



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.