



WEEK 1 STUDY GUIDE

Read Luke 15:1-10 in preparation for today's lesson. Jesus often taught by using parables—powerful stories that bridged the gap between the gospel and real life. This didn't sit well with the Pharisees, the pious religious leaders who banked on following the Old Testament rules. And they weren't afraid to puff themselves up based on the "right" things they did, and put others down based on the "wrong" things they did. Jesus came to rewrite the rules—to make the good news applicable and real. He came to offer salvation to everyone.

Shepherding was a common career in Bible times. This basic correlation with Jesus as the Shepherd and people as sheep allowed his audience to better understand and embrace the relationship Jesus was offering to all. It may seem foolish for a shepherd to leave the 99 sheep, but this shepherd knew the 99 would be safe together. Sheep don't like being by themselves. A sheep that's alone is stressed and can often be in danger. They gather together in large groups for protection and socialization. They have a natural instinct to follow.

Jesus demonstrates his love and pursuit of each person by sharing that the shepherd would leave the 99 sheep to save the one lost sheep. That sheep is in danger, and the shepherd wants the sheep to return to the sheepfold. To simply forgive sinners is one thing, but to seek out sinners and rejoice upon their return takes incredible love and devotion.

This lesson also includes discussion on the parable of the lost coin, which starts in verse 8. In Jesus' cultural context, women traditionally received 10 silver coins on their wedding day. Not only were these coins valuable, but they also held a sentimental value. To lose one of these coins would be distressing to a woman. She would be driven to find that lost coin and would rejoice when it was found and the set of 10 was complete and restored.

WEEK 1 OVERVIEW

THE MAIN POINT

Jesus values the lost sheep
and we should too.

THE MAIN SCRIPTURE

Luke 15:1-10

DISCUSSION GUIDE

This guide is a suggestion. Adjust the questions and activities as needed to fit your group. Don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here. Let the students and the Holy Spirit guide the conversation, too.

GET THEM TALKING

- What is your favorite story of all time (book, movie, etc.)?
- What is your favorite Bible story?

READ Luke 15:1-10 and answer the following questions:

1. Jesus values the sheep that never wander off.

- *What do you find most challenging or unclear about this passage of Scripture?*
- *Why would Jesus compare us to sheep? Isn't that insulting, or are there some good qualities about sheep? Explain.*

2. Jesus values the one lost sheep.

- *Why would this sheep—or any other sheep, for that matter—leave the safety and protection of the sheepfold?*
- *Give examples of life distractions that can wind up getting us lost.*
- *Why is there so much joy in finding one lost sheep?*

3. Jesus values you.

- *Tell us about a time you searched passionately, even frantically, to find something you lost. Why was that item meaningful enough to justify that kind of search?*
- *Look at verses 8-10. How does it feel to know Jesus pursues you personally, like this woman searched for her lost coin?*
- *In what ways has Jesus pursued you? Be as specific as possible.*
- *How do you know it was Jesus pursuing you?*

NEXT STEPS

- *How can your actions show that Jesus values you?*
- *How can you help other people discover how much Jesus loves them—and how he's searching for them and wanting a friendship with them, too?*

Have everyone come up with one tangible step they want to take this week to show the lost sheep around them Jesus' love and share it with the group.

PRAYER GUIDE

We'll close our time tonight by praying for the lost sheep. Someone open in prayer, then leave a time of silence for each person to share the initials of one or more students they are praying would begin a relationship with Jesus. Someone close the prayer by asking God to show how each of you can pursue the lost sheep in your life and reflect Jesus to them.

TOUGH PARABLES

Wrestling With Jesus' Challenging Stories

Week 1: The Lost Sheep and Coin

Main Point: Jesus values the lost sheep and so should we.

Main Scripture: Luke 15:1-10

THE WHAT

ME:

Share a happy or funny story about a time you got, or lost, something of value to you – or even a time where something lost its value to you. For example, when I was 10 and I got my first bike – it was THE BEST THING EVER! It meant I could ride it to my neighborhood friends' house and play whenever I wanted. So great! But when I got my first car – that bike just started collecting dust in the garage. Now I could drive – go further – and take some friends with me. Suddenly, the bike didn't hold that much value to me anymore.

WE:

Ask students to share a similar story OR do the below optional activity:

ACTIVITY SET UP: You'll need two pads of adhesive notes—one pad of yellow notes and one pad of pink ones—for the opening activity.

