

SERIES OVERVIEW

Jesus used parables to challenge assumptions about God and people. Across this series, students will explore belonging, grace, and God's pursuit of those who feel far away.

BOTTOM LINE

Your value to God does not depend on your status, performance, or reputation.

SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 15:1-7 together. Religious leaders criticize Jesus for welcoming and eating with people they considered outsiders. Jesus responds with a story about a shepherd who searches for one lost sheep and celebrates finding it. Pay special attention to the joy in verse 7.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Use these prompts as a conversation, not a checklist. Students may pass on any personal question.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What is a label people at your school are quick to give someone? Where do labels come from?
- When can a first impression be useful, and when can it keep us from seeing a person clearly?
- Think of a character in a movie or book who was misunderstood. What changed how others saw them?

WHAT THE TEXT SAYS

- Who is drawn to Jesus in verses 1-2? Who objects, and what does their complaint reveal about their view of belonging?
- What stands out about the shepherd's response to one missing sheep? What does the celebration add to the story?
- Read verse 7 again. Why might Jesus connect being found with repentance and joy? What might his critics have needed to hear?

Leader note: Let students explore tension in the story. Avoid treating the sheep as a label for a classmate, and do not require anyone to disclose a personal struggle.

WHAT WE CAN DO

High school can make worth feel measurable: grades, college plans, teams, relationships, and online attention. Jesus' story offers a different picture of how God sees people.

- Which measures of worth are hardest for students to ignore? How do they shape the way people treat themselves or others?
- What would change if you believed your value remained steady when you failed, felt left out, or disappointed someone?
- When have you seen someone reduced to a reputation or one mistake? What would it look like to see the whole person?
- What is one genuine way to make room for someone who tends to be overlooked, without making them feel like a project?
- How could this group make space for honest questions and different experiences of faith?

PRAY TOGETHER

God, thank you that your love is not earned by our achievements or changed by our reputation. Help us recognize the labels we place on ourselves and others. Give us humility to listen, courage to welcome people well, and joy when someone finds their way toward you. Amen.

THIS WEEK Invite students to choose one step: (1) Identify a label or measure of worth they want to question. (2) Make one respectful effort to include someone they might usually overlook.