

**RESOURCES
FOR A
CHURCH-WIDE
EMPHASIS**

REACHING THE ONE: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

*If the ax is dull
and its edge unsharpened,
more strength is needed,
but skill will bring success.
(Ecclesiastes 10:10 NIV)*

As a child of God, most likely you already buy into the idea of an evangelistic life emphasis, even a church-wide culture dedicated to reaching the Ones in your community. But the question lingers, *How do we get started?*

So often our hearts are eager to serve, to reach, and to love those around us in Jesus's name, but how do we do that effectively in our various contexts? People have written many books on *why* we should be active in living out the Great Commission, but *how* we do that can be challenging. We need to develop and continue to refine the skills necessary to reach those far from Christ in our local areas of influence.

The materials that follow are some ideas that you may want to consider as you develop a plan to become even more intentional in living out the Great Commission in real and vital ways. They have worked in our local setting, and we believe they can help you too. Our hope is that you will

take these strategies and adapt them for your situation. The goal is to become consistently focused on reaching those far from God. Actually developing systems that perpetuate a culture of invitation and welcome is the ultimate end.

Ideally, this can be done on a church-wide level, but it is best lived out in personal ways. So, if you do not have the authority to institute church-wide change, then implement where you can. A Sunday school class, small group, Bible study group, youth group, or even just a group of friends can commit to using many of these principles to develop strategies to live into the Great Commission in effective ways.

Before we get into *how* to create a church-wide synergy around evangelism, we want to encourage you not to become discouraged when you see ideas that will be challenging in your setting.

Every new venture has challenges. You will face roadblocks. Barriers will stand in your way, so before you read further, we hope you will choose an attitude of "how do we make this work?" as opposed to "this won't work." Begin to meditate on what's possible as opposed to what stands in your way.

Overcoming your obstacles will be key to effectiveness in instituting real change. In our leadership book *Start This, Stop That* (Abingdon Press) we share about the practice of overcoming obstacles.

One of our kids' favorite games is what we call "So/But." Here's how it works. We begin a story with "so," such as, "So, I was going to the greatest toy store ever to buy you a gift, but..."

Then one of the kids takes over: "But, there was a giant gorilla wearing lipstick that tried to attack me, so..."

It's my turn again: "So, I became a ninja warrior and attacked that giant gorilla, but..."

REACHING THE ONE: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Then the kids throw me another obstacle: "But the gorilla had studied karate under Chuck Norris and your ninja warrior skills were of no use, so..."

On and on it goes until finally we overcome all of their obstacles and accomplish the goal.

In ministry you are going to have obstacles. Jesus told us, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NIV). You are going to have obstacles in life. These are your Buts. Some of you have some big Buts in your lives right now: "I'd like to reach out to the unchurched, *but* my congregation doesn't seem to care." "We would love to have a dynamic children's program, *but* no one will volunteer to lead it." On and on it goes. Move past the excuses and change the conjunction. Instead of saying *but*, say *so*. For example, "The congregation has not been excited about reaching out to the unchurched, *so* our next sermon series is focused on the Great Commission and what God is calling us to do in our area." The *So* helps move the congregation past the paralysis caused by the giant, pink-lipstick-wearing gorilla in the room to a stage of problem solving.

As Harvest experienced rapid growth, we had no space to accommodate large numbers of children. We were meeting in a theater and had a limited number of spaces. One weekend we had more than fifty children in one classroom-type setting. At best it was controlled chaos. So, we had to come up with a new way of doing Christian education. The traditional Sunday school setting would not work. Out of necessity, we assessed our options and created what we call the "carpet group system." Instead of having

THE ONE

each theater accommodate one group in a classroom-type setting, we put down different colored carpets and assigned eight to twelve children per carpet with a leader. Using this system, we were able to grow in the same space to handle 250 children at once.

Instead of giving up, when faced with a big But, we kept struggling until we discovered a So. It has worked. In fact, as we designed our new facility, we chose to keep our carpet system. (This decision saved us millions of dollars, by the way.)

