

## JUST FOR ME Bible Study Handout

Luke 15:1–7

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

<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> “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? <sup>5</sup> And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ <sup>7</sup> 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.

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### **INTRODUCTION:** Understanding the Setting of the Parable

Luke chapter 15 opens with a powerful moment in the ministry of Jesus. Two very different groups of people are gathered around Him.

On one side are tax collectors and sinners. These individuals were often marginalized in society and looked down upon by the religious establishment. Yet they were drawn to Jesus because when He spoke, they heard hope and grace.

On the other side stand the Pharisees and scribes. These religious leaders believed that people who had wandered far from God should be avoided rather than welcomed. Instead of celebrating that lost people were drawing near to hear God’s Word, they criticized Jesus for receiving sinners and eating with them.

It is in response to their complaint that Jesus tells three parables in Luke 15.

These parables reveal the heart of God toward those who are lost.

Over the next few weeks we are exploring these stories together in a series called:

### **LOST AND FOUND: DISCOVERING THE HEART OF GOD**

The first story describes a shepherd searching for a lost sheep.

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### **KEY TEACHING THEME**

The parable reveals three important truths about the heart of God:

- God notices when someone is missing
- God searches for those who wander
- God rejoices when the lost are restored

These truths help us understand both the grace of God and our response to that grace.

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### **POINT 1: He Noticed When I Was Missing**

Jesus begins the story by asking a question about a shepherd who has one hundred sheep but discovers that one is missing.

The shepherd does not ignore the loss or assume that ninety-nine sheep are enough. Instead, the shepherd recognizes that one sheep has wandered away.

In the ancient world shepherds often knew their sheep individually. They paid close attention to the flock and recognized when one animal was missing. Sheep depended entirely on the shepherd for protection and guidance.

This part of the story reveals an important truth about God:

God sees individuals.

In a world where people often feel overlooked or forgotten, the parable reminds us that God notices when someone drifts away from Him.

God's love is personal. God cares about every life.

### **SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Psalm 139:1–3

God knows us completely and understands every step of our lives.

John 10:14

Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep.

Isaiah 49:15–16

God declares that He does not forget His people.

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### **POINT 2: He Came Looking Just for Me**

After noticing that the sheep is missing, the shepherd does something remarkable. Jesus says the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine and goes searching for the one that is lost until it is found.

The emphasis of the story is on the shepherd's determination. The shepherd refuses to give up until the missing sheep is located.

In the rugged hills of Judea, sheep that wandered away could easily become trapped in rocky crevices or tangled in brush. Because predators also roamed the countryside, a sheep separated from the flock was in serious danger.

For that reason shepherds would search persistently for a missing animal, sometimes continuing the search into the night until the sheep was found.

Jesus uses this image to reveal something powerful about God's character.

God does not give up quickly on wandering people.  
God pursues those who are lost.

Throughout Scripture we see this pattern repeatedly. God continually reaches out to those who have drifted away from Him.

#### SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY

Ezekiel 34:11–12

God promises to search for His scattered sheep.

Luke 19:10

The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.

Romans 5:8

God demonstrates His love toward us even while we were still sinners.

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#### **POINT 3: He Brought Me Home with Joy**

When the shepherd finally finds the lost sheep, the story reaches its most beautiful moment. Instead of scolding the sheep, the shepherd lifts it onto his shoulders and carries it home rejoicing.

Sheep that wandered far from the flock were often exhausted and unable to make the journey back on their own. A caring shepherd would carry the animal to safety.

This part of the parable reveals the grace of God.

When God restores us, He does not simply tell us to find our way back on our own. God carries us through His grace.

The image also points forward to the saving work of Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus carries the burden of our sin and restores us to a relationship with God.

The story ends with celebration because heaven rejoices when someone who was lost returns to God.

## SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray.

1 Peter 2:25

You were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd.

Psalm 23:1–3

The Lord is my shepherd; He restores my soul.

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## KEY LESSONS FROM THE PARABLE

This parable teaches several important truths:

God's love is personal. Every person matters to God.

God actively seeks those who wander. No one is beyond the reach of grace.

Restoration brings joy. Heaven celebrates when the lost are found.

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## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the Pharisees criticized Jesus for welcoming sinners?
  2. What does the shepherd's determination to search reveal about the character of God?
  3. How does the image of the shepherd carrying the sheep help us understand God's grace?
  4. Can you identify moments in your life when God was drawing you back toward Him?
  5. How might this parable change the way we view people who seem far from God?
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## PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

Jesus does not stop with the story of the lost sheep.

In Luke 15 He continues with another parable about something that was lost and then found.

Next week we will study the story of the lost coin and discover more about the value God places on every person and the joy that fills heaven when someone returns to Him.