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**KEY TAKEAWAY**We’re all lost, but there’s a way home. Jesus wants to be our way home.

**KEY VERSES:**
Genesis 3:7, Romans 3:23, Luke 15:4–7, Genesis 29 & 30, Genesis 3:21

**INTRO**

A couple of years ago, I moved to the state of Florida, and everything about it felt strange to me. I didn’t know where anything was, and like most people, I relied heavily on my phone to get me everywhere. Siri was my compass, and I was getting everywhere I needed to go, but finally my luck had run out—or at least my phone’s battery did. I had a meeting with some other youth pastors. The location was over two hours away, and the meeting took another three hours, and in that time, my phone’s battery life had dropped to 5%.

My two-hour commute turned into over three hours because my tactic for finding my way home was flawed. I tried retracing my steps, but that got me more lost. I even tried following people that looked like they might be wanting to go where I was wanting to go—believe me I know how ridiculous that sounds. Eventually I made my way home, because I kept my eyes open for the right signs that would guide me back home.

Have you ever gotten lost before? Maybe you couldn’t find your way in a new school, or maybe it was driving for the first time, and even Siri had no idea where you were. Being lost feels horrible. Some people might panic, most of us feel lonely or stupid, and some of you get a little angry when you’re lost. Feeling lost is the worst, and every one of us will feel it eventually.

In fact, there’s a chapter in the Bible in which Jesus talks about how three different sets of people got lost and are missing, and tonight we’re going to talk about the first “lost” story. But before we can even get to that, we need to talk about the original lost people. These were the first people in humanity to ever get lost and feel the panic of it all. I’m talking about Adam and Eve.

**LOST**

In case you’re not familiar with this couple, let me catch you up. Adam and Eve’s story can be found in the book of Genesis, and the main thing you need to know is that they had the perfect relationship with God. There wasn’t a single need that wasn’t fulfilled, so when they talked with God they didn’t give Him this giant wish list of things like you and I do when we pray. When they talked to God, it was because they genuinely wanted to hang out with Him, and He wanted to hang out with them, as well. The three of them had a close friendship, and it was perfect.

But eventually, Adam and Eve broke God’s one rule. They ate fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. By doing this, they were telling God that He was not good enough for them and that He was holding out on them. This was their way of saying, “We don’t trust you, and we’re not as close as you thought we were.” Sounds pretty heart-wrenching. As soon as they ate the fruit, as soon as they made that decision, here’s what happened:

*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.* (Genesis 3:7, ESV)

The second these two broke this famous rule, they heard a voice they had never heard before. It’s a voice that you and I know all too well. It’s that voice that whispers, “You’re not good enough. She’s prettier. He’s faster. You don’t even compare …” Adam and Eve were hearing this voice for the first time, and it whispered, “You’re naked and exposed, and when God finds you, you’re gonna get it!” This voice has a name: shame.

**COMPARISON COMPASS**

Because of what Adam and Eve did in the beginning, we’re all sick with a disease the Bible calls sin. The symptoms of this disease include things like lying, cheating, murder, lust, and a slew of other issues that we all tend to act out. But a symptom is a body’s way of communicating that something is wrong. So these symptoms are trying to communicate that there is something wrong with humanity. Paul tells us in **Romans 3:23:**

*“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*

What Paul is saying is, because of Adam and Eve, we are all lost. We have no idea where we are going. Every one of us is navigating blindly through life. Just like I was lost without Siri, we’re lost without God. So what do we do? We try to look for the signs. Maybe that exit will take us where we want to go.

Maybe if I chase popularity, that will take me home. Maybe if I take the “relationship” exit, I’ll find the love that will make me feel safe. Success seems like a good route to take. If I can be the best or the smartest, then I’ll feel good about myself.

None of these exits are wrong in themselves, but at the end of the day, these exits are distractions. You’ll be fighting for popularity with every decision and action until you eventually forget who you really are. Relationships eventually become difficult, and the honeymoon newness fades and you will start looking for another relationship to feel whole. That success that you keep getting will fade at the end of the day, and you’ll need yet another win in order to feel alive.

So when we can’t follow the signs, we do the next best thing, which is actually the next-worst thing. We start comparing our lives to other people.

Remember how I tried to follow other cars in the hopes that they would take me home? That’s what comparisons do. We all have this little compass that we’re secretly using to navigate life with, and that compass is called *comparison*.

