

IN-DEPTH SUMMARY

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

The in-depth summary of each bible study is much different from the small group bible study laid out before the leader and the students. The small group studies are intended to be interactive, provide a learning atmosphere for students, and open discussions allowing for interpretations of what the gospels' witnessed. The in-depth summary is designed to help the leader with expansive information, much more than what is in the text notes found at the bottom of every bible page. An exhaustive search was completed on each verse to help the Leader answer questions that may come up during the study.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep can be found in Matthew 18:10-14 and Luke 15:1-7 in the Synoptic Gospels. These accounts describe a shepherd who loses one of his sheep, searches for it, finds it, and rejoices over its recovery. Despite the similarities between the two versions, each Gospel has a unique message to convey through this parable. Let's delve into each one and uncover the different lessons they offer.

Matthew's perspective for the Parable of the Lost Sheep: Matthew 18:10-14

To understand Matthew's perspective on the Parable of the Lost Sheep, it's essential to look at the context of Matthew chapter 18. The chapter begins with the disciples discussing who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus responds by explaining how to enter the kingdom of heaven and who would be considered the greatest. He emphasizes the need to be converted and humble oneself like a child. This perspective is reflected in Matthew's version of the Lost Sheep, where Jesus refers to "these little ones" twice. Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven, their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

Luke's perspective for the Parable of the Lost Sheep: Luke 15:1-7

When trying to understand the meaning of this parable, it is crucial to examine the dialogues presented in both Matthew and Luke's accounts. While the conversations are similar, each author provides a unique lesson perspective. By arranging the verses in a seamless and fluid manner, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the parable. It's also worth noting that in Ezekiel 34:16, God mentions that he will destroy the sleek and strong sheep. This raises the question of why God would want to do this. Some verses refer to them as fat and strong, but the reference here is to those who are proud, arrogant, and full of themselves - the wicked, sinful, immoral, corrupt, and unrighteous.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

IN-DEPTH SUMMARY

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

On the other hand, God is trying to find and save those who are lost - the broken-hearted, those who had the Holy Spirit within themselves and are now lost, and those who are enlightened by God's Spirit. By keeping these points in mind, we can better understand the parable and its message. To set the stage for understanding, someone should read Ezekiel 34:11-16, in which God mentions that he will destroy the sleek and strong. When examining the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke's Gospel, we can see that Jesus interacted with tax collectors and sinners, which caused disapproval from the Pharisees and scribes. They started murmuring about him. But when we look through the lens of a tax collector or sinner, we can witness the search for the lost sheep and the excitement of finding it. The story comes to a head with great rejoicing in heaven when the sinner repents, showing the power of redemption and God's love for all people.

Set the stage: Have someone read Ezekiel 34:11-16. In Ezekiel 34:16 God mentions he will destroy the sleek and strong. Two questions:

1. Why would God want to destroy the sleek and strong sheep? It's interesting to note that some verses refer to them as fat and strong. The reference here is to those who are proud, pompous, arrogant, full of themselves, the powerful and rich, the wicked, sinful, immoral, corrupt, and the unrighteous. It's a reminder that God values humility and righteousness above all else, and those who choose to live in opposition to his will ultimately face the consequences of their actions.

2. Who is God trying find and save? God is always searching for those who are lost. He seeks out the broken-hearted, those who once had the Holy Spirit within themselves but have become lost. He also looks for those who are enlightened by His Spirit. Rest assured, if you feel lost, God is searching for you. He wants to bring you back into His loving embrace and guide you towards a brighter future. Trust in Him, and He will lead you to where you are meant to be.

Let's start with Luke's version of the Lost Sheep.

Luke 15:1 (Read the verse outlined in black): **Who were the tax collectors? And why would they be grouped with the sinners?** When Jesus walked the earth, some tax collectors were not well-regarded by the Jewish community. They were seen as corrupt individuals who worked for the Roman Empire and collected taxes from the Jewish residents. There were two levels of tax collectors: the ordinary and the chief. Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples, was an ordinary tax collector, while Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector in Judean. The Pharisees and scribes looked down on both levels of tax

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

IN-DEPTH SUMMARY

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

collectors, seeing them as untrustworthy and low-valued members of society. However, Jesus did not discriminate against them. Instead, he welcomed them with open arms, and many tax collectors and sinners gathered around him, eager to hear his teachings and wisdom.

