

# The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7)

## A Small Group Outline



### 1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
  - Sing a few songs of praise to God

### 2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

### 3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.

### 4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

### 5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

- **Notes for the facilitator**

- Read *Christ's Object Lessons (COL)*, pp. 185-192
- "As the 'publicans and sinners' gathered about Christ, the rabbis expressed their displeasure. 'This man receiveth sinners,' they said, 'and eateth with them.' By this accusation they insinuated that Christ liked to associate with the sinful and vile, and was insensible to their wickedness. The rabbis had been disappointed in Jesus. Why was it that one who claimed so lofty a character did not mingle with them and follow their methods of teaching? Why did He go about so unpretendingly, working among all classes? If He were a true prophet, they said, He would harmonize with them, and would treat the publicans and sinners with the indifference they deserved. **It angered these guardians of society that He with whom they were continually in controversy, yet whose purity of life awed and condemned them, should meet, in such apparent sympathy, with social outcasts.** They did not approve of His methods. They regarded themselves as educated, refined, and pre-eminently religious; but Christ's example laid bare their selfishness" (COL 185)
- "The souls who came to Jesus felt in His presence that even for them there was escape from the pit of sin. **The Pharisees had only scorn and condemnation for them; but Christ greeted them as children of God**, estranged indeed from the Father's house, but not forgotten by the Father's heart. And their very misery and sin made them only the more the objects of His compassion. **The farther they had wandered from Him, the more earnest the longing and the greater the sacrifice for their rescue**" (COL 186)
- "As the shepherd loves his sheep, and cannot rest if even one be missing, so, in an infinitely higher degree, does God love every outcast soul. Men may deny the claim of His love, they may wander from Him, they may choose another master; yet they are God's, and He longs to recover His own" (COL 187).

- “In the parable the shepherd goes out to search for one sheep—the very least that can be numbered. So **if there had been but one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one**” (COL 187)
- “The sheep that has strayed from the fold is the most helpless of all creatures. It must be sought for by the shepherd, for it cannot find its way back. So with the soul that has wandered away from God; **he is as helpless as the lost sheep, and unless divine love had come to his rescue he could never find his way to God**” (COL 187)
- “The shepherd who discovers that one of his sheep is missing does not look carelessly upon the flock that is safely housed, and say, ‘I have ninety and nine, and it will cost me too much trouble to go in search of the straying one. Let him come back, and I will open the door of the sheepfold, and let him in.’ No; **no sooner does the sheep go astray than the shepherd is filled with grief and anxiety**. He counts and recounts the flock. When he is sure that one sheep is lost, he slumbers not. He leaves the ninety and nine within the fold, and goes in search of the straying sheep. The darker and more tempestuous the night and the more perilous the way, the greater is the shepherd's anxiety and the more earnest his search. He makes every effort to find that one lost sheep” (COL 187).
- “[When the shepherd finds the sheep], **he does not scold it because it has caused him so much trouble. He does not drive it with a whip. He does not even try to lead it home. In his joy he takes the trembling creature upon his shoulders**; if it is bruised and wounded, he gathers it in his arms, pressing it close to his bosom, that the warmth of his own heart may give it life. With gratitude that his search has not been in vain, he bears it back to the fold” (COL 188)
- “It was taught by the Jews that before God's love is extended to the sinner, he must first repent. In their view, repentance is a work by which men earn the favor of Heaven. And it was this thought that led the Pharisees to exclaim in astonishment and anger. ‘This man receiveth sinners.’ According to their ideas He should permit none to approach Him but those who had repented. But **in the parable of the lost sheep, Christ teaches that salvation does not come through our seeking after God but through God's seeking after us....**We do not repent in order that God may love us, but He reveals to us His love in order that we may repent” (COL 189)
- “‘Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.’ **You Pharisees, said Christ, regard yourselves as the favorites of heaven. You think yourselves secure in your own righteousness. Know, then, that if you need no repentance, My mission is not to you.** These poor souls who feel their poverty and sinfulness, are the very ones whom I have come to rescue.... You complain and sneer when one of these souls joins himself to Me; but know that angels rejoice, and the song of triumph rings through the courts above” (COL 189)
- “**The rabbis had a saying that there is rejoicing in heaven when one who has sinned against God is destroyed; but Jesus taught that to God the work of destruction is a strange work.** That in which all heaven delights is the restoration of God's own image in the souls whom He has made” (COL 190)
- “**When one who has wandered far in sin seeks to return to God, he will encounter criticism and distrust.** There are those who will doubt whether his repentance is genuine, or will whisper, ‘He has no stability; I do not believe that he will hold out.’ **These persons are doing not the work of God but the work of Satan**, who is the accuser of the brethren.... Let [the repenting sinner instead] rest in the love of God and in no case be disheartened by the scorn and suspicion of the Pharisees” (COL 190)
- “When you turn from those who seem unpromising and unattractive, do you realize that you are neglecting the souls for whom Christ is seeking? At the very time when you turn from them, they may be in the greatest need of your compassion” (COL 191).

- “If the lost sheep is not brought back to the fold, it wanders until it perishes. And many souls go down to ruin for want of a hand stretched out to save.... Angels pity these wandering ones. Angels weep, while human eyes are dry and hearts are closed to pity” (COL 191).
- *Read Luke 15:1-7. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** *(use only a few). The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
  - Why do you think the tax collectors and sinners were drawn to Jesus, while those who felt themselves ‘righteous’ and ‘holy’ were so uncomfortable in His presence?
  - Why do you think Jesus avoided directly attacking the scribes and Pharisees after they accused him of receiving sinners? Why did he tell a story instead? What’s the value of a parable? *(ask one question at a time)*
  - What do you think Jesus wanted the scribes and Pharisees to know about the lost?
  - Why do you think Jesus chose a parable about **sheep** to make His point?
  - How might the one sheep have gotten lost?
  - In what ways do people go astray?
  - What are ways we can ensure that our churches do not lose people?
  - In general terms, what could be the ‘cost’ (not necessarily financial) of finding lost people?
  - Picture the moment the shepherd found his lost sheep? Describe that moment.
  - What does the parable tell us of the character of God?
  - Let’s imagine for a moment that the shepherd was hired and did not love the sheep. What would he have possibly said, or how would he have acted upon finding the sheep after such a distressing search?
  - There was **one** sheep that was lost, the smallest number. What implication does that have for individuals and churches?
  - The shepherd lays the sheep on His shoulders as he carries it back. What are some practical ways we can gently lead sinners back to the fold of God?
  - What are ways that we can **celebrate** the return of lost sheep?
- **Application Questions** *(select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT)*
  - Has there ever been a time in your life when you wandered away from God and His church? What led to that happening? How did you make your way back? *(ask one question at a time)*
  - Do you have people in your life that are lost? How can you use this passage to help them understand that Christ’s mission was to seek and save them? How can you use your testimony to show that God has “found” you? *(ask one question at a time)*
  - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group’s secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. “I will dedicate the next 6 months in working with a colleague, who grew up as a Christian but later turned his back on God. He has been going through some challenging times of late, and I would like to be there for him.”

## 6. Share *(Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)*

- Do you have anyone you could share today’s lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

## 7. Closing prayer

*Prepared by Shandrell Penniken / Northern Conference*