
LOOKING FOR THE LOST

BIBLE STUDY - The Lost Sheep - Luke 15:1-7

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Getting started

The parable of the lost sheep in Luke’s gospel is right next to the parable of the lost coin and the parable of the prodigal son. All three parables are about the joy of finding what was lost. Read all three parables in Luke 15. What ideas are common to all three?

Looking deeper

In verses 1 & 2 you find the familiar theme of sinners up against the Pharisees. The Pharisees’ are complaining and grumbling just like Israel did in the desert. What were the Israelites complaining about in the desert? What are the Pharisees complaining about? Can you see a similarity?

Describe the scene that led to Jesus telling the parable of the lost sheep. What were the Pharisees saying was a problem?

Jesus welcomes those that are not generally welcomed into communities, and in particular those that the “righteous” Pharisees would never welcome. Who you eat with is an indication of who you are in fellowship with, so why shouldn’t the Pharisees’ grumble about Jesus behaviour?

Read Ezekiel 34:11-16 and John 10:11-18:

- Who is the shepherd?
- What qualities does the shepherd have?
- Who are the sheep?
- What qualities do the sheep have?

Consider the statement “God seeks out all who are lost.” How does the parable illustrate this?

How does the shepherd’s search for the lost sheep end? How does God’s search for the lost end?

Does it change the way you see your salvation when you read that God and the heavenly host rejoice when the lost return to him?

The shepherd called in all his friends and neighbours to celebrate when the lost sheep was found. How do we celebrate with God when the lost are found? How could we do that better?

Where to from here?

God goes beyond our expectations and uses surprising people to seek the lost; think about Paul and the Corinthians in 1 Cor 1:26 for example. How can we be limited in who we try to reach? Are there people we find it easy to exclude from God’s love, either in our thinking or in our actions?

What can you as an individual do to seek out the lost? What can you as a group or as a church do?

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