

Don't Be a Lost Sheep (Bible Study) – What Is a Lost Sheep?

(If you are the pastor, start praying ahead of the series about assigning jobs in the church. Your congregation is called by God to work in the church. As they start to pray, they'll start to volunteer. Take a step out in faith, and write a list of jobs.)

(The last study, I recommend doing communion. Ask a couple people to bring bread.)

We're starting a new study on **The Lost Sheep**. The Holy Spirit has given us some a revelational interpretation of two parables; the ten virgins (what the oil is exactly, why they can't share it, and why it can be purchased) and also the talent parable (why they had different amounts, and what the table of exchange means). I can't wait to get right to those parables, but we're going to take the scenic route so this can be a life impacting study for you, your family, and those that you love. For that reason, **you need to bring a notebook to take notes**. I will give you a handout at the end to help you, but it won't replace weekly notetaking.

Overview: Today we're going to study what is a lost sheep and a little of God's Plan. Next two weeks or so, we'll study God's Plan by looking at scripture and then focus on His Plan for our lives. After that, we'll look at those who chose not to seek God's Plan or start His Plan and then stop. As a warning, I am going to suggest you buy a "God's Plan" notebook for yourself and one for each family member. One subject cheap notebooks are perfectly fine and encouraged!! You need space to add to and eventually rewrite everything after your page is crossed out and marked up. If you have one of those fancy leather-bound notebooks, you'll be more concerned about making it neat and conserving pages. There may very well be times you'll write through tears and have to rewrite it. A cheap notebook and a cheap or free pen are perfectly fine. Finally in this study, we'll look at judgement day and go over the handout. I'd like to do communion for the last study, so if you'd like to bring a celebration loaf of bread (fancy and sweet) keep that in mind.

Let's jump right into the study...

Who are the lost sheep in the Bible?

Luke 15:1-7 NKJV

¹ Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." ³ So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ⁴ "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

The Pharisees and scribes complained that Jesus was receiving and eating with sinners. In our modern mind, we think of these "*sinners*" as unbelievers. That's not so! Before we dig deeper, let's see what Jesus said to the Canaanite woman with a demon possessed daughter...

Matthew 15:24 NKJV

But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

These people Jesus was eating with are lost sheep of the house of Israel, or lost sheep of the House of God. The Jewish people were the chosen race, the chosen people, and their righteousness was performance based as opposed to the New Testament righteousness through Jesus. But they were still lost from The House of God. Notice that we read Jesus said, "*sinner who repents*," and didn't say that they should become a Jew or should believe in God, because they did!

What does this mean to us?

What this means to us is that these "*sinners*" weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing, not following their instructions. Repentance means sincere regret or remorse, which indicates that you plan on stopping that

action and doing what's right. So, these men were of The House of God, but doing something else other than what they were called to do. God didn't create them and give them skills to hurt others. It's difficult for us to understand salvation was in their race and actions, because our salvation is in Christ. BUT we, like these sinners, can still be lost sheep, busy doing what we weren't created to do. We'll see this reflected in Jesus' teaching and revealing Heavenly judgment in later chapters.

How do those of the House of God, the saved, become lost sheep?

By not following instructions. Yes, some people quit serving God altogether, but we're not focusing on that group of people for this study. That's quite obvious. We're focusing on lost sheep currently in The House of God, which goes undetected. God has created and gifted each one of us for a specific purpose. Let's take a look at this before we move on. Jesus tells the Lost Sheep story in **Matthew 18**, we looked at Luke, but then in **Matthew 21:28-32**, Jesus makes it clear those of the House of God are required to follow work instructions.

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ **“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’²⁹ “‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.³⁰ “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.³¹ “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.³² For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.**

This parable still applies to us today. Just because we're saved and believed Jesus, it **doesn't make us exempt from following our work instructions.** If you go up to **verse 23**, the chief priests and the elders were the ones questioning Jesus here. The chief priests and elder's had jobs as well. In short according to the Old Testament, the chief priests had oversight of the temple duties and preformed sacrifices. The elders would govern and represent their clan, the tribes of Israel. The teaching was originally done by priests and prophets. Later at the time of Jesus, teachers and then other approved leaders would teach. They killed the prophets and apparently the priests weren't teaching the people. At this point the information starts to become he said she said as to who was permitted to teach. The point is the chief priests and elders weren't following their work instructions.

