinners who dine with Jesus. The first is a parable of a shepherd who seeks out a lost sheep. The shepherd in the parable is not likely working alone, and his seeking the lost sheep is not at the expense of the safety of the ninety-nine. Instead, it illustrates what any competent and decent shepherd would do. This works on several levels, including pointing out what Jesus, the Good Shepherd, does for the lost and unbelieving world. He actively seeks and rescues lost sinners from the clutches of hell, bringing people to repentance and faith by His Word, at which all heaven rejoices. The scribes, or shepherds of the people, have hardened their hearts to God's heart for bringing sinners to repentance.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Using language from the text, what different messages is Jesus sending to the Pharisees? How might these messages apply to God's people, the Church, today?

REFLECTION HELPS

Some messages of this parable are: God rejoices when sinners repent, the Pharisees need to repent, and the Pharisees should be the "shepherds" of God's people and seek the lost as Jesus does.

LUKE 15:8–10

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Jesus tells a second parable, related to the first. This time, a woman loses a coin in her home and fervently seeks to find it. She seeks with a lamp, possibly representing the work of the Word of God in the seeking. When she finds the coin, there is much rejoicing. Both parables show, in both dramatic and commonplace ways, God's perspective on Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost and how all heaven rejoices when sinners come to repentance.

REFLECTION QUESTION

How does this second parable build upon the first, and why does that matter?

REFLECTION HELPS

It's a woman doing a more simple task, implying God's seeking happens in both dramatic and more mundane ways.

LUKE 15:11–24

BIBLE COMMENTARY

This parable extends the lessons of the previous two parables, contrasting two sons and showing their father's love for both of them. We should see the parallels between this example and the Father's love for both sinners and the Pharisees. In this parable, the younger son asks his father to give him his inheritance early, not only a social faux pas but also highly disrespectful to his father. Amazingly, the father agrees. The younger son then goes far away and wastes the inheritance money, likely on highly sinful and selfish ventures. Finally humiliated, feeding unclean pigs and starving in a foreign land, the son comes to his senses, making up his mind to go back home and become a servant to his father, who he knows is merciful. This initial repentance seems somewhat self-serving. To everyone's amazement, however, the father not only accepts the son, but restores him, cutting him off before the son can even complete his well-rehearsed confession! The father, fully overwhelmed by the return of his wayward son, shows not only mercy but also grace. The son is fully accepted and restored to a right relationship, all by His father's work.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Contrast the son's repentance to the father's reaction at the son's return. What message might this be sending the Pharisees about the nature of God's grace? What might we learn from this about our identity in Christ?

REFLECTION HELPS

The son initially showed repentance for his acts, but it appeared to be mostly for self-preservation. The father, however, not only has mercy but also shows full grace. The Pharisees likely saw the repentance of the tax collectors and sinners as being self-serving, but Jesus showed that the Father has grace for all who repent.

LUKE 15:25–32

BIBLE COMMENTARY

The parable turns back to the older brother, who is angry at his father for accepting his brother. The older brother is most angry at the feast and the father's lavish celebration at the younger son's return. The older son even makes a public spectacle of his self-righteous indignation. He is putting his relationship with his father in jeopardy, even as his father restores the relationship with his younger son. The scene ends without resolution. Will the older son see his father's perspective and go in to join the feast, or will he harden his heart and walk away? After three parables, the Pharisees and the scribes are left with this same decision. We thank God that in Christ He gives us true repentance!

REFLECTION QUESTION

In what ways is the older son like the scribes and Pharisees? What are we to learn from this as we live out our callings as God's people today?

REFLECTION HELPS

Jealous at his brother's treatment and angry at his father's mercy, the older son willingly fractures his relationship with his father. God's grace does not work like human repentance.

LEAVE

FINAL REFLECTION

Note different insights from the text that help you understand what it means that Jesus seeks sinners like you.

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Pages.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray before you leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

A very interesting and prominent theme throughout these parables, as throughout Luke, is the theme of table fellowship, with all three parables ending in rejoicing and a feast. If you have time, talk about what that might mean or foreshadow, considering the importance of the Lord's Supper as a foretaste of that feast to come. For more, check out *TLSB* pages 2230–2231.



CHRIST CONNECTION

By His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ has sought me out, forgiven me, and called me to be His forever.



LEADER NOTE

Possible insights include: I am lost without Jesus, God rejoices over bringing people to repentance, and I should avoid the sinful hypocrisy of the Pharisees and welcome the sinners God brings to His people in Christ.

LOST-AND-FOUND WONDERS

ADULT
Unit 8
LESSON HANDOUT
Lesson 2

BIBLE TRUTH

Jesus seeks lost sinners.

LEARNER GOAL

I can perceive from the text different insights into what it means that Jesus seeks lost sinners like me.

BIBLE VERSE

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Luke 19:10

Jesus Seeks the Lost

Luke 15

REFLECTIONS

OPENING REFLECTION Have you ever temporarily lost a child (or been lost as a child) in a store? What did you feel like and why?

LUKE 15:1-7 Using language from the text, what different messages is Jesus sending to the Pharisees? How might these messages apply to God's people, the Church, today?

LUKE 15:8–10 How does this second parable build upon the first, and why does that matter?

LUKE 15:11–24 Contrast the son’s repentance to the father’s reaction at the son’s return. What message might this be sending the Pharisees about the nature of God’s grace? What might we learn from this about our identity in Christ?

LUKE 15:25–32 In what ways is the older son like the scribes and Pharisees? What are we to learn from this as we live out our callings as God’s people today?

FINAL REFLECTION Note different insights from the text that help you understand what it means that Jesus seeks sinners like you.

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