

Lesson 178

TEXT Luke 15:1-10

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that God is vitally concerned about one who goes astray, and that His mercy will extend to any length to restore one into the fold.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. — John 10:11

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? — Matthew 18:12

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **The Lost One**

**SEARCH
TITLE:** **The Lost Sheep**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Shepherding was an important occupation in Bible times because sheep were a source of food, and their thick wool and tanned skins were used to make clothing and tent materials. Sheep are helpless animals. They are unable to find their own food and water, and without direction they would wander aimlessly about the hillside. Hence, a shepherd was essential for the care and protection of a flock.

The shepherd lived with his flock, cared for them, and protected them. Out of this grew a tremendous bond of affection. If a single sheep wandered, the shepherd would risk his life to bring it back to the fold. An injured sheep was carried upon his shoulders until it was able to walk. A newborn lamb was sometimes carried in the shepherd's cloak until it was strong enough to move along with the rest of the flock.

YOUR OPENER

The Lost Sheep

TEXT: Luke 15:1-10

KEY VERSE: How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? — Matthew 18:12

Our text for this lesson reveals the love and compassion of Jesus. This is portrayed as the shepherd's seeking his one lost sheep and the woman's searching for her lost coin. It brings out the helplessness of some who are lost, as well as the needs of those who are lost and do not realize it. Jesus is seeking for both. He gave these parables to the scribes and Pharisees to show how much He loves and values even one soul, and to show the joy in Heaven when a sinner repents.

RESPONSES

1. Class discussion should bring out that this was the very reason why Christ came to earth. His purpose was to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) and, of course, this necessitated His association with them.

2. The scribes were the copiers and transcribers of the Mosaic Law. The Pharisees were a religious party during the time of Christ. As seen in these Scriptures and many others, they were strict in repeating the Law, but lax in doing it. In discussion, bring out that there still are persons today with this same attitude. Do not speak of them in a critical way, but help your students see that it is God's will that His people be "doers of the word." See James 1:22.

3. Class discussion will likely bring out that a sheep is a helpless animal. It is gregarious and dependent upon the protection and guidance of its master. Few creatures stray more easily, or are more heedless. After bringing out some of these characteristics of sheep, continue by discussing how many people show these same traits in wandering away from God. Conclude by mentioning the fact that "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). There is no one who does not need to be found and brought into the fold.

1. The scribes and Pharisees complained, saying that Jesus received sinners and ate with them. Why was this complaint inappropriate?

2. Who were the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-7)? In what way did they fall short of Jesus' expectations of them?

3. In what respect are we all like sheep who have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6)? Explain your answer.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. Who rejoices when a sinner is saved?

5. Think of your concern for a loved one who is unsaved, and list several things you could do to help bring that one to the Lord. How is the value of a lost soul shown in the parable of the Lost Coin?

6. How does the woman's reaction to finding her lost coin, coincide with the words of Christ in Luke 5:32?

7. Describe the differences in the awareness of the sheep and the coin in regard to their lost condition.

8. What is repentance? See 2 Corinthians 7:10.

4. Oftentimes the friends, family, and loved ones of the sinner will rejoice as well as the rejoicing which takes place in Heaven. The shepherd found his lost sheep and called his friends to rejoice with him. Jesus said there is more joy in Heaven over the lost one that is found, than over ninety-nine just persons who were not lost. Continue your discussion by bringing out that not only is there joy in Heaven, but the one who has been found and has repented finds joy in his life. The prophet Isaiah wrote that "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). There may be battles and hard places for one to go through after he has repented, but as he clings to the Lord he can find joy and strength for every need.

5. Students' lists will vary according to their relationship to the sinner. They may mention prayer, fasting, witnessing to the sinner, and asking the ministers to visit. The woman who owned the coin realized the coin was lost and sought for it diligently. Ask your students to list the three steps she took in finding the lost piece: She lit a candle, swept the house, and sought diligently, thus showing her great concern over the loss. Help the students compare their love and concern for one who is lost, with Christ's far greater love. He came to save those who are lost (Matthew 18:11). In the discussion with your class, assure them of the saving grace of Jesus Christ today.

6. She called her friends and neighbors and asked them to rejoice with her. The discussion should center around the fact that the rejoicing was over the fact that the lost coin was found, not that the other nine had not been lost. This coincides with the words of Jesus to the scribes and Pharisees when He told them that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

7. The sheep knew it had been in the fold and wandered away. The coin was lost, but being a coin, it had no knowledge of being lost. Discuss with your class that there are some people in the same condition today, who are lost but don't know it. Others know they are sinners and realize their need of God. Continue the discussion with the fact that Jesus came to seek and to save all who are lost. See Luke 19:10.

8. Repentance is godly sorrow for sin. Your class may mention other definitions. Repentance is spoken of by Jesus in both verses 7 and 10, showing that the rejoicing in Heaven was brought about by the repentance of one who was lost. Wrap up your lesson with the thought that all men everywhere are to repent (Acts 17:30), and except they repent, they will perish (Luke 13:3,5). As you close, bring out that repentance brings salvation. When the wicked man (unsaved) turns to the Lord, repents and forsakes his way, he will find pardon (Isaiah 55:7). This promise is for the "whosoever"! See Revelation 22:17. It was God's love for all of us that caused Him to send His Son to the cross. See John 3:16.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

How does this lesson show God's care for you?

How has God revealed to you that He wants you to be saved?

In what ways does God call His "sheep" that have gone astray?

How does God show His care and concern for His children?

Discuss some of the dangers that might be faced by a wandering lamb, such as thickets, ravines, wild animals. Then discuss the dangers which might face one of God's children who wanders away from the spiritual fold.

Imagine that your child is lost in the woods. What emotions would you feel? What action would you take? Compare this to the love of our heavenly Father for His lost child, realizing that this could mean eternal, not merely physical, death. How would you feel when the child is found? How does this compare with the rejoicing in Heaven when a sinner repents?

Do you think the lamb that the shepherd was seeking knew it was lost? Would this always be the case? Draw a spiritual parallel.

THINGS TO DO

For young juniors, bring a stuffed lamb to class. Use it to begin a discussion of the characteristics of a sheep. (See Reference Information.) Then compare these to the spiritual characteristics of a young Christian.

Bring a magazine or newspaper article about missing children. Discuss the parents' concern and emotions. Then compare this to Christ's concern for His lost child.

Have an adult come to class and give his testimony about how he was drawn to God through His love and mercy. Use this to illustrate that God really cares about us as individuals.

For each of your students, make a copy of the following paragraph which is printed in all capital letters. Instruct them not to look at the paper until you say go. When it's

time, tell them they have one minute to read the sentence and count all the F's they find in it.

FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE
THE RESULT OF YEARS OF CAREFUL
PRAYER AND DEDICATION OF THEIR LIVES.

Try it yourself before you read the answer below! Most people will count four. Others will see six or seven. Very few will count all eight F's that are in the sentence. Ask the students for their various answers, and then surprise them with the correct answer. After you point out to them the word "OF," tell them that most people tend to overlook this because they are looking only at the bigger words. Remind them that this should prove to be a good example of how diligent the good shepherd was when he searched for his lost sheep.

Answers for ANSWER

