

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, January 16 – Read Luke 15:1-2. Why were the Pharisees and teachers of religious law bothered that Jesus associated with these people? The religious leaders were always careful to stay “clean” according to Old Testament law. In fact, they went well beyond the law in their avoidance of certain people and certain situations and in their ritual washings. By contrast, Jesus took the concept of “cleanness” lightly. He risked defilement by touching those who had leprosy and by neglecting to wash in the Pharisees’ prescribed manner, and showed complete disregard for their sanctions against associating with certain classes of people. He came to offer salvation to sinners and to show that God loves them. Jesus didn’t worry about the accusations. Instead, he continued going to those who needed him, regardless of the effect these rejected people might have on his reputation. What keeps you away from people who need Christ?

Tuesday, January 17 – Read Luke 15:3-6. It may seem foolish for the shepherd to leave 99 sheep to go search for just one. But the shepherd knew that the 99 would be safe in the sheepfold, whereas the lost sheep was in danger. Because each sheep was of high value, the shepherd knew that it was worthwhile to search diligently for the lost one. God’s love for each individual is so great that he seeks out each one and rejoices when he or she is “found.” Jesus associated with sinners because he wanted to bring the lost sheep – people considered beyond hope – the Good News of God’s Kingdom. Before you were a believer, God sought you, and his love is still seeking those who are yet lost!

Wednesday, January 18 – Read Luke 15:8-10. Palestinian women received 10 silver coins as a wedding gift. Besides their monetary value, these coins held sentimental value like that of a wedding ring, and to lose one would be extremely distressing. Just as a woman would rejoice at finding her lost coin or ring, so the angels rejoice over a repentant sinner. Each individual is precious to God. He grieves over every loss and rejoices whenever one of his children is found and brought into the Kingdom. Perhaps we would have more joy in our churches if we shared Jesus’ love and concern for the lost.

Thursday, January 19 – Luke 15:11-17. The younger son, like many who are rebellious and immature, wanted to be free to live as he pleased, and he had to hit rock bottom before he came to his senses. It often takes great sorrow and tragedy to cause people to look to the only one who can help them – Jesus. Are you trying to live life your own way, selfishly pushing aside any responsibility or commitment that gets in your way? Stop and look before you hit bottom. You will save yourself and your family much grief.

Friday, January 20 – Read Luke 15:25-31. It was hard for the older brother to accept his younger brother when he returned, and it is just as difficult to accept “younger brothers and sisters” today. People who repent after leading notoriously sinful lives are often met with suspicion; churches are sometimes unwilling to admit them to membership. Instead, we should rejoice like the angels in heaven when an unbeliever repents and turns to God. Like the father, accept repentant sinners wholeheartedly and give them the support and encouragement that they need to grow in Christ.

Saturday, January 21 – Read Luke 15:32. In Jesus’ story, the older brother represented the Pharisees, who were angry and resentful that sinners were being welcomed into God’s Kingdom. “After all,” the Pharisees must have thought, “we have sacrificed and done so much FOR God.” How easy it is to resent God’s gracious forgiveness of others whom we consider to be far worse sinners than ourselves. But if our self-righteousness gets in the way of rejoicing when others come to Jesus, we are no better than the Pharisees.