

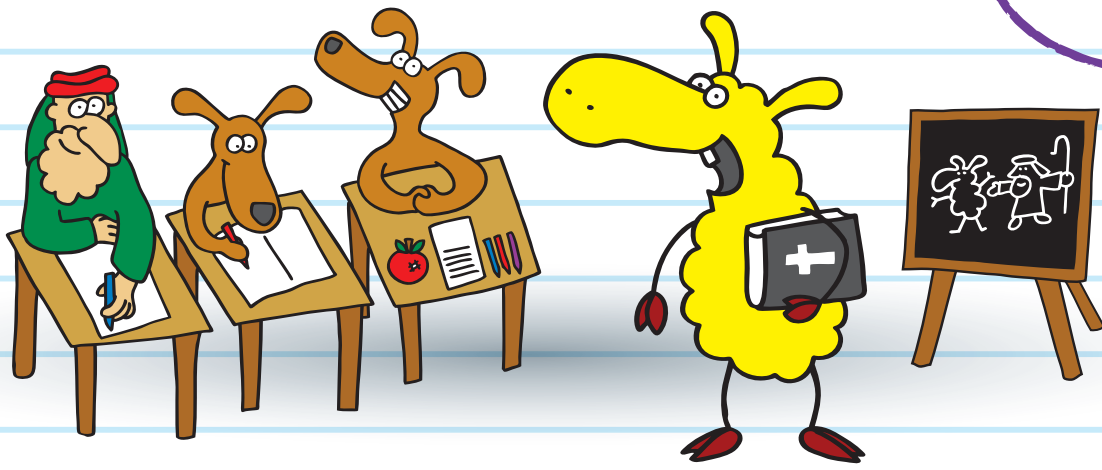


SHEEP DOG SCHOOL™

Cecil

the Lost Sheep™

Created by
Andrew
McDonough



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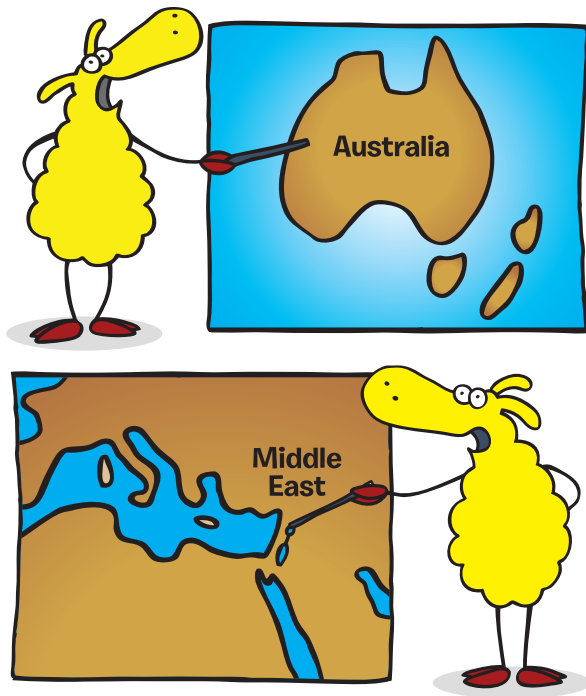
Introduction



Hi shepherds, sheepdogs, teachers and parents.

My name is Cecil and I'm the head teacher at Sheepdog School. From the first pages of Genesis, where we meet Abel who kept flocks ([Genesis 4:2](#)), to the last chapter of Revelation where Jesus is called "the Lamb" ([Revelation 22:3](#)), we find stories of sheep and shepherds. If you are going to understand your Bible you need to know about sheep. I could send you on six months' work experience to some small village in the Middle East where the role of shepherds has hardly changed since Biblical times, but it may be easier if I just share my expertise.

History & Geography



As a sheep expert I have traveled widely studying the different ways people look after sheep. In Australia where one farmer can have thousands of sheep, he doesn't know their names. Instead, each sheep gets an ear tag with a number on it. When the farmer wants to get the sheep from the paddock to the shearing shed, the sheepdog rounds them up while the farmer yells out instructions like, "Get away back!" or, "Get in behind!" If the sheepdog ignores the instruction the farmer yells out things that are not appropriate for us to repeat here at Sheepdog School. The farmer doesn't hang around with the sheep; he is off doing things like fixing the tractor. Even at night the sheep have to stay out in the paddock and look after themselves.

While I don't want to offend my friends in Australia, I think shepherds in the Middle East are nicer to their sheep. A shepherd will have a herd of 5-15 sheep or an extended family may have a flock of 40. One hundred sheep is a big flock and would be cared for by a group of shepherds

Luke 15:4. The shepherd knows each sheep well and he doesn't need ear tags to tell who's who. He stays with them all day and takes them home at night. If they do stay out at night, the shepherd stands guard. When it is time to move, the shepherd just calls out and all the sheep recognize his voice and follow him (**John 10:3-4**). Shepherds do not lose sheep. If one strays he searches until he finds him. Even if a sheep is killed by a wild animal, the shepherd will find the remains and bring them home. Mind you, and wild animals be warned, read **1 Samuel 17:34-37** before you decide to pick on a sheep. Mess with the sheep and you answer to the shepherd.