All too often, when we encounter obstacles, we are overwhelmed. Instead of facing the obstacle with faith, tenacity, and creativity, we allow the obstacle to win. When Moses led the Hebrew people across the desert to the promised land, do you remember what happened? "This was their report to Moses: 'We arrived in the land you sent us to see, and it is indeed a magnificent country—a land flowing with milk and honey.... But the people living there are powerful....' They spread discouraging reports" (Num. 13:27-28, 32 NLT 1996). When ten of the twelve spies faced a significant obstacle, they not only were afraid but also panicked the people. An entire generation missed the promised land because ten spies got stuck on the But. An entire generation missed the blessing God had for them because a few people would not face their obstacle, which basically was fear. Only Caleb and Joshua said, So "if the LORD is pleased with us...they are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection.... Don't be afraid of them!" (Num. 14:8-9 NLT). When we look beyond the obstacle, we can move in faith.

To be clear: the Buts in your life are real. You have to face them and find ways of dealing with them.

REACHING THE ONE: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

There really were giants in Canaan; however, with God's help, Joshua and Caleb led a faithful generation to defeat them. Basically, we have two options as we face the future: fear or faith. An attitude of fear will give in to the obstacles. An attitude of faith will not give up until the obstacle has been overcome.

While consulting with a church in eastern Kentucky, we were presented with a challenge. Children no longer attended the church. Once we did the research, we discovered there were plenty of children in the area, but on Sunday mornings in that particular area, many children helped their parents with crops in the field. It was a relatively poor area, and on the weekend, during daylight hours, the entire family helped bring in the harvest. The church had a real But to face. "We would like to have children in our church, but they are busy on Sunday mornings." We helped them move toward a So: "So, move your programming to a weekday evening, and prepare a meal for the whole family." At first, some of the church folks complained because that was not their usual church time. It seemed an inconvenience to some members. To this pastor's credit, she did it anyway, and it worked.¹

So, as you begin to dream about implementing strategies to reach those far from God, you will come against obstacles. That's just part of the journey. *Don't give up too quickly!* Some of the "buts" you face may include criticism, lack of support, unenthusiastic leadership, fear, and financial limitations. These are real and will need to be addressed. But don't let them stop you!

1. Jennifer Cowart and Jim Cowart, *Start This, Stop That: Do the Things That Grow Your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 17-19.

First, we will address those of you who would NOT identify yourself as a leader in a local church setting—even if you might lead or facilitate a small group. Then we will address church leaders.

Reaching the One Outside a Leadership Role

As you think about how to become active in reaching the lost, you may think, *“But I’m not a leader. I don’t have a title or position in my local church.”* Don’t allow that to keep you from actively seeking to reach the lost in your sphere of influence. Leadership is all about influence—no title necessary. So, if you come in contact with other humans, then you have the potential for influence, which means you can be a leader at a personal level.

Honestly, the most success I (Jen) personally have had in leading people to Jesus is from the stage, but getting them into the doors of the church has happened at a much more personal level. It’s doing things like stopping to talk to the lady at the dry cleaner or inviting the guy who helps me get the groceries into the car. It’s looking for the moving van in the neighborhood and letting new people know we’d like to get to know them. It’s developing relationships with neighbors, the families of my kids’ classmates, and people I meet at the gym. By taking time to personally connect with people, you earn the privilege to then begin a relationship that ultimately may lead to the honor of sharing Jesus with them, or at least inviting them to church with you.

In my experience, an effective way to connect with people far from God is to lean in when you realize they are hurting. When people are in pain, they are more likely to share their story. When I see that pain with friends, acquaintances, and even strangers, I’ll often ask two simple questions:

1. What's going on?
2. How can I pray for you?

When I ask people if I can pray for them, I've noticed that no one has ever turned me down. Even if they don't believe in God! I guess they figure, *Well, if you're praying anyway, go ahead and include me/my marriage/my kids/my sickness—whatever.* Probably they are thinking, *Well, who knows, it couldn't hurt, I guess.* The point is that it opens a door for them to know that I love the Lord and I care about them. Both are important.

If it's appropriate, then I follow up with two more things:

1. What can I do to help?
2. I'd love for you to join me at church this week.

When you eat out, go to the gym, sit in the carpool line, go to the park, wherever, be ready to invite. Have your strategy ready and make it a practice to pray every morning, asking God to use you to share his love with those you meet. If you pray that in sincerity, you'll begin to see new opportunities around every corner, and it's exciting!