So... Putting these two parables together, Jesus is speaking about “*sinners*” entering in the Kingdom of God before the people of The House of God. Notice two sons, they both belonged to the father; or for us, two sons of God belonging to the House of God. The one that followed instructions was entering Heaven, and the one who didn't wasn't going to Heaven. He was busy doing whatever he wanted to do, refusing his work instructions.

The prostitutes and tax collectors entering into the kingdom before the sons, because when they get saved, they're so thankful they start witnessing, and also, they have to witness!! Those of us who are *stationary* in The House of God don't have to do this. They have to say to the people they know, “*I'm not working the streets anymore... I'm not cheating for you on your taxes anymore,*” and they must seek God for instructions. Their lifestyle is often so incredibly bad they have to change how they dress, change who they fellowship with, throw things away, use different speech, make their wrongs right, and desperately figure out what they're supposed to be doing. They receive grace and fruit of repentance as they clean up their life, so they're running fast in their race. Then we often, hopefully never here... just say amen, see the religious spirit of the Pharisees rise up against these people. “*I don't want these people in my church. I might have to find a new church. This is my seat, my family and I sit here. I like a small church. Give them some time, they'll settle down.*” That's the Pharisaical religious attitude that puts people in danger with The Lord that we just read above in Luke. If that feeling ever creeps in, we have to stop it right away and say, “***What are my instructions for new people coming in to the church?***”

Not everyone will have specific instructions from God for new people, but we should all know our Heavenly instructions when new people sit near us or in our favorite seat. When you visit churches often enough, there are people who will actually come up to you and inform you that you're in their set. They'll either want you to move or let you know you have their permission to sit there *today*. **Those are NOT instructions from the Lord,**

that's destruction from the flesh! One day, years ago, a lady sat down and the woman in front of her just said, "Hello, would you like a mint?" The lady's whole countenance changed. It was amazing. Who knew a mint could turn a frog face frown into a warm happy smile? The Holy Spirit knew. Then on the other side we have overly friendly people, "Hi. Where you from? What's your last time? Where do you work? Are you married? Do you have kids? How long have you been saved?" It's like a job interview. For some people, they're conducting a secret interview to see if they could hook you up with another single from the church, meddling. No! Not everyone wants interviewed and hugged 10 times. **Get your instructions from Heaven!** But never get up from Jesus' table. The Pharisees were on the outside angry; and the people they're angry with were sitting at Jesus' table happy. Don't get up from the table because you're uncomfortable with change, or with people that don't look like you. Seek your instructions, your work order, for The House of God, or you could end up being a lost sheep.

Who are the Lost Sheep today?

Today, the lost sheep are the saved ones, the ones not following the Good Shepherd, Jesus, The Head of The Church. They're the saved people that strayed up into the mountains to find their own grass to feed on, or told to work and refused. **The church originally in the Book of Acts called themselves "the followers of the way."** Which indicates they understood there was a journey to walk out. The term Christian, originally meaning Christ-like, carried the idea they were acting like Christ, with actions not just a belief system. If you Google the term now, the definition in some places is dulled down to not mean much:

Oxford - professing Christianity or its teachings; received Christian baptism or is a believer in Christianity

Merriam-Webster - believes in Jesus Christ and follows his teachings; a member of a Christian church

Dictionary.com - a person who believes in and follows Jesus Christ

Dictionary.com did better, but only about half the definitions I looked at even carried the "following" aspects or some type of action on our behalf, other than the "I believe..."

The lost sheep are people who have given their life to the Lord, might even be confessing they're "living for Jesus," but they're not FOLLOWING Jesus, The Head of the Church, where He told them to go work.

Let's talk about some real people, not here in our church, and what this looks like...