Interviews



Hi, sheepdog school trainees, I'm here in [Luke 15:1](#) hoping to interview some tax collectors and sinners. To my surprise, I've discovered a shepherd amongst this lot. Hello shepherd, I didn't expect that people would lump you in with the sinners! I thought everyone loved shepherds.



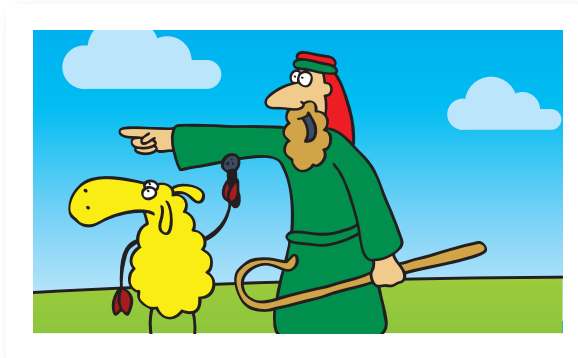
They should love shepherds. All the big names in the Old Testament were shepherds. Abraham had large flocks ([Genesis 13:5-7](#)), as did his son Isaac ([Genesis 26:12-14](#)), and his son Jacob. And what were Jacob's sons doing all day? You guessed it, looking after the sheep ([Genesis 37:12-17, 47:3](#)). Then there is Moses. He spent forty years as a shepherd ([Exodus 3:1](#)). King David? Where did he hone all those skills that made him such a great leader? As a young shepherd protecting the family's flock, of course ([1 Samuel 16:11-13](#)). Not to mention the prophet Amos (if you don't know what his occupation was, look up [Amos 1:1](#)).



Even God is a shepherd. Jacob says, "God has been my shepherd all my life" ([Genesis 48:15](#)), David prays, "The Lord is my shepherd" ([Psalm 23:1](#)), and the great prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all call God, "our shepherd." Look up these verses in your Bible: [Isaiah 40:10-11](#), [Jeremiah 31:10](#), and [Ezekiel 34:12](#). But that's not all; God calls the leaders, the kings, and the priests to be faithful shepherds to his people. David did a brilliant job ([Psalm 78:70-72](#)), but others neglected their flock ([Ezekiel 34, Jeremiah 23:1-4](#)).



The funny thing about being a shepherd is that while everyone has warm fuzzy feelings about King David and Moses looking after sheep, and while everyone loves going to the Temple and reciting, “The Lord is my shepherd,” no one wants to hang around with a real flesh and blood shepherd. They say ours is an unclean occupation, so while we provide all the animals for sacrifice (sorry, Cecil), we can’t go into the temple to worship. If something goes missing, who gets the blame? Those “thieving” shepherds. Do you need a witness in court? You can’t call a shepherd. Shepherds can’t be trusted. That is why we are over here with the tax collectors and sinners.



Let me tell you about this crowd. That man is a tax collector. He takes our hard-earned money, gives some to the Romans, and keeps a tidy sum for himself. That woman has a bit of a reputation. Him? I’m surprised to see him sober. And don’t park your donkey near those young lads under that tree. It’ll be covered in graffiti and missing its shoes by morning. There are some rotten, godless, violent people in this crowd but most of us are ordinary folk. Some of us have “unclean” occupations. Some of us don’t keep the feasts, attend the synagogue, or keep all the rules. That’s why the Pharisees call us sinners.



Cecil: Let’s move over to [Luke 15:2](#) and meet the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Hello sir, can you tell me about yourself?

Pharisee: Hello, I’m a Pharisee. Would you mind standing a little farther away? If I’m touched by a sheep then I will be ceremonially unclean. We Pharisees are not religious professionals like the priests. We’re just ordinary Jewish men from all walks of life who are passionate followers of God’s Law. If the Bible says it, we do it!

My friend here is a teacher of the Law. He helps us determine how to keep God’s law perfectly. We’re big on application and big on details. Not everyone agrees on the details, so we have plenty of arguments with each other and with religious people like Sadducees, priests, and Jesus. Despite the arguments, we’re broad-minded and worship with other Jews, but we keep well away from tax collectors and sinners. We’re popular with the people because of our piety, generosity, and because we’re not afraid to stand up to the Romans. Our popularity is why we are powerful. You are welcome to join us—just do everything on this list.

