

# 2.2

**TRUTH ABOUT GOD**

God cares about every lost soul.

**TRUTH FOR MY LIFE**

I will rejoice when any lost sheep is found.

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP



**FOCUS VERSE: Luke 15:7**

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

**LESSON TEXT: Luke 15:3-7**



# BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

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**Lesson Text:** Luke 15:3-7

The Parable of the Lost Sheep is the first of three parables that all share similar themes. This parable is immediately followed by the Parable of the Lost Coin, which beautifully mirrors the Parable of the Lost Sheep. These two parables are followed by the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). All three stories share a similar pattern: something of extreme value (a sheep, a coin, a son) was lost, and there was great rejoicing when it was found. The biggest difference in the stories is that the first two record an active search for the lost item, whereas the third does not. The prodigal son decided to return on his own. However, all three stories serve the same purpose: to respond to the Pharisees and scribes who criticized Jesus for the morally suspicious company He kept.

The response of the shepherd, the shepherd's friends, and the angels in Heaven provide a sharp contrast to the response of the scribes and Pharisees. The Pharisees and scribes "murmured" (KJV) and "complained" (NKJV) about the presence of wicked people in their midst, but those in the parable rejoiced greatly. The Pharisees and scribes should have rejoiced that long-lost sinners were listening to the message of truth Jesus was presenting to them. Instead, they were preoccupied with keeping these sinners out of their lives.

In their vanity, the Pharisees may not have seen themselves as needing repentance. Therefore, it is likely they believed Jesus was referring to them as the just persons who needed no repentance. In reality, the tax collectors and sinners who had come to Jesus were probably more just in God's eyes than the Pharisees because they were willing to repent. The former well understood their own sin and their desperate need for Jesus and His mercy. In their self-righteousness, the Pharisees only complained against Jesus and the way He welcomed sinners. The religious were making the most trouble for Jesus because He loved and welcomed sinners.

THE RESPONSE OF THE SHEPHERD, THE SHEPHERD'S FRIENDS, AND THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN PROVIDE A SHARP CONTRAST TO THE RESPONSE OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

# DAY 1

## Luke 15:3

And he spake this parable unto them, saying.

### Biblical Insight

Jesus' parable was in response to the accusations of the Pharisees and scribes who grumbled against Jesus in the previous two verses. Jesus was fond of responding to the criticism of the religious elite with parables. By His use of parables, the accusers were given a glimpse of their hypocrisy, and the other listeners could hear Jesus' well-said response in simple terms so they could understand. Jesus' parables were a great equalizer—easy to be understood by all.

### Daily Devotion

Have you ever heard a great, applicable story that made you laugh out loud or shed a tear or two? Stories, depending on how they are presented, can be powerful. They bring the topic down to a level of understanding where the listener can say, "I've been there too."

They are real life, shoes on, heartbroken, running home, relatable examples of grace and relevance. Jesus told these kinds of stories well in a way that changed lives. He still speaks this way—simply and surely. Jesus spoke using methods people could understand and process. Some chose not to listen or felt like He was not speaking the way they thought He should. We must tune our ears to hear Him and be willing to listen no matter how unassuming or, on the contrary, extravagant.

Take time to answer the following questions:

What are some ways Jesus speaks to you?

What methods can you use to tell your story or the gospel to those around you so they can understand?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 2

### Luke 15:4

What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

### Biblical Insight

The imagery of a shepherd leading and caring for his sheep is seen throughout Scripture. Psalm 23 famously depicts the Lord as our shepherd, and Jesus described Himself as the “good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14). Jesus’ question in Luke 15:4 was hypothetical, but His phrasing indicated His question was rhetorical. Obviously the shepherd would seek after the lost sheep; not doing so would be irresponsible and lazy. The listeners also might have remembered Ezekiel 34, where the prophet railed against the lazy, selfish shepherds of Israel and promised the Lord would watch over them as a more perfect and just Shepherd.

### Daily Devotion

Shepherds are often gentle and patient people. Psalm 23 paints a picture of the LORD as our shepherd. The psalmist David introduced God as one who leads His sheep beside still waters and on paths of righteousness. In this passage, we see God as a provider, leader, comforter, and refuge.

God restores the weary and worn-out soul. His sheep do not want for any good thing because our Shepherd takes care of us and knows what we need and even what we long for. He leads us to places where we can find rest and what we need to be sustained. He directs the sheep to walk on paths of righteousness for His will and glory.