A musician called to record Christian albums, faithfully attends church, reads their Bible, works on the sound board for the church, and occasionally plays guitar as a fill-in. Are they following their instructions? No.

A preacher that's called to pastor a church, they're refusing to go to Bible college, but they're born again, bring people to church regularly, and attend prayer meeting. Are they following their instructions? No.

An evangelist that's called to the prison ministry, they faithfully attend church, attend Bible study, but went to community college to get a better job at 45 years old. Are they following their instructions? No.

A short-term missionary that's called to lead groups to South America goes on mission trips alone and teaches fun classes like karate and knitting at a mission house, because they *refuse* to move out of a heavily poverty-stricken area where people can't afford trips. Are they following their instructions? No.

This might be a lot for you to handle right now, because we haven't been taught this way. But I want to pause right here and tell you that I am sharing the truth with you because I love you in Christ. We will ALL have chaff burned off of us in this series (Matthew 3:12). **It's better to feel uncomfortable in love here on Earth and learn God's Plan for your life, than it is for me to say nice things and you face the Father in shock and wonder that you missed His Plan for your life.** Not only that but I am going to be held responsible for not teaching you that we all have a plan for our lives that we will *really* enjoy fulfilling.

Next week, we'll take a deeper look at following your instructions. You'll see that going to Heaven depends on it. We have to ask ourselves, "Does The Head of The Church have a right to require us to produce fruit and do some work?" Yes, yes He does! He poured creativity and abilities inside of us, and it's our job to let them out.

This is another way we can put ourselves on the path of blessings and live the blessed life where our prayers get answered.

Let me put it to you this way, someone will pray and ask God for many things through the years. They come to the conclusion that God doesn't want to do these things and those things, and so they'll proclaim, "It's not God's will to..." whatever they want. But if you ask the Lord, He might say, "I asked her to go to the assisted living facility and do a 5-minute Bible Study to encourage the elderly, and pray for their needs. She's been refusing for 12 years, saying, 'I should go... Someone should go... Why doesn't someone go.... Why hasn't some church gone there...'" If this was you, I could pat you on the back and tell you it's not your fault God doesn't want to answer your prayers. I could tell you He's mysterious, keep praying, and He will work things out one day. **But we need to change our thinking!** There is a hurt and dying world out there. We are all called to the battlefield. The Lord is looking at the bigger picture. He's seeing how many elderly are dying without Jesus or live depressed and died in those 12 years that woman did nothing. That woman will tell you how she tithes her money, gives, and helps out at the church. That's a wonderful start, but... **this woman made herself a lost sheep. Jesus, The Head of The Church, stepped towards the assisted living home, and she didn't follow.** I want us all to walk directly behind Jesus, and not feel lost like, "Where's God?" when something goes wrong.

Someone may have asked you to go to the assisted living facility, and you said no because you feel so uncomfortable. That's ok, you're not a lost or bad sheep. It wasn't The Plan for you. When you learn The Plan, you'll find that you're gifted for it and it will be very enjoyable.

Another thing that **happens to Christians when they're a lost sheep** is mid-life crisis, blaming their spouse for not being fulfilled, trying to live vicariously through their children or single friends, running from this vacation to that event, trying drinking because after all... Jesus made wine, and other weird behavior. Often times people will suggest they read their Bible more, pray more, listen to this sermon, watch that video, or attend more church. That's not the answer. The answer is unfilled Plan of God in their life. When you're busy about Your Father's business, you'll live refreshed and fulfilled. **People fall away or get into weird behavior when they shift their focus from The Plan to something else or they lived life as a lost sheep.** God's Plans are very important for you to live a fulfilled, blessed, and healthy life. **God's Plan gives your life purpose. You're either following Jesus or you're a lost sheep.**

Being a **lost sheep can make you afraid of death**, sickness, tragedy, and whatever else floats by. These aren't just unfounded feelings people developed. When the Shepherd moves, if you don't move with Him, you're susceptible to being attacked, losing your peace, and then develop a mentality of expecting attacks and problems in your life. Let's look at an **obscure Bible story** and then talk about it.