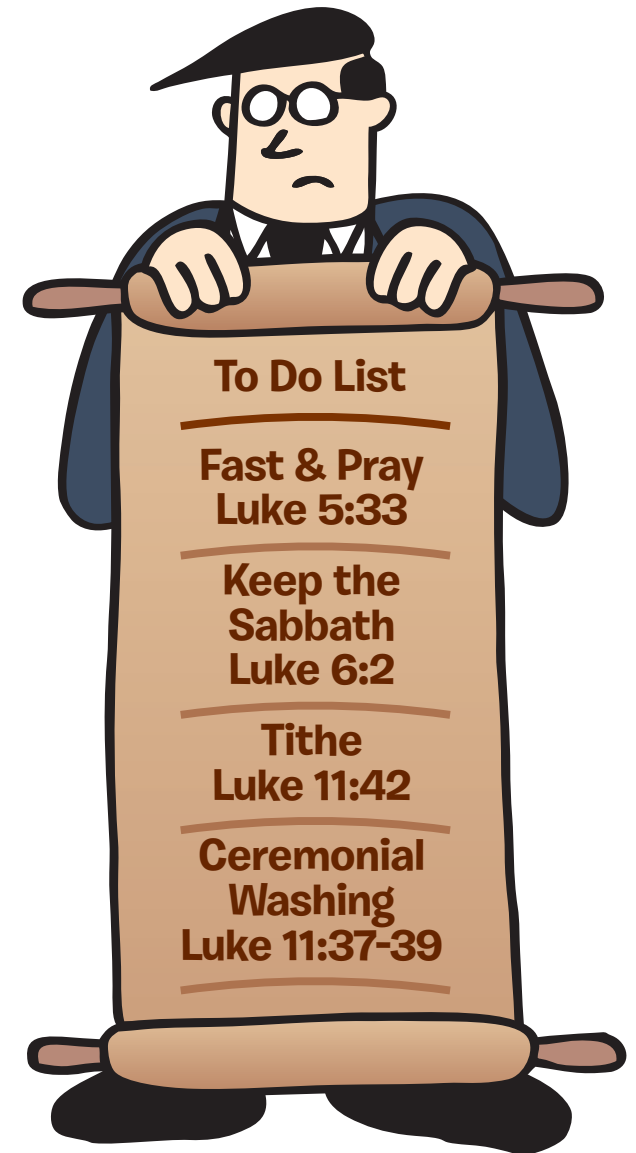


Cecil: Why are you grumbling about Jesus?

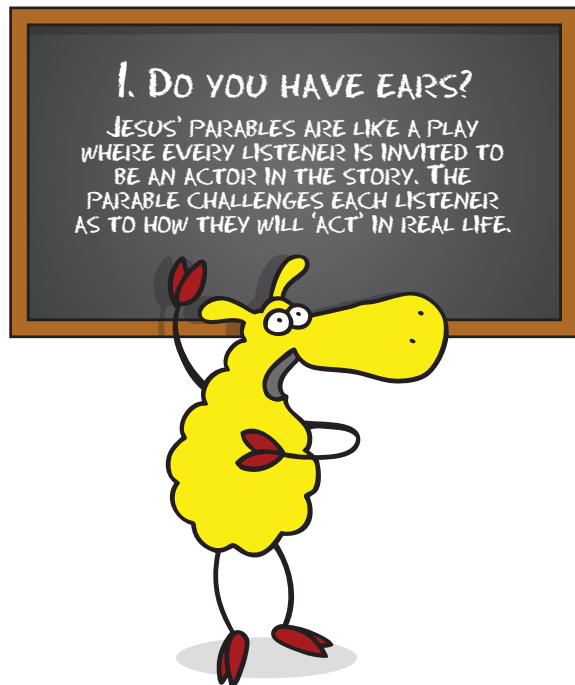
Pharisee: Jesus keeps turning up at the wrong parties! And when he hosts a party—he invites the wrong sort of people. Sometimes we wonder if Jesus understands Middle Eastern culture. If you invite someone to a meal, you are saying that the guest brings honor to your house. During the meal you give a long speech saying how wonderful your guest is, and then the guest gives a speech saying wonderful things about you. To share a meal is to share your life. It says, “I accept you, approve of you, trust you, and forgive you.” You must be very, very careful about who you invite for dinner and whose invitation you accept.

Jesus' Party List		
Bible Verse	Host/Guests	Attend
Luke 5:27-32	Levi the tax collector	✗
Luke 7:36-50	Simon the Pharisee	✓
Luke 11:37-54	Pharisee & law experts	✓
Luke 14:1-24	Pharisees & law experts	✓
Luke 15:1-2	tax collectors & sinners	✗
Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus the Taxman	✗

We've been keeping a list of the parties Jesus attends. We can't figure him out. One day he accepts an invitation to one of our parties and the next day he is inviting tax collectors and sinners over to his place!