Reaching the One within a Leadership Role

Now, if you are a leader in the local church setting, your role is to help people move past their objections (buts) when it comes to living out Christ's commands. Here are three practical ways to help others move past their roadblocks:

1. Cast compelling biblical vision.
2. Pray.
3. Lead by example.

If you are the pastor, preach the vision. If you are a group leader, cast a fresh and compelling picture of what it would

THE ONE

be like to live on mission with God, reaching out to those who don't yet know him. The more clearly you are able to cast a clear biblical vision of a preferred future, the more likely it is that you will be able to achieve it. As you share this goal of being evangelistically alive, pray. Really pray. Ask God for clarity, wisdom, and breakthrough for a community-wide movement of life change. Then, just do it. Lead by example. If you want people to invite, become a champion inviter. If you want to see first-time guests, then start being the one to bring people with you to church and small group. Don't wait for a committee to vote or a steering team to plan. Just do it. Live into the Great Commission with abandon and watch God show up!

PLANNING A CHURCH-WIDE EMPHASIS

In our setting, we call a church-wide emphasis a campaign, but we hesitate to use that word because it is so often associated with a fund-raising movement. So, we suggest making the mental shift from using the word *campaign* to using *emphasis*, describing a broader multifaceted approach to creating a culture and even a movement that gets people working together toward a common goal.

At Harvest, we create a church-wide emphasis about twice a year. The emphasis varies, but the goals are the same: move people in the same direction, encourage them to join small groups, grow their faith, and give them something compelling to which they would want to invite their friends.

Themes we have used in the past have included: Here, Near and Far—a church on mission; If These Walls Could Talk—living out faith in your home; Big Questions—an apologetics series; Living the Five—implementing the five commands contained in the Great Commission and Great Commandment; and obviously, The One—a call to reaching those close to us who don't know Jesus. The topics of an emphasis may vary, but the basic components are consistent: Weekend

Messages, Small Group Materials, Prayer Support, Memory Verses, and Invitational Tools. (These will be discussed later in this chapter.)

Benefits of a Church-wide Emphasis

As you plan and create your church-wide emphasis to reach the One, you will have the opportunity to:

- cast fresh, compelling vision;
- brand your message within the church and community;
- teach biblical truths in creatively redundant fashion;
- stir up synergy among believers;
- motivate people to new behavior;
- move people into small groups; and
- give believers an “event” to invite their nonbelieving friends to attend.

In Acts we see the early church model the multifaceted approach of ministry. Many of the components of the emphasis are embedded in this powerful passage:

***Everyone was filled with awe** at the many **wonders and signs** performed by the apostles. All the **believers were together** and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to **give to anyone** who had need. Every day **they continued to meet together in the temple** courts. They **broke bread in their homes** and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And **the Lord added to their number daily** those who were being saved.*

(Acts 2:43-47 NIV, emphasis added)

PLANNING A CHURCH-WIDE EMPHASIS

- filled with awe—an excitement about what was happening
- wonders and signs—God moving miraculously in their midst
- believers were together—unity and synergy of a common goal
- giving to those in need—meeting practical needs in the community
- met together in the temple—corporate worship with purpose and passion
- broke bread—sharing Communion and eating together
- met in homes—small group fellowship
- the Lord added to their number daily—people saved on a daily basis!

As we read about how the early church functioned, we see many moving parts at work here. Each one contributed to the overall health and growth of the family of God. In essence, it was a Holy Spirit-driven emphasis!

Components of a Church-wide Emphasis

As you begin creating an evangelistic emphasis for your community, here are some basic components to consider:

Weekend Services

The weekend service is meant to be a gathering filled with passion, praise, prayer, and a powerful message, giving hope and direction to those who are gathered.

If you are the pastor of the church, your single greatest tool to reach people and cast a clear compelling vision for reaching the One will come through the weekend service. Instead of asking a board or committee to vote on whether or not to live into the Great Commission, preach through it!

People are hungry for godly leaders who will come forward and lead in clear, compelling ways. We need pastors in local churches who will stand up and share from God's Word the direction that Jesus intends his church to go.

As we read the psalms, we see that there is great emotion in worshipping the Lord. Singing, praising, music, even dancing are present. There seems to be an atmosphere of celebration and joy. As we see the early church assemble in the New Testament, there is a passionate dedication to the mission of the church. The goal is to assemble not only for fellowship but also for prayer and a dedication to the purposes of God. People are generally very excited to follow a leader who has a clear, compelling vision that is rooted in God's Word.

As you craft weekend messages, make sure that you are clear and concise. Be sure that people can see where you're leading and what their role in that journey will be. Each week during the church-wide emphasis, you may want to have one clear action step for people to take.

