

Learning More with
Stories of the Master

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You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Luke 15:1-10.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Luke 15:1-10 NASB	Luke 15:1-10 NLT
<p>Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. ² Both the Pharisees and the scribes <i>began</i> to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."</p> <p>³ So He told them this parable, saying, ⁴ "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way, there will be <i>more</i> joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.</p> <p>⁸ "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."</p>	<p>Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. ² This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!</p> <p>³ So Jesus told them this story: ⁴ "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. ⁶ When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!</p> <p>⁸ "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.' ¹⁰ In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents."</p>

2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

From *Poet and Peasant* by Kenneth Bailey

- A noble man may feed those of lower rank than himself but he would never eat with them. Jesus however ate with sinners.

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- Shepherds were considered unclean in the first century.
- A hundred sheep may be owned by several families which explains why the whole community rejoiced when the lost sheep was found.
- Shepherds could keep their sheep out at night in the wilderness or bring them back to their pens in the courtyard of the family.
- In a village, cash was a rare commodity and the loss of one coin would be distressing.
- Village women wore their coins on their necklaces.

From *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptics* by Malina and Rohrbaugh

- To receive or welcome “sinners” implies that one is hosting a meal. Thus, Jesus is not merely showing up at a meal, he is hosting the meal.
- Inviting anyone to a meal implied trust, acceptance, and peace.
- Hosting tax collectors was risky because it was thought that tax collectors would be examining the value of all the household possessions to assess taxes.
- Not only did Jesus use “unclean shepherds” as an illustration in his story, but he asked the Pharisees to imagine themselves in that role.
- Lost sheep could frequently sit down, bleat constantly, and refuse to move. Thus, a shepherd who finds it would have to carry it back to the flock.
- The woman lighting a lamp would be necessary because most homes would be windowless and would have dark places in the home.

From the *New International Version Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*

- The Pharisees in attendance would not readily identify with the main characters in these stories, shepherds and women. In addition to being despised, the testimony of shepherds and women was mistrusted in courts.
- Because there could be several owners of 100 sheep and several shepherds, one shepherd could leave the flock with the other shepherds while he looked for the lost sheep.
- Archaeology has often revealed coins in the cracks of floors! Sweeping would help the search effort for one could then hear the coin as the broom swept over it.
- Oil lamps in the home were small and could be carried in the palm of the hand.

3. Answer these reflective questions.

Why were the Pharisees upset that Jesus was eating with sinners? How much pressure did this place upon Jesus to stop this practice? Why did Jesus never stop doing this?

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Jesus used two examples in the stories – shepherds and a woman – who were culturally despised. Why do you think he used them in the stories he told the Pharisees? What do you think the Pharisees thought about those stories? What lessons can we learn from them?

The shepherd left the 99 and went searching for one lost sheep. The woman diligently searched for the lost coin. What does that tell you about God’s love for you?

Which of the two stories – the lost sheep and the lost coin – speaks to your heart the most. Why?