1 Kings 13

King Jeroboam was sacrificing to other Gods. The Lord sent a young prophet to prophesy against the alter. King Jeroboam stretched out his arm and demanded the prophet be arrested. King Jeroboam's arm froze in place and the Word of the Lord came to pass that the alter was split and the ashes fell out. Let's pick up in verse 6.

⁶ Then the king answered and said to the man of God, "Please entreat the favor of the Lord your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me." So the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as before. ⁷ Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." ⁸ But the man of God said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place. ⁹ For so it was commanded me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came.'" ¹⁰ So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel.

For time's sake, I'm going to skip around and read parts. You can read the chapter at home this week.

¹¹ Now an old prophet dwelt in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done... ¹⁴ (the old prophet) went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak... ¹⁵ Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." ¹⁶ And he said, "I cannot ... ¹⁷ For I have been told by the word of the Lord, 'You shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by going the way you

came.'”¹⁸ He said to him, “I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’” (He was lying to him.)¹⁹ So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water.

²⁰ Now it happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back;²¹ and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord, and have not kept the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you,²² but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the Lord said to you, “Eat no bread and drink no water,” your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.’”

The young prophet leaves and a lion kills him on the way home. The sons of the old prophet tell their father he’s dead. The old prophet buries him and says to his sons,³¹ “When I am dead, then bury me in the tomb where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones.”³² For the saying which he cried out by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the shrines on the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, will surely come to pass.”

Who said his bones were needed for a Word of God spoken come to pass? That’s arrogant! This old prophet wasn’t living right before the Lord. God had to send a young man into town, because this old prophet followed his own path away from God. He lied to the young prophet, because he wanted his oil (we’ll study this later), which was some of his anointing to prophesy. The old prophet destroyed his own Plan of God. He wanted the young prophet to come to his house, disobedient or not, in hopes he could get something spiritual. The reason the old prophet wanted the young prophet’s bones to be laid on his is because he was afraid of death. The young prophet had the anointing to reverse that arm freezing, so he thought laying his bones on him might heal him and bring him back. He was afraid to face the Lord and give account for his life. That’s why he lied and didn’t care if the young prophet died, it was all about him. **Two really big takeaways** from this story are **don’t be a lost sheep** because **it produces fear**; and **never let anyone talk you out of The Plan**, no pastor, no family, no friends, or any angel that appears to you. That’s how the Mormon religion started and also the Muslim religion, an angel appeared and gave a word. **Follow the Shepherd and don’t let anyone lead you astray from The Plan.**

Let’s look at Mary and Jesus, because I want you to see this.... You’ll never see this story the same again! Then we’ll end the study for this week.

Luke 2:41-50 NKJV

⁴¹ His (Jesus) parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. ⁴³ When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day’s journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. ⁴⁶ Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.”

⁴⁹ And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

The journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem in ancient Bible times is 90 miles. An average packed donkey can travel 20 miles a day. They *did* have a long journey home... but the question is, “**Who told Mary and Joseph to do the bare minimum, pack up, and leave?**” They packed up so fast to get out of there, they didn’t even count their children. We watch that old movie Home Alone and think who would *really* leave on a trip without their kid? Mary and Joseph! Luke is subtly telling us something here. They had to have known Jesus, during the feast, was interested in being in the temple. Knowing they had a special child, they didn’t seek God’s Plan for when they should leave the temple. When they *do* find Jesus, Mary shifts the blame on Jesus, “*Son, why have You done*

this to us?" She made it about herself and her own emotions missing The Plan of God. Jesus' response shows you Mary and Joseph missed it, "*Why did you seek Me?"* As in you should have sought The Father first. His response is respectfully letting them know they missed God but He was working God's Plan in His life, "*Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"* Jesus had to work The Plan even though they didn't follow and wanted to do the bare minimum. Most people focus on Jesus' being submitted to his Earthly parents. Yes, Jesus submitted to them, but notice how His questions correct them subtly. It's almost humorous once you see it. It's the same thing He was doing in the temple to the leaders.