For instance:

- **Week 1:** Identify five people in your life who don't yet have a relationship with Jesus.
- **Week 2:** Begin to pray for your five people. Also begin to pray for the courage to take the step of invitation next week.
- **Week 3:** Invite your five to church (or to a nonthreatening event such as a block party).
- **Week 4:** Meet your One or Ones at church and take them to lunch afterward.

As you lead, remember to stay very close to Jesus. Stay humble. Pray and seek God's guidance as you prepare the

weekend message, or the Sunday school lesson, or whatever your role may be. Be clear. Be concise. Stay focused on the One.

If you are the pastor, your roles can be numerous and demanding: counseling the troubled, visiting the sick, caring for the elderly, handling daily church concerns. But do not forget that a primary task of the pastor is to feed and to lead. If the tasks of the church outside of preaching and leading are consuming your time, then you may need to make your first step empowering laity to take on these tasks within the church family. The biblical model teaches us that the pastor is to equip the saints for the working of ministry. They have spiritual gifts and abilities that need to be activated, and when that happens, pastors are freed up to spend more time crafting sermons and creating ministry strategies.

As you specifically begin to prepare messages for the One, keep these verses before you daily and let them guide you:

³⁷"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"
(Matthew 22:37-39 NIV)

¹⁹"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

(Matthew 28:19-20 NIV)

If you are a leader at any level, keep these tips in mind as you cast vision:

- Consistently share the vision in creatively redundant ways. Once or twice is not enough.
- Be clear and concise.
- Give specific action steps.
- Leverage influence with other leaders by having meetings before the meeting.
- Use meetings as vision-casting sessions and not just occasions to give reports.
- Be gentle, but bold.
- Love everyone and be kind to all, but move forward with those who catch the vision.

Small Groups

The early church met in homes for fellowship, Communion, and to share life together. In that same fashion, a powerful component of the church-wide emphasis is the small group experience. Activating every attender into a cell group for the purpose of focusing on reaching those far from Christ will help build momentum and synergy.

In our leadership book, *Grab, Gather, Grow* (G3) (Abingdon Press, 2012), we share our learnings about creating a system that involves the entire church family in small group life. Through the G3 process, in fact, at times we have more people in weekly groups than we have in weekend attendance—a feat that we, honestly, had not believed possible. There are many benefits to a strong small group system, which include membership care, spiritual maturity, developing more intimate friendships, and casting vision in smaller settings. But an additional benefit in *The One* will be the members' ability to process verbally their fears about reaching out to friends and family who don't yet know Christ. These fears are real, and if people are really going to engage, they'll need to process those concerns so they can move into action.

In order to facilitate your small group strategy in conjunction with *The One*, provide your people with the discussion questions and exercises in this book, as well as the video segments on the accompanying DVD, to help engage them in directed conversation. Preparing your church-wide emphasis in advance and pairing these materials with the weekend service can be a powerful tool. The idea is to mirror information from the weekend while providing fresh Scripture, insights, and discussion questions. We call this creative redundancy: the points are basically the same from the weekend to the small group, but expressed in new and varying ways.

Creating this system is best done with the lead pastor personally involved. It can be delegated, but if the pastor does not drive the vision from the stage/pulpit, it will be much harder to achieve church-wide engagement.

In our experience, the weekend service and the small group experience are the two most critical pieces to implementing a successful church-wide emphasis.

Memory Verses

This is a simple step to implement. In fact, at the end of each of the four chapters in the participant book, we have included a memory verse. The verses are also included in this leader guide (see page 77). The memory verses are one more way to drive home the passion and scriptural mandate for us to be active in reaching the One.

Prayer Support

Turning your congregation into a well-organized evangelistic engine is sure to draw the attention of the enemy. So, be proactive by covering the entire effort from start to finish in prayer. Think about tackling this on several fronts rather than with just one effort. Here are a few ideas:

- ***The One prayer team***—Include people dedicated to praying daily.
- ***Church-wide prayer emphasis***—Pray for one another to have the courage to reach out to those far from God.
- ***Around-the-clock prayer vigil***—Have church members sign up for shifts so that people are praying continually during week 3 for members to reach out to those far from God and invite them to “come and see” as Philip urged Nathaniel to do in John 1.
- ***Personal emphasis***—Every week, encourage members to focus on the appropriate action step: identify their Ones, pray for their Ones, share their faith and invite their Ones, and plan to meet them at church and invite them to lunch.

Before, during, and after the church-wide emphasis, soak all that you do in prayer. We know that God wants us to be passionate about reaching out to people far from him, and we will need his help and wisdom to do that effectively. This is a great way to gather a team to cast vision and get them actively engaged before the church-wide emphasis even gets started.