Although a good shepherd guides his sheep to wonder and beauty, He is also close and constant through dark valleys of disappointment, death, and sorrow. He leads and guides the sheep through loss and gain. Similarly, our God cares for us, no matter what we face. Isn’t it wonderful to know the Good Shepherd is taking care of you?

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 3

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### Luke 15:5

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

### Biblical Insight

Laying the sheep on his shoulders allowed the shepherd to protect the sheep while carrying it back to safety. Isaiah 40:11 also speaks of God carrying His sheep. This example shows the magnitude of God's love for His people.

Even though carrying the sheep might have been weighty, the shepherd still rejoiced as he carried the sheep home. The added burden was worth the effort because the shepherd found the sheep unharmed. If he had found the sheep torn apart by wild animals, his response likely would have been mourning, despite a potentially easier walk home.

### Daily Devotion

Do you remember “in the beginning,” when God was so glad for all He had made? He made the oceans, animals, trees, and flowers, but even after all this creation, something was missing. He breathed into what we walk on—the dust—and created humanity who would continuously let Him down. Yet, He still said “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). God formed humanity knowing we would fail Him.

With the taste of what appeared to be fresh and appeasing, the first man and woman sank their teeth deep into a spoiled and sinful beginning. But even after their disobedience, God came looking for them. Once they fell, God called out to them in the garden, longing to pick them back up and bring them toward redemption.

When babies take their first steps, their caretakers do not love them any less when they stumble. Adam and Eve were the first people to ever walk. They were also the first ones to fall. Their fall came with lasting, generational consequences, yet our Father loved them, and He still loves us when we make mistakes.

Jesus is always reaching down and picking up what has fallen. Nothing is too heavy for the Good Shepherd. He carries the weight of the world on His shoulders so we do not have to. He carried the cross, so we don't have to carry the shame.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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# DAY 4

## Luke 15:6

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

### Biblical Insight

The rejoicing did not end with the shepherd. This occasion was deemed celebratory enough to gather friends and neighbors together. Interestingly, the shepherd in this parable threw a party despite experiencing no net gain. If anything, the shepherd lost time and energy seeking out and returning the lost sheep. However, each individual sheep was so important to the shepherd that even rescuing a lost sheep was worth celebrating. This celebration demonstrated the purity of love the shepherd had for his precious sheep, both as a whole and also individually.

### Daily Devotion

In a pasture in the rolling, green hills, a shepherd smiled toward his sheep. He counted once more, though he had barely finished doing so minutes earlier. Ninety-seven . . . ninety-eight . . . ninety-nine . . .

Ninety-nine . . . ninety-nine . . . something was wrong. Where was the one hundredth?

He ran frantically toward the flock. He counted a fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth time. A sheep was not there.

The shepherd gathered the other sheep together in a secure area, then he set off to find the wanderer. The rain fell and his concern grew. He trudged forward, through great distances and all manner of landscape.

After many shouts and tears, the shepherd heard a tiny, almost unrecognizable bleat. There was number one hundred, under a pile of brush, struggling to find freedom. The shepherd picked up the sheep and rejoiced that his lost sheep was found. The sheep was celebrated, not scolded.

The good shepherd stops at nothing to welcome His own home. No matter how dark the night, how intense the storm, or how far you have roamed, if you are lost and want to come back home, God will do the same for you.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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## DAY 5

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### Luke 15:7

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

### Biblical Insight

Jesus' explanation of this parable in verse 7 demonstrates the value He places on each individual life. There are no "extra" people in God's kingdom. His heart breaks for even one who walks away.

Obviously, "just persons, which need no repentance" does not indicate the possibility of being sinless and not needing to repent. The Bible is clear that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), and God's desire is that "all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). Rather, this phrase used by Jesus is to indicate those who are already in the fold, have already repented and experienced salvation, and are currently in right relationship with God.

### Daily Devotion

The Parable of the Lost Sheep is a beautiful, tangible illustration of God's love for His children. Some have opined that sheep are some of the least smart animals. They stray, they wander, they smell, and they do not always make sound decisions. Yet God chose to compare people to sheep. It should not resonate as hurtful, however. Despite our being "less than smart," God still chooses us, chases us, and changes us. He wants us to be part of His fold, and He is saddened when even one chooses to venture in a wrong direction.

If you have wandered or know someone who has, remember our patient, loving Shepherd mourns the lost. He has a spot saved just for you. You are not too far gone or too broken. He is searching for you and longs to welcome you back. The green pastures are waiting. The road may be hard, but the way home is right.

Write about a time you felt the welcoming forgiveness of your faithful Shepherd.

### Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

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