1. During the time of the Romans, a group of Jewish people called "publicans" were used to collect taxes from their people. This was a way for the empire to gain revenue from conquered territories. However, the Jewish community was unhappy about this practice, as it benefited the Roman oppressors and Jewish tax collectors. The tax collectors were viewed as dishonest and corrupt individuals and were not highly respected in society. Even so, Jesus did not discriminate against them and welcomed them with open arms. As a result, many tax collectors and sinners came to listen to his teachings.

2. It's unfortunate that some individuals in history, such as the Jewish tax collectors during Roman times, took advantage of their position to enrich themselves at the expense of their own people. It's important for all members of society to act with integrity and honesty, especially those in positions of power or influence.

3. In the past, it was not uncommon for people or families to fall behind on their taxes. In these situations, the tax collector would sometimes offer them an advance to help cover the cost of their taxes. However, in exchange for this advance, the tax collector would require the individual to use their assets as collateral for a private debt. This debt would then accrue interest over time, making it even more difficult for the individual to pay off their tax debt.

4. It's interesting to note that tax collectors in ancient times lived quite a luxurious lifestyle. They could afford better clothing and even sandals, which allowed them to maintain a higher level of cleanliness. As a result, they tended to separate themselves from the rest of Jewish society and form their exclusive group. It's fascinating how wealth can create such a divide among people.

Luke 15:2-3 (read the verse outlined in red): **Why is eating with sinners looked upon as an unacceptable or intolerable act by the Pharisees and scribes?** Read Mark 2:15. It is mentioned that after Matthew joined Jesus' group of disciples, many tax collectors and sinners ate with them in Matthew's house. It is important to note that sinners were often known as those who deliberately refused to follow the Mosaic law. This act of Jesus eating with them was seen as an insult by the Pharisees and scribes. However, it

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

IN-DEPTH SUMMARY

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

was a sign of acceptance and friendship, a beautiful demonstration of Jesus' unconditional love for all people.

Let's look at the beginning part of Matthew's version of the Lost Sheep.

Matthew 18:10 (read verses outlined in dark red): **Who are the little ones?** It's important to understand that when Jesus talked about not despising one of the little ones, he was actually referring to any believer or follower of Christ at any age. He wanted his disciples to pay attention and have the heart and compassion of a child, and it's our responsibility as parents, leaders, and ministers to protect those who have the heart of a child. Equally important is not to devalue or look down on those with the heart of a child. Let's follow Jesus' teachings and treat all with love and compassion, regardless of age or status.

The second part of this verse, Jesus talks about "in heaven, their angels always see the face of God." For many years, people have referred to this verse as evidence that every believer has their own guardian angel. **Does this mean every believer has their own guardian angel?** Some people have interpreted a verse in which Jesus mentions "their angels" as evidence that every believer has their own guardian angel. However, this interpretation may not be entirely accurate. While the verse does say that angels in heaven always see the face of God, it does not necessarily mean that every believer has their own personal guardian angel. So, while this verse may be a source of comfort for some, it does not necessarily provide evidence for the idea of individual guardian angels for every believer.

Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:4 (read verses outlined in green): When one sheep goes missing, it is significant and valuable to the shepherd. Jesus emphasized this point in his parable about the lost sheep. The shepherd's attention is focused on the one lost sheep, not the ninety-nine that are safe on the mountains. Each disciple interpreted the importance of the lost sheep differently, but the lesson remains the same: every individual is valuable and worth seeking out, even if they have strayed from the group.

Matthew's version: **From Matthew's perspective, who is the lost sheep?** As a shepherd knows every sheep, so does God know each and every one of his believers or followers of Christ. God's love for us is boundless, and just like a parent, He will leave no stone unturned until He finds the lost one. Each of these little ones may have strayed away from the flock, but God will search tirelessly until they are found. As Psalm 119:176 reminds us, God's love for us is immeasurable, and He will go to the ends of the earth to

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

IN-DEPTH SUMMARY

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

seek and save his lost children. Every single believer is precious to Him, and He will never give up on us.