Branding

Creating a cohesive message within the church will help build momentum as your church-wide emphasis progresses. You’re welcome to use the graphics provided at www.abingdonpress.com/theonedownloads or create your own. Give the series an identity so that it takes on a life of its own. And then...put it everywhere. T-shirts, social media, the church website and newsletter, the walls of the church, the

front of the bulletin, inserts—keep the emphasis in front of people to create a sense of urgency and excitement.

Skills Training

People may need coaching about how to share Christ, how to invite people to church, and how to pray for the Ones in their lives who don't yet know him. Don't assume that they already have these skills. Use humor, video, and skits to model how to be invitational in winsome ways. Many people are afraid of sharing their faith or even inviting people to church. By modeling easy-to-use techniques and conversation starters, you can make the process less scary and more attainable.

Another skill you may want to teach is how to develop meaningful, genuine, and authentic relationships with those far from Christ. No one wants to feel like a project, so some helpful coaching in this area may be wise.

Invitational Tools

Help your people win by giving them the tools they need be successful. Developing events and distributing materials they can use as invitations will increase the chances that they will become effective inviters. Here are a few ideas:

- Create invitations that can be handed out at school, work, and in neighborhoods.
- Put out video invitations that can be shared on social media.
- Host community-wide events that hold interest for nonbelievers, such as a fish fry, concert, block party, kids' festival, and so on.

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSES

Week 1

*"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."
(Acts 16:31 NIV)*

Week 2

*"The Son of Man came to seek and to save the
lost."
(Luke 19:10 NIV)*

Week 3

*"For where your treasure is, there your heart will
be also."
(Matthew 6:21 NIV)*

Week 4

*We love because he first loved us.
(1 John 4:19 NIV)*

WEEKLY SERMON STARTERS

Week 1: You Are the One

Primary Scripture Focus:

¹Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. ²This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

(Luke 15:1-2)

Sermon Points

1. Jesus had a specific mission from God.

“For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”

(Luke 19:10)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

(John 3:16 NIV)

2. As Christ-followers, we have been given the same mission.

THE ONE

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

(Matthew 28:19)

3. Your life is better when you live on mission with Jesus.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

(Matthew 6:33 NIV)

4. "Non-church people" were, and are, drawn to Jesus.
5. Jesus loves being with "the One."
6. In modern times, Christ-followers have built barriers between ourselves and "the One"—busyness, fear, apathy.
7. A functioning addict is one who hides his or her addiction so well that he or she can function in society undetected; no one knows about the addiction. A functioning Christian is one who hides his or her faith so well that they can function in society undetected; no one knows about their faith.

Sermon Questions:

- Do we really take the Bible seriously?
- Do we really take the mission personally?
- Do we really care about the One?

Week 2: The Sheep

Primary Scripture Focus:

4"If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? 5And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. 6When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' 7In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!"

(Luke 15:4-7)

Sermon Points

1. Jesus has a mission from God: to *seek and save* the lost.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

(Luke 19:10)

2. God has given this same mission to every *Christ-follower*.

18Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

(Matthew 28:18-20 NIV)

THE ONE

3. Our lives have more purpose and meaning when we live *on mission* with God.

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well."
(Matthew 6:33 NIV)*

4. In this parable, there are two categories of people:
lost and found/safe/secure.

- Lostness implies value. Lost people are incredibly valuable to God.
- Every number represents a name. Every name has a story. Every story is someone Jesus died for.

5. Lost sheep have no direction.

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way.
(Isaiah 53:6a NIV)*

*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.*

*(Robert Robinson, "Come, Thou Fount of
Every Blessing," 1758)*

6. Lost sheep have no protection.

*"Therefore the people wander like sheep
oppressed for lack of a shepherd.
(Zechariah 10:2b NIV)*

*The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
(Psalm 23:1 NIV)*

*"I [Jesus] am the good shepherd. The good
shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*

WEEKLY SERMON STARTERS

(John 10:11 NIV)

7. It's easy for us to relate to the lost sheep because we have a tendency to wander. But God wants us to imitate the Shepherd.

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep."

(John 21:17b)

Sermon Questions:

- Are we prone to wander?
- Are we seeking first the kingdom of God?
- Do we really care about the One?

Week Three: The Coin

Primary Scripture Focus:

⁸“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won’t she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels when even one sinner repents.”

