



Week One Study Guide –September 13
The Jesus Way: Surrender
Luke 15:1-7

Opening Questions:

- Tell about a time when you have been “temporarily disoriented” (lost). How did it feel?
- How did you know you were lost? How did you resolve your situation?

Read aloud this introduction:

We humans have tools at our disposal to remedy the situation when we find ourselves physically lost. The Boy Scouts teach us to S.T.O.P. - stop, think, observe, and plan. When we find ourselves lost, whether driving, walking, or biking, these are good steps to remember.



In the Scripture text we will look at, one about a lost sheep, these steps are of no use. Why not? Because a middle eastern sheep is not like us. A sheep is totally incapable of an independent existence. It has no capacity to stop, think, observe or plan. And it is this animal Jesus uses in a story that is one of the most important stories Jesus told.

Before reading the Scripture, let's be reminded about the context for this story. Our passage starts with a note about the people who are with Jesus when he tells this story. His disciples are there. Teachers of the Law and common, everyday villagers are also with him. The teachers of the Law believe themselves to be very close to God while no one else is. They refer to these common folk as "sinners." These "sinners" believe they'll never measure up to all God requires.

Invite someone in the group to read Luke 15:1-7 aloud.

Pray this prayer (one person or the whole group together):

Lord, as we come together to study your Word, we bring all of who we are with our needs, our hopes, and our expectations. Meet us here in the power and presence of your Holy Spirit. Give us insight and understanding as we listen carefully for your voice. And then give us courage and conviction to align our lives with the way of Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen.

Questions for Exploration:

- What stands out to you in this story? What grabbed your attention?
- Who are the characters in this story?
- Observe the man (the shepherd) in this story. What exactly does he do?
- How long does the shepherd in the story search?
- What is the role of the sheep in this story?
- What does the sheep do in order to be rescued?
- What point is Jesus making when he talks about “leaving the ninety-nine others in the wilderness”?
- What do you see as Jesus’ central point in telling this story?

Read aloud some background on sheep behavior:

The central characteristic of sheep is that they wander. That's why there are sheep dogs and fences in our day. That's why people are hired to watch over sheep now and in Jesus' day. Sheep contentedly keep their heads down and contentedly nibble themselves away from the rest of the herd if they are not carefully watched and guided. Sometimes attentiveness slips and sheep get lost.

When a sheep realizes it is all alone it is a jolting moment. It discovers that its shepherd and the rest of the flock are nowhere to be seen. The lost sheep is suddenly aware it is totally alone. It begins to cry out in hopes that the shepherd is within ear shot. If the shepherd does hear the cry, he will speak or sing or make a noise that the sheep recognizes and the temporarily disoriented sheep will trot toward the shepherd's voice until back where it belongs.

In Jesus' story, however, the suddenly aware sheep gets no response. A lone sheep will always turn to sheer terror. It may frantically run around for a bit, but it will, at some point, freeze in place. It knows it is in deep, deep trouble. It may stand until unable to stand or choose to immediately lie down. It will bleat its little heart out, but that is all it can do except to shake in fear as it realizes its predicament. Without outside intervention, it will eventually be discovered by wild animals and it will come to its end. A lost and never rescued sheep will surely die.

The shepherd in Jesus' story realizes at some point that he has a missing sheep. It could be hours later. He leaves the rest of the flock, perhaps in the care of another shepherd or in a sheep fold, or perhaps even alone if need be, and he retraces his steps. He risks everything to



find that sheep. His professional integrity is on the line. His name will be worth nothing if he does not account for every sheep placed under his care by the villagers. His character and reputation are at stake. So, he searches everywhere until he hears or comes upon the petrified sheep somewhere in the rocky, hilly terrain. The shepherd is relieved beyond measure.

The sheep, unable to move out of total fear, must be picked up and draped across the shoulders of the shepherd. The sheep Jesus tells about is no cuddly little lamb. This is a full grown forty to seventy pound wooly adult animal. The shepherd gets down, comes up under the helpless sheep, lifts it up onto his shoulders and begins to navigate the treacherous, uneven ground through the hills back to the village. It may be a journey of hours, but he perseveres. He risks everything for his name's sake to bring the helpless sheep to safety.

Questions for Pressing it Out:

- What does this story reveal about who God is?
- What does it reveal about God's priorities?
- What does this story tell us about who we are?
- How does this story inform us about our own priorities in living out the way of Jesus?
- What does God want us to do?

Closing Prayer:

Depending on the needs/desires of your group here are some options:

- Ask one or two group members to close the group in prayer
- Pray the Lord's prayer together aloud:

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."