Luke's version: **From Luke's perspective, who is the lost sheep?** Jesus had just overheard the Pharisees and scribes grumbling amongst themselves about his choice to associate and dine with tax collectors and sinners. In response, Jesus told a parable about one hundred sheep, with one of them going astray. This resonated strongly with the tax collectors and sinners, who could easily see themselves as the lost sheep. They had once been part of a larger community but now found themselves lost and alone. The tax collectors were fellow Jews, now collecting taxes on behalf of the Roman Empire, while the sinners had fallen from grace after once being righteous and faithful. It was easy for them to imagine what might happen to them next.

Matthew 18:13, Luke 15:5-6 (read verses outlined in purple): **The lost sheep is found, and the shepherd rejoices.**

Matthew's version: **From Matthew's perspective what is gained by finding the lost sheep?** The feeling of finding a lost sheep must be indescribable. It's like witnessing a miracle that brings so much joy to the heart. The mere fact that the lost sheep has finally returned to the flock is a true blessing, and I can only imagine the emotional state of the person who found it. The overwhelming happiness and gratitude that one must feel is beyond measure. It's an incredible reminder that even when we stray from the path, there is always a way back to the flock, and the journey back home can be just as beautiful and rewarding as the destination itself.

Luke's version: **From Luke's perspective what is gained by finding the lost sheep?** The parable of the lost sheep is a poignant and heartwarming representation of the Lord's boundless love for sinners and his unwavering commitment to their redemption. The story depicts a shepherd who, upon realizing that one of his precious sheep has gone astray, sets out on a mission to find it. After much searching and effort, the shepherd finally locates the lost sheep and, overcome with joy and relief, hoists it onto his shoulders and carries it back to safety.

The imagery of the shepherd carrying the sheep on his shoulders is a powerful and evocative symbol of the Lord's care and protection for his people. It is reminiscent of a triumphant parade, with the crowd lifting up a hero or celebrity after a victorious sporting event. Similarly, the shepherd's joy at finding the lost sheep is palpable and

IN-DEPTH SUMMARY

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

infectious, inspiring him to call upon his friends and neighbors to join him in celebrating the happy news.

It is worth noting that the shepherd's reaction to finding the lost sheep is not merely a matter of restoring lost property. While it is true that sheep were valuable assets in biblical times, the shepherd's joy is rooted in something deeper and more profound. The parable reminds us that each and every one of us is precious and beloved in the eyes of the Lord, and that his mercy and grace extend even to those who have strayed from the path.

Luke 15:7 (read the verse outlined in grey): **What is the parable lesson in Luke?** The parable of the lost sheep teaches us that heaven rejoices when a sinner repents and turns to Jesus for salvation. In this parable, finding a lost soul is likened to finding a lost sheep. The joy and celebration in heaven are abundant when a sinner repents and accepts Jesus as their savior. Read Luke 5:31-32, the healthy do not need a physician, but rather the sick. Similarly, when a sinner repents and turns to Jesus, it brings great joy to heaven. The welcoming of a born-again Christian who has turned away from their sinful ways is more joyful than the other ninety-nine who have already been saved.

Matthew 18:14 (read the verse outlined in orange): The Father's will is to save one of the little ones. **What is the parable lesson Matthew?** It's comforting to know that God will never give up on us, even if we wander off or fall away. The parable in Matthew emphasizes that if we are one of the "little ones" who have lost our way, God will continue to search for us and give us many opportunities to find our way back. It's a beautiful reminder that God's love and mercy are boundless.

Matthew 18:11 (read the verse outlined in blue): **Why did Jesus come to save the lost and not the righteous?** Read Luke 5:32. It's interesting to see how Matthew and Luke both showcase the different ways people can be lost. Matthew emphasizes the importance of finding and bringing back the "little ones" who have strayed from Jesus, while Luke focuses on sinners who have yet to turn to God for salvation. Jesus, in both cases, provides a way for these lost individuals to find their way back to righteousness and salvation. It's a powerful reminder of the boundless love and mercy that God has for all of us.