INSTRUCTIONS

I'm giving each of you two adhesive notes, each a different color. The yellow adhesive note represents high value, and the pink adhesive note represents low value. Take a look around the room. Without talking, think about which items in this room are of high value and which items are of low value. [NOTE: Give students time to look around your meeting area.] Now, take your adhesive notes, and place the yellow note on an item in this room you think has high value. And place the pink note on an item in this room you think has low value. Once you've placed your adhesive notes, have a seat. [NOTE: Give students time to place their notes.]

Ask a few students to explain to the whole group where and why they placed their notes. Then read or have a student read Psalm 139:13-17.

- What phrase or idea from that Scripture do you find most meaningful, and why?
- How does Jesus show us he values us?
- What would it be like to imagine one of those yellow adhesive notes on every person you meet every single day?

TRANSITION:

The yellow adhesive notes—the ones identifying high value—belong on each of us. Jesus loves us and values each of us greatly. Each of us is wonderfully made by the Creator of the universe. Today, we're going to take a look at how Jesus revealed how much He values us through His use of parables. Parables are intentional stories that help us understand an eternal truth by relating it to everyday life.

SO WHAT

GOD

READ LUKE 15:1-10 together as a group.

It might seem odd to read a passage about a lost sheep and a lost coin, and being compared to sheep might be tough to accept, but let's take some time to explore this Scripture.

1. Jesus values the sheep that never wander off.

Today, there are sheep in the sheepfold—people who have a growing relationship with Jesus—and lost sheep—people who are spiritually lost and don't have a relationship with Jesus. The shepherd knew the 99 sheep were safe together. In fact, sheep don't like to be alone. Similarly, God created an incredible plan for us: As the church, we are called to lift each other up, encourage each other, and walk together through life.

2. Jesus values the one lost sheep.

It's surprising that a sheep would leave the sheepfold since sheep like to be together. It's safer for the sheep to remain together, and they like being together. So something had to distract the sheep. Satan loves to distract us with things and ideas and temptations that draw us away from what Jesus wants for us. Once distracted, we can easily become discouraged and defeated. If Satan can cause us to be lost, he has won. But that's not the end of the story! Jesus is willing to search for us and pursue us to come back to Him.

3. Jesus values you.

It's odd to be compared to sheep, but the beauty of the first parable is that we do have a Shepherd. A shepherd spends all waking hours caring for the sheep and often sleeps outside with the sheep to be sure they're safe. Jesus leads us and wants to have a growing relationship with us. He seeks each of us out and knows when we're lost. He rejoices—in fact, all of heaven rejoices—when someone begins following Jesus. That's what both of these parables teach us.

GOSPEL MOMENT

Jesus values you SO much, He chose to die so that you could transform from being lost to being found. What do I mean by that? Well because of SIN (which is anytime we do something wrong/not God's way) our relationship was broken. God didn't want a broken relationship with us, so He sent His son JESUS to suffer and die a painful death on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. This is a free GIFT given from God, not something we earn by "doing enough good" or "going to church enough." God loves us completely, so He allows us to CHOSE whether we believe in Jesus or not. When we chose to believe and give our lives to God, we receive eternal salvation and a restored relationship with God.

TRANSITION:

Once we receive the gift of salvation, we transform from being lost to being found. When we understand how much Jesus values us we should then, out of the overflow of God's love and joy, help the lost people around us find their value and life in Jesus.

NOW WHAT?

YOU

I wonder where in the parable you find yourself? Are you a lost coin or a found coin? If you feel lost, know that Jesus values you and wants to change your life and deem you FOUND in HIM. If you are already found, never forget how much Jesus values you and how He has called you to help others become found in Him.

WE

Imagine what this world would look like if all of us who were lost, became found. And then all of us who were found, helped others become found in Jesus. His love could spread like wildfire in this hurting world – and that wildfire could start with us being saved by Jesus and even helping one more person find Jesus. And then if that person helps one more person, it could be a huge domino effect of so many people in our schools and lives coming to know their value and hope in Jesus!

PRAY

God, thank you for valuing us SO much! I pray that we all find our place in you and that you would help us to share your love and hope with those around us who are lost. Help us to be like you, and boldly pursue the one lost sheep. We love you and may everything we do honor you. Amen.

WEEK 1 TOUGH PARABLES DISCUSSION GUIDE

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