



At the Movies  
July 16, 2017

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**Encouragement:** In this week's message Pastor Miles uses the themes in the movie Finding Dory to explain the parable of the Prodigal Son.

When Dory the short-term memory fish finds herself lost, she becomes friends with Nemo and Marlin who join her on her journey back home.

Dory was lost; she had no family and no home. Like Dory, when we are lost, we search for people who love and care for us.

Pastor Miles explained how we feel lost when life doesn't give us what we think we want. When we search on our own for home we can lead ourselves astray unless we know where true home is and how to get there. On our journey to getting what we think we want, we can look for home in happiness, money, wild living, drugs, relationships or accomplishments. We strive to find the right combination of things to make us happy.

But we internally long for a better life; a life more fulfilling; more purposeful. So we keep searching, like Dory, hoping we will find it. Like Dory looking for signs, clues, even seashells to point us in the right direction.

Pastor Miles asked us to contemplate our own search and how will we know we've arrived? He reminded us that the answer includes a relationship with our Heavenly Father. He exhorted us to find the clues from Him because those clues will lead us to the love, acceptance and peace we all crave.

**Icebreaker:** Have you ever gotten lost? Where were trying to go? How did you know you were lost? What did you do to find your way? How long did it take you to redirect? Did you have help? What signs did you follow?

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**Scripture:**

Read Luke Chapter 15. These three parables are about lost things; the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. Jesus sets us straight about God's attitude toward sinners and a startling picture of God.

As a group make a list of descriptive words that paint an image of God who is harsh and punishing. Now read aloud Luke 15:5 and 20. Make a contrasting list of descriptive words about God. What thoughts and feelings do you have as you compare the two images of God?

In these three parables, compare the way the Pharisees see “sinners” to the way Jesus says God sees them.

Imagine yourself listening to these stories as a Pharisee. If you were able to hear Jesus, what thoughts and feelings might you have in response to these stories? What if you imagined yourself to be the “sinner” listening to these stories?

Who is represented by the central characters/or objects in each parable?

How do you account for the intense reactions of the shepherd, woman and father to their losses and discoveries? What part does repentance have in all three parables?

Look more closely at the Prodigal son parable. How might the Pharisees and teachers of the law have felt about each of the actions of the younger son? V13-16?

How might the Pharisees have expected the father to respond when the son came home?

Read verse 20-24 what do these verses reveal about our Father in heaven? How can this portrait of God help us feel fully accepted by the Father—despite our sin?

Why does Jesus go on to describe the reaction of the older son (verse 25-32)? What additional point do you think Jesus wants to make? Why?



**Pray:** Jesus told three parables to correct the Pharisees’ misconception about God. These parables show that God loves all people and wants everyone—especially sinners—to come to Him. God doesn’t play favorites, and He rejoices when anyone turns to Him. God offers salvation to everyone.

Take out a piece of paper and have everyone make a list of people that need God’s free gift of salvation. As a group pray for these individuals. Consider keeping these lists and praying through them each week as a group.

Then, spend some time reflecting on your attitude toward sinners. Do you find yourself judging others? Ask God to show you His value for the people you judge. Talk about ways you show God’s love to them? Ask God to help you remember what He has done to show you love.

**Next Steps:**

Dory, the shepherd, the woman and the father all knew they lost something. Then in each example, they all called together friends and neighbors to rejoice in finding what were lost. This week how can the Finding Dory movie and these parables motivate us to love those who are lost?

Who needs to know this truth Jesus has taught you?

Perhaps you are lost, trying to return home like the prodigal son? Do you need to confess any sins?

Pastor Miles reminded us that we aren't home yet and won't be until we are in Heaven with God. He pointed us to Ecclesiastes 3:11, God has "put eternity in their hearts."

This week spend some time thinking about eternity. Reflect on your own mortality. What does it mean for you to live today in the knowledge that God has set eternity in your heart? What changes can you make in your lifestyle based on that knowledge?