Since we all have fallen short and we’re all lost, what better way to feel better about yourself than by comparing your life to others? You might be a sinner, but you’re not as bad as that one guy. You might be lost, but that one girl is so lost, she doesn’t have a chance. You tell yourself that you’re closer to home than other people, but at the end of the day, you are still lost.

**JACOB, LEAH, AND RACHEL**

When I think about the comparison compass, I’m reminded of a story in Genesis 29 that is awkward, in every sense of the word. You’ve got this guy named Jacob, who has run away from home to a foreign land, and when he gets there he sees the most beautiful woman ever. He’s so madly in love with her that he goes straight up to her father, Laban, and tells him that he will do anything to marry his daughter, Rachel. So Laban strikes up a deal, and tells Jacob that he has to work for seven years—and then he can marry his daughter.

The Bible is poetic describing Jacob’s attitude. It says that the seven years felt like nothing because he loved Rachel that much. So seven years go by, and Jacob demands that Laban give him his daughter. So Laban throws this huge wedding feast, the kind that would be talked about for years. Food and drinks are being consumed left and right, and Laban gets Jacob completely drunk. The next morning, Jacob doesn’t wake up next to the beautiful Rachel—he wakes up next to her sister, Leah. Leah was not known for her beauty. In fact, her name means “weak eyes,” which is the Bible’s way of saying, “She has a great personality …”

Jacob is furious! He runs to Laban, screaming, “I thought we had a deal! You tricked me into marrying ‘Weak Eyes’!” Laban casually confesses that it would be weird to just give away his younger daughter while his older daughter is still unmarried. So he strikes another deal with Jacob: stay married to Leah, agree to work seven more years, and I’ll let you marry Rachel *today*. Jacob agrees to the new terms, and now we have one angry guy with two wives.

But our story doesn’t end there. This is when the comparison compass takes its toll on these three newlyweds. Genesis 29:31 opens with one of the most harsh intros ever about a character:

*When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren …*

Leah was hated by Jacob and Rachel because Jacob and Rachel were in love, and she was the third wheel in all of this. Her father used her as a bargaining chip to get some free slave labor, so we know he didn’t care about her, either. Leah’s self-worth is in the dumps. The Bible is blunt in saying that she is *hated*. So what does she do? She starts having kids to please Jacob. Since Rachel is barren and can’t have kids, maybe she can make her husband happy by giving him children.

So Leah gives birth to a son, and she names him “Reuben,” which translates to “behold a son.” The way that she names her son is like her screaming at Jacob: “Notice me! Please, just look what I did! I gave birth for you!”

After Reuben is born, Leah makes this statement: “Maybe now my husband will love me …” Leah is comparing her life to Rachel’s, so she takes the exit ramp of performance. But Leah is still hated and ignored. So she tries performing again, and has another baby and says, “The Lord has heard that I am hated.” So she names her son Simeon, which means “heard.” But Leah is *still* hated and ignored. So she has another baby and sys, “Now Jacob will attach to me, because I have given him three sons!” So she names him Levi, which means “attached.”

The voice of shame that whispers in your brain when you look in the mirror—the same voice that attacked Adam and Eve—was attacking Leah. “You don’t compare, Rachel is prettier, and Jacob never wanted you. Your own father hates you and sold you off like cattle. Keep performing Leah, maybe you’ll find acceptance if you could just perform better …”

**FOUND BY ACCEPTANCE**

When we try to find our way home by using comparisons, we will always end up more lost than ever. Leah was using the comparison compass, and she was taking any exit ramp she could find in order to find just a little bit of acceptance. Even though she was so lost, what she didn’t know was that God was chasing after her this entire time. Every moment that Leah felt hated or unloved, God was there chasing after her lost heart. When Leah wanted to be noticed by Jacob, God noticed her. When she wished to be heard, God heard her.

Leah’s story is your story. The same way that God chased after Leah’s lost heart, Jesus is chasing after yours. He is chasing after you because He knows that you’re lost. Sometimes we hate ourselves so much that we could never imagine that Jesus would ever want us that much.