Let's continue to look at Mary's Plan...

John 2:1-5 NKJV (Skipping around)

¹ On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

³ And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

⁴ Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

Mary tells Jesus about the wine. Jesus basically tells her no, and gives the reason that His ministry hadn't started yet. Mary doesn't back down and say, "*God's Will be done.*" She looks at the servants and says, "*Do what He says!*" Mary is not God's Plan minded, she's more Earthy focused. I'm not suggesting she's a lost sheep, sinful, or bad; she didn't have a regenerated spirit and didn't understand. We have regenerated spirits!

But there is a stark contrast to Mary in the Old Testament...

Sampson's Birth - Judges 13 (Skipping around)

2 Now there was a certain man from Zorah.... Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children.

3 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

6 So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me...."

8 Then Manoah prayed to the Lord, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born."

9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again....

Sampson's parents were very God's Plan minded. They didn't run to the temple, ask their parents for advice, and take a survey. No, they asked for more instructions from God on their own. God was obviously impressed with their prayer, because He sent the angel back to them with more instructions.

I know this is jumping ahead a little in the study using Jesus, but we must keep Jesus' actions in mind as we go through this series. So we know this is not only applicable to us, but we follow the example.

John 5:30 NKJV

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

Matthew 14:23 NKJV

And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

There are many scriptures of Jesus stating that He's following God's Will or God's Plan for His life on Earth. We can also see that Jesus *had* to pray to know God's Plan. But what we're looking at today is that Jesus DIDN'T turn Himself and the disciples into some type of vigilantes, going off and fighting the forces of evil as they saw fit. Even though He was The Good Shephard, He still could have been disconnected from the Father by doing whatever He wanted, especially when it came time to be crucified. We read in the Word that He was tempted in every way like we are (Hebrews 4:15). **If Jesus had to pray to follow the Father, we should take praying to following Jesus, The Head of The Church, just as seriously.** Next time you read the gospels, pay attention how many times Jesus prayed and how many times He referred back to the Father for The Plan. He didn't say, "*Be gone demon, I Am The I Am,*" or, "*Be made whole, I Am God.*" No! **Mark 1:13**, Jesus woke up early, got away

from everyone to pray, and then went down to minister to the people. He prayed for the people and sought the Father for The Plan.

You might be wondering, *“Why are we following Jesus and not the Father?”* Jesus is the Head of The Church (Colossians 1:18). That’s His delegated responsibility. The Father and Jesus are one, it’s not like it a separate plan. Pray to the Father for The Plan in Jesus’ Name, but you’re following Jesus’ example and you can speak to Him as well about The Plan.

We will close today’s study with this...

Matthew 25:21 NKJV

His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

We have to ask ourself the question, *“Good and faithful to what; our plan and our way or His Plan and His Way?”* Servants do the Master’s plan His way.

How do we make sure we’re not lost sheep?

The short answer is, act like Jesus and spend time with the Lord to get your instructions for your assignment here on Earth. Jesus did not get all of His instructions in Heaven or at once.

We’ll talk more about the Plan of God in the upcoming studies, and look at how some people in the Bible treated their assignments. You may not have read these stories in the light of God’s Plan, but we will and it will be eye opening. Make sure you’re ready to take notes next week.

Homework

- Buy a notebook to get ready for God’s Plan for your life
- Talk to the Lord, start telling Him you’re ready for your instructions
- Read your Bible 10 mins a day, praise and worship 10 mins a day every day this week
- Think about volunteering at the end of the series to bring sweet yummy bread, either bought or homemade

Prayer Points

- Thank You, Lord for this eye-opening word
- As we meditate on this lesson and share it with our loved ones, let this become revelational knowledge that illuminates our heart
- I ask that You stir up an excited passion inside us to pray for and carry out Your Plan for our lives
- When we are in our quiet times and spending time with You, please let our instructions become more and more clear as learn to follow Jesus
 - Holy Spirit light our torch so that we can set other people’s passion on fire to serve You with both our words and how we live

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.