(Luke 15:8-10)

Sermon Points

1. Jesus has a mission from God: to seek and save the lost.

“For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”

(Luke 19:10)

2. God has given this same mission to every Christ-follower.

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:18-20 NIV)

3. Our lives have more purpose and meaning when we live on mission with God.

WEEKLY SERMON STARTERS

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well."*

(Matthew 6:33 NIV)

4. The lost coin isn't worthless; its value is just wasted.
5. When I'm disconnected from God, that's what it means to be spiritually lost.
6. Why the passionate search for the coin?
7. value = a day's wage
 - ten silver coins of a married woman's head-dress
8. She doesn't just rejoice privately; she calls together her friends and neighbors to invite them to share in her joy. What was lost has been found!
9. Are we throwing parties for the lost who have been found?
 - Where does that kind of passion come from?

Sermon Questions:

- Who is your One?

Week Four: The Boys

Primary Scripture Focus:

¹¹To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. ¹²The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

¹³"A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. ¹⁵He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

¹⁷"When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, ¹⁹and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."'**

²⁰"So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

WEEKLY SERMON STARTERS

22"But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

25"Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, 26and he asked one of the servants what was going on. 27'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'

28"The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, 29but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. 30Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'

31"His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. 32We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'"

(Luke 15:11-32)

Sermon Points

1. In all of these lost stories, religious people are shocked that Jesus says God loves and searches for lost people.

THE ONE

"For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

(Luke 19:10)

2. The younger son says, "I won't change until I get fed up with my life."

*¹³"He wasted all his money.... ¹⁴His money ran out.... ¹⁶The young man became so hungry.... ¹⁷**He finally came to his senses.**"*

(Luke 15:13-17, emphasis added)

*"When you come looking for me, you'll find me./ Yes, when you get serious about finding **me** and want it more than anything else, I'll make sure you won't be disappointed."*

(Jeremiah 29:13 MSG, emphasis added)

3. The younger son had to own up to his own sin.

¹⁷"When he finally came to his senses... ¹⁸I have sinned against both heaven and you."

(Luke 15:17-18)

*"But **if we confess our sins** to him [God], he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."*

(1 John 1:9, emphasis added)

4. The younger son had to give himself to God.

"I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."

(Luke 15:19)

Give your bodies to God.... Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

(Romans 12:1)

WEEKLY SERMON STARTERS

5. The older son became unconcerned for his lost brother.

²⁹"These many years I have been serving you....³⁰But as soon as this son of yours came...you killed the fatted calf."

(Luke 15:29-30 NKJV)

6. The older son felt entitled.

²⁸"But he [older son] was angry and would not go in....²⁹You never gave me a young goat."

(Luke 15:28-29 NKJV)

7. The older son became unresponsive.

- The story ends abruptly. We aren't told if the older brother is convinced and comes into the celebration or if he remains outside, angry and discontented.

Sermon Questions:

- What happens when we refuse to obey?
- Why are both sons loved by the father?
- Who is your One? Are you the One?



A FINAL WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Just this week a friend dropped by the office and asked, “When will we do ‘The One’ series again? It was my favorite thing we have ever done as a church.” I said, “Well, that was a one-time series, with a long-term emphasis.” Her response was, “No, let’s do it again—and again—and again. Every year we need a refresher course to help us remember that this is why Jesus leaves us here. To love, invite, and reach those who don’t know him yet.” It was encouraging to hear her enthusiasm and to realize how deeply “The One” series had touched her life. I was reminded of several Scriptures as she was speaking:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

(1 Peter 3:15 NIV)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

(2 Timothy 2:15 ESV)

THE ONE

“Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.”

(Mark 16:15)

How encouraging to hear that our people are eager to continue to be about the work of reaching those far from Christ! In fact, they not only want their church to be known for caring for the One, but they want to be individually known for it as well.

So what have the results been in our situation as we focused on the One? At Harvest, we have seen a dramatic increase in first-time visitors, which has resulted in a renewed number of first-time decisions to follow Jesus.

God loves people. So much so that he allowed Jesus to suffer on the cross for us. He longs to have a relationship with us now and forevermore. But his love is not just for us. We are already in his family. He wants us to grow that family. Living into the Great Commandment by loving God and others and sharing the message of Jesus with others are the most important things we will do on this planet. It should actually consume us! We hope that the passion to reach the One will grow within you and within your community. May God bless you as you seek him and as you share his love with others. Blessings, brothers and sisters.

—Jim and Jen