It’s hard to imagine why Jesus would chase after one person, but this is what He says about you:

*“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?”* (Luke 15:4)

What you need to understand is that this parable about sheep is Jesus’s way of going to war with the voice of shame. That voice might whisper in your heart that you’re insignificant and that no one really cares about you. But Jesus is saying the opposite. Jesus is telling a crowd of thousands of people, “God hates that you’re lost, and I’m here to do something about it. You matter to heaven, and you matter to me.”

But then, the voice of shame keeps whispering: “Oh! God is looking for you? When he finds you, He’s going to rub your nose in your mistakes. He’s going to find you and give you your report card and let you know how much of a failure you are. You matter to God? Only because you owe him a debt. No one chases after the lost without wanting something in return. When God finds you, He’s going to give you the tongue-lashing you deserve. You, sheep, are dumb, and the Shepherd is going to let you have it!”

But Jesus continues:

*And when he has found the lost sheep, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.* (Luke 15:5)

When Jesus finds the lost, He rejoices. He doesn’t celebrate our mistakes; he celebrates because He found you, and He wants to carry you home. He won’t rub your nose in your mistakes. He’s happy that He found someone who means the world to Him. And He won’t put you on a leash and make you walk back home. He picks you up and carries the lost sheep. He offers His strength and does the legwork of taking the sheep home. Jesus isn’t just telling a whimsical story about sheep … He’s on a warpath against shame, and that voice of shame is scared.

That voice in your head is freaking out now. It knows that heaven has its sights on you. It knows that something big is coming, and it wants to keep you away from ever experiencing it. But if you want to experience the acceptance of Jesus, you have to step out of your comparisons and into God’s acceptance.

Remember how Leah kept comparing her life to Jacob and Rachel? Remember how it robbed her of being happy and experiencing God’s acceptance? Well, Leah had a fourth child, and check out how her reaction changed:

*And Leah conceived again and bore a son “This time I will praise the Lord.” Therefore she called his name Judah.* (Genesis 29:35)

Leah’s attitude changes, and instead of comparing her happiness to others, she steps into God’s acceptance. “This time I will praise the Lord,” is a powerful statement.

This time I’ll take my eyes off of other people, and I’ll fix my eyes on Jesus. This time I’ll stop trying to find home on my own, and I’ll let Jesus rescue me. So many of you are trying to find your way home. You’re trapped, trying to overcome your imperfections, but they’ve overcome you and there’s no way out. But Jesus wants to come and rescue you and bring you home.

Not only does Leah find God’s acceptance, but the name she gives her new son reveals what’s going on in her heart. His name is Judah, which means “hands reaching out.” She is no longer reaching out to things that fail her or lead her away, but she’s reaching out to a God who loves her.

Tonight, most of you are reaching out to things that will get you lost. Step out of your comparisons and into God’s acceptance. Take your eyes off of others and start looking to Jesus. Start reaching upward to Jesus, because He’s been reaching out to you this entire time.

You can’t walk away tonight without knowing this truth: every one of us is born lost, but there’s a way home. Jesus wants to be your way home, because He is the only way home. But if you don’t want to be lost anymore, it’s going to require something of you.

**1.** **You have to admit you’re lost.** We’re all sinful, and we’ve all fallen short of the glory of God, and there is nothing we can do to change that.

**2.** **Surrender to Jesus.** When we can admit that we’re lost, the next step is to say that Jesus is our only way to Salvation. Without Him, we would be left in a life of wandering and an eternity in hell, separated from God’s love. But if we surrender to Jesus, He will lead us home. Surrendering to Jesus means giving Him full control of your life. It’s saying, “He can do whatever He wants with my life, and I will follow Him.”

When we do this, whether we are giving our lives to Jesus for the first time or we’re coming back to Him for the 500th time, your decision has eternal significance.

*And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.* (Luke 15:6-7)

When one sinner repents and gives their life to Jesus, heaven throws a party. When one person comes back to God’s love, all of heaven celebrates.

This series is called *Now You See Me*, and you probably thought that tonight’s message was about God finding you and seeing you for the first time. But God has seen you this entire time. In fact, He’s been reaching out to you this entire time.

When we talk about this idea of “Now You See Me,” it’s actually about *you* seeing *God* for the first time. God was reaching out to Leah the entire time, and she finally saw that and decided to reach out and accept God’s love. Jesus has been reaching out to you this entire time. Will you accept His love for you?

Let’s pray.