

Week Two - Pursue People Like Never Before

Luke 14:15-24

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. When was a time that you actively pursued a goal or a relationship? What kinds of action and time and focus did that require?
2. Now read a parable about pursuing guests for a banquet, Luke 14:15-24. Why is Jesus telling this particular story to His listeners?
3. Parables are deceptive in their simplicity. It's often quite difficult to figure out which parts of a parable represent which things. For this parable: Who do you think the master of the banquet represents? Who do the first round of guests making excuses represent? Who are the second round of guests, the crippled and blind and the ones from the roads and lanes?
4. Are *you* represented by any of the figures in this parable?
5. What does the wedding banquet in the story represent in our lives?
6. What did you do to deserve your invitation to God's eternal feast in heaven?
7. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer, thanking God that He searched for you and found you to invite you to His wedding feast.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

8. Let's look again at the deceptively simple parable from yesterday. Re-read Luke 14:15-24. As a refresher, who does the master represent? Who do the different sets of guests represent?
9. What does this parable reveal about God's priorities?
10. How legitimate do you think the first guests' excuses were for skipping the party?
11. How might this same attitude affect believers today? What are ways that we decline God's invitations to us?
12. If this were a real-world story, we would likely pity or scorn a party host who is so desperate for guests that he

grabs ragamuffins and undesirables off the street. So, if the host represents God, in what ways do you agree or disagree with God's actions?

13. Is it accurate to say that God is foolish for being willing to reach, love and rescue people who want nothing to do with Him? What does that say about how we should act toward those who are not believers?
14. Finish your FIFTEEN by praying and asking God to give you some of his "foolish" love for people who don't love him.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

15. Jesus continues His teaching on God's pursuit of the lost with two more parables in Luke 15:1-10.
16. Again, it's always important to start with parables by identifying what the parts represent. Who is the shepherd? Who are the 99 sheep? Who does the lost sheep represent?
17. With which character/characters do you think you're supposed to identify?
18. In the coin parable, who does the woman represent? Who are the nine silver coins? Who is the one lost coin?
19. Again, which part of the story represents you?
20. Who is God's priority, the people who already know and love Him or the people who are lost? Why do you think this is?
21. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to open your eyes to the lost coins and lost sheep who are all around you in this life.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

22. We've spent this week looking at three parables that show God's priority for pursuing the lost. What might it look like in practice for your church to show the same priority?
23. Read this quote from CFW Walther, the founder of the LCMS: "What an influence it will be on our dear congregations and their pastors and on their relationship toward one another if all acknowledge the saving of souls as the end and aim of our joint work! Whatever will win the most souls for Christ, that would decide between us."

How well would you say the LCMS follows this admonition? How well does St. John? How well do *you* do at treating the saving of souls as your top priority?

24. Read Luke 19:9-10. What does Jesus say is His mission statement? How well does this match Walther's mission for the LCMS?
25. What programs do you think a church should have if it's going to make seeking and saving the lost its top priority? What would its members need to commit to doing?
26. For help with this question, look back at Luke 19 and see what actions Jesus performed immediately before stating His mission. How was Jesus practically seeking the lost?
27. How might you practically seek the lost?
28. Close your FIFTEEN with prayer, asking for God to provide opportunities for you to form connections with lost people.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

29. Have you ever crossed paths with someone involved in a multi-level marketing program or a pyramid scheme? What was that experience like?
30. One negative of those programs is that salespeople feign interest in others for the sake of selling them something. They tell lots of stories of their own success, without truly caring about the story of those they're pursuing for financial gain. Look again at Luke 19:1-10. How was Jesus' approach different from that of a salesperson?
31. Pursuing the lost isn't about selling them our story; it's about loving them and then helping them see the connection between their story and God's story. Think of the unbelievers that are in your sphere of influence. How well do you know their stories?
32. What can you do to be more connected to their stories?
33. The best way to pursue the lost is to care as much about their individual stories as you do about your church programs. St. John offers lots of opportunities to connect with those stories, such as our Christ In Action committee, our partnership with Bryan Hill Elementary and our new initiative for a house church movement. Commit to learning more about the stories of those around you.

34. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to show you if any of these ministries are where He's calling you to serve in this season.