



# Lost: Live Together or Die Alone

*I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.*  
(Ezek. 34:16)

## Preparing for the Session

- If you have not followed the series, watch summaries available from iTunes or read summaries of the series on the Internet at such sites as Lostpedia. Depending on the availability of video summaries, you may be called on to summarize—or guide a summary—of the series personally. Also note the context of any of the scenes you will be showing for discussion.
- Read this Leader's Guide carefully as you will need to decide just how to use the time you have. Pay particular attention to activity 5 and plan how you will best organize this study. It may mean adding a session.
- For a one-session study, if participants have not followed the series and time permits, ask them to watch (or show them) one of the summaries of the series, such as "A Journey in Time," a free download available from iTunes recapping Seasons 1-5 in 45 minutes. You may also wish to allow two or more weeks for this study on *Lost*, showing the long recap in your first session and watching an episode from the final (or any) season in a third. If you allot additional sessions, begin and end your viewings with prayer, as modeled in this lesson, and suggest that participants pay particular attention to the themes of fate, free will, loss, violence, and redemption as they watch.
- Review scenes and scene descriptions before your session begins so that you will feel comfortable reading or summarizing the action for your group. This is particularly important if some members have not seen the series. You may, of course, choose other scenes that illuminate the central themes considered in this lesson.

## Session at a Glance

### OPENING

- Prayer
- Focus question

### EXPLORING

- Clip 1
- Clip 2
- Series summary

### RESPONDING

- Return to focus question

### CLOSING

- Prayer

- Have a chalkboard, writing pad, or other resource available to write down responses during discussion so that all can see and reflect on them.
- If you have a large group, consider breaking into smaller groups for discussion of individual questions and then coming back together to report on the small-group dialogues. If you do small-group work, ask each group to appoint a scribe and a spokesperson willing to tell the larger group about their conclusions. If you choose to divide the group in this way, remain conscious of time. Allow about five minutes in small-group discussions, and then briefly report back to the larger group. This may mean shutting down some interesting discussion so that you have time to hear from each group. While in small

groups, you should circulate, serving as a resource and helping to keep on task.

- Be familiar with your DVD equipment and how to prompt each clip so as not to lose time finding particular scenes. Have the first clip cued and ready to show before the session begins.
- Review the free “Guide for Showing Movies in a Group” from the Thoughtful Christian site, included in this download, and review the section “Leading a Film Discussion.” You need not be an expert on film or television to be a useful guide for this session.

## Teaching Tips

- In presenting this series for discussion, a good leader will want to be respectful of differences of opinion, which may extend across political, social, religious, and other divides; although set on a fantastic island, *Lost* is extremely topical. It will be helpful if some or all of the people in your session have seen episodes of *Lost*, but we suggest ways you can refresh the memories of participants who have followed the show and bring those who haven’t up to speed. You can also customize this lesson by expanding the number of sessions or by choosing your own episodes or scenes of *Lost*, so long as you keep in mind the core themes considered here.
- Try not to treat this discussion of *Lost* as a conversation with an easy answer or answers; the problems of identity, power, community, and redemption dramatized in the lives of these characters resisted easy answers for six seasons and may resist your participants as well. Probably what will emerge from your discussion will be some insight, some frustration, and, perhaps, some new wisdom about the lives that we live off the island.

## Series Data

**Rating:** TV-14 (violence, sexual innuendo, disturbing images, and suspense)

**Series Length:** Six seasons: 2004–2010

**Production Company:** Touchstone Television

**Creators:** J. J. Abrams, Jeffrey Lieber, and Damon Lindelof

## Cast

**Jack Shephard:** Matthew Fox

**James “Sawyer” Ford:** Josh Holloway

**Kate Austen:** Evangeline Lilly

**John Locke:** Terry O’Quinn

**Sayid Jarrah:** Naveen Andrews

**Jin Kwon:** Daniel Dae Kim

**Sun Kwon:** Yunjin Kim

**Hugo “Hurley” Reyes:** Jorge Garcia

**Ben Linus:** Michael Emerson

**Charlie Pace:** Dominic Monaghan

**Boone Carlyle:** Ian Somerhalder

## Introduction

*Lost* is one of the great media phenomena of our time: more than just a successful television show (although it certainly has been that), it has engaged its viewers on a variety of levels and through a variety of media. While individual episodes shown on television have been cinematic, mysterious, and captivating, the series as a whole has created a larger mythology debated and interpreted across the Internet. Producers have also integrated Internet content into the larger storyline, permitting fans of the show to follow red herrings, learn backstory, and gain secret knowledge to some of the many questions the show has posed and ultimately attempted to answer in its final season.

*Lost* premiered on September 22, 2004, to phenomenal ratings (18.65 million watched the pilot in the United States) and to great critical acclaim (the series closed out its first season with an Emmy for Outstanding Drama and a directing Emmy for J. J. Abrams who directed the series pilot). That pilot episode introduced a group of 48 castaways, survivors from the crash of Oceanic Flight 815 now marooned on a desert island, an island that was much more than it seemed. From the first episode on, the show engaged viewers with its feature-quality production and story and hooked them into future viewing by slowly shifting the playing field from relating a realistic survival story to creating a mystical world where anything could happen;

this shift is symbolized by the moment when former rock star Charlie (Dominic Monaghan) asks a question that goes well beyond simple geography: “Guys, where are we?”

Where the castaways were was simultaneously a magical island and real life, since the questions of faith and fate, good and evil explored in the TV series are also important to all of us, and “lost” is a word that can describe even those who know exactly where they are on the planet. The show’s producers have confirmed that their concept for the show included both the physical and the spiritual dislocation of its characters; they are people who are simultaneously unstuck in their lives and unhinged on the planet.

While the survival adventure provided plenty of drama, the spiritual elements of the show were actually among its most compelling; over the course of six seasons, the “Lostees” encountered “Others,” faced betrayal and certain death, escaped, returned, and, in the process, wrestled with some of our most basic spiritual questions: Why am I here? What is life all about? What should I believe? Is there a plan to life? Do I make my own choices?

*Lost* also examined topical issues: What should be done to protect oneself and those of one’s tribe? Are torture, kidnapping, or assassination ever justifiable actions? Can good people do bad things in defense of noble causes? Can we ever be completely safe?

Ultimately, in addition to the amazing production values, strong writing, and sympathetic characters, *Lost* became an international sensation because it was an artful work of popular culture dealing with important questions of human life in the twenty-first century.

## Opening (5 minutes)

### 1. Prayer

Adapted from the *Book of Common Prayer*.

O God, from whom all good proceeds, grant that by your inspiration we may know those things that are right and by your merciful guidance do them, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## 2. Focus Question

In what ways can human beings be lost?

Ask members of the session to sit for a moment and consider the question. Don’t ask for comments. Just ask them to imagine how this question might lead to other questions—questions that you will ponder together in the course of discussing *Lost*. If they are taking notes, you might ask them to brainstorm, list, or free write for one minute on the topic before introducing the first scene for discussion.

## Engaging the Series (40 minutes)

### 3. Clip 1: “Lost on the Island”

(Clip location: Season 1, Episode 1, Chapter 1, 0:00-4:45)

(Use this scene to illustrate the concept and suggest the production value of the series. You may read or summarize the following scene description as necessary before considering the questions on the Participant Handout. Limit discussion to eight minutes.)

Dr. Jack Shephard (Matthew Fox) regains consciousness in the middle of a jungle and wanders to a white sand beach, where he (and we) discover a scene of carnage: the central section of a jet airliner is strewn across the beach, and people wander, scream for help, or lie injured. After an understandable moment of hesitation, Jack goes to the rescue, enlisting other survivors to help. Among them, we see Charlie and Locke (Terry O’Quinn).

### 4. Clip 2: “Survive Together or Die Alone”

(Clip location: Season 1, Episode 1, Chapter 2, 8:11-11:35)

(You may read or summarize the following scene description as necessary before considering the questions on the Participant Handout. Limit discussion to eight minutes.)

After Jack makes sure that everyone he can help is safe, he looks through the bags and finds the items he needs to treat himself. Slipping away so that no one can see

him, he prepares to treat himself—only to discover that his wound is out of his reach. He enlists the passing Kate (Evangeline Lilly) to sew up his wound, one of many instances in which it becomes clear that the survivors need each other to survive.

## 5. Series Summary

Show participants one of the series summaries available from the producers (“Lost in 8:15,” a serious look at Seasons 1-3, or “Lost Untangled: 5 in Five,” a humorous but authorized summary, both available on iTunes, YouTube, and other media sources). If you can’t show a summary, give (or commission) a five- to eight-minute minilecture on *Lost*, introducing the series, the dozen or so main characters, and the issues of good and evil, fate and free will, and violence in defense of a community or ideal. This summary could easily spread to take your whole session time; prepare ahead of time to make sure this summary can be done economically but usefully. Limit discussion to eight minutes.

## Responding (5 minutes)

### 6. Return to the Focus Question

Ask participants if their perception of the question (In what ways can people be lost?) has changed in any way

as a result of this session. Have their views been complicated, or have they been reinforced? Encourage them to review the “What’s Next” section of the Participant Handout. The group may want to pursue additional discussion and study of popular culture and theology, war and peace, torture, or violence in future sessions. If you choose to explore *Lost* in additional sessions, then consider showing an episode from Season 6, perhaps even the final episode (available as streaming video on abc.com and for purchase on iTunes), and focus on the theological questions that may have emerged in this discussion around loss, redemption, community, violence, faith, and free will.

## Closing (5 minutes)

### 7. Prayer

Below is a prayer for the human family, adapted from the *Book of Common Prayer*.

O God, you have made us in your image. Look with compassion on the whole human race, break down the walls that separate us, unite us in bonds of love, and work through our struggles and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**