Master Class



1. Do You Have Ears?

One of the things Jesus used to say is, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" ([Luke 14:35](#)). That's good advice, especially when you're listening to one of Jesus' parables! Some listeners think, "What a nice story, I'll have to tell it to the kids," but those who hear Jesus, go, "Hang on! That story is about me!" They head home really happy...or very angry depending on where they ended up in the story. If you hear a parable of Jesus it will affect you! When I first heard this story, I went, "Hey, I'm a sheep! This story is about me!" I went home happy thinking about how much God loves me. When the tax collectors and the sinners heard this parable they yelled, "Hey, this story is about us! We're that lost sheep! Wow the Shepherd loves us sinners!" They went home amazed and happy.

Jesus made sure the Pharisees and the teachers of the law knew the story was about them. He looked them in the eye and began, "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep." The Pharisees thought, "What a rude thing to say! How dare you call us shepherds! Shepherds are unclean sinners!" But then Scriptures like [Ezekiel 34:1-6](#) would have come to mind, where God had called the leaders of Israel to be faithful shepherds of His sheep. At the end of the parable many of the Pharisees would have been furious and said, "How dare Jesus imply that those sinners belong to God's flock and that we should rejoice in them." But maybe one or two Pharisees received the parable as an invitation to be a faithful shepherd, they would go home happy thinking, "Wow! Jesus is right! I should eat with sinners, for they are God's sheep and need us shepherds." We know of a few Pharisees who became followers of Jesus. There is Nicodemus ([John 3:1](#), [John 19:39](#)), the Apostle Paul ([Acts 26:4-5](#)), and the crowd in ([Acts 15:5](#)).



2. Joy, More Joy, and a Big Party

This story is bursting with joy. When the shepherd found me ([Luke 15:5](#)), he rejoiced. He was delighted to see me even though he had a tough journey carrying me back home. I like this because people think, "If God catches up with me he'll be angry and disappointed." No way! He rejoices! Then the story ends with joy and a huge party where everyone was invited to celebrate until way past their bedtime ([Luke 15:6](#)). This is the picture of God's delight when people like the tax collectors and sinners are welcomed into his flock. When Jesus says, "Ninety-nine righteous persons who don't need to repent," he is taking a little dig at the Pharisees who think they're perfect. More importantly, Jesus is inviting the Pharisees and teachers of the law to join in God's celebration. To get the full force of what Jesus is saying, read the parables of the Lost Coin ([Luke 15:8-10](#)) and the Lost Son ([Luke 15:11-32](#)). These three parables are all part of Jesus' big answer to why he ate with sinners and why everyone one should join the celebration.



3. Jesus the Good Shepherd

One of the things Jesus is saying to the Pharisees and teachers of the law is, "I am a good shepherd. The reason I eat with tax collectors and sinners is because they are lost sheep. So, as a good shepherd, I go and find them and restore them to the flock." Check out these verses where Jesus is described as the Shepherd: [John 10:11-16](#), [Micah 5:2-5](#), [Hebrews 13:20](#), [1 Peter 2:25](#) and [1 Peter 5:2-5](#). And here are some more verses about wayward sheep: [Isaiah 53:5-6](#) and [Psalm 119:176](#).

Teaching Tips



1. Every One Counts.

I may be biased, but I think Cecil the Lost Sheep is the best story you will find for encouraging children to receive God's love. I've noticed that children and adults, even sheep, struggle with low self esteem. They feel they're just one of the crowd who makes up the numbers. My story highlights that, for God, nobody "just makes up the numbers." The shepherd cried, "Cecil is missing!" not "I appear to be one short." Each child is so important that God 'leaves the 99' to search for the one that is lost. You may like to share passages like [Psalm 139:1-16](#) and [Matthew 10:30](#) which speak of the intense interest and delight God has in each of his children.

2. Amazing Grace.

I'll never forget the day the shepherd lifted me onto his shoulders and carried me safely home. He was so glad that he had found me. It reminded of a movie that we once stayed up way past our bedtime to watch. It was called Amazing Grace and featured a slave-trader named John

Newton. He was one very lost sheep who, once found, helped bring an end to the slave trade. This an excellent story to share with your children. When a full length feature film is made of my life, I will be singing "Amazing Grace" as the shepherd carries me home. Why not teach this hymn, and the story of John Newton, to your kids?

3. God isn't disappointed in you!

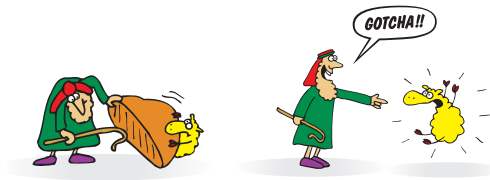
While my story is good I must admit the story of the prodigal son is worth sharing. Many children from Christian homes stray from God. Often, they would like to come back, but they fear how God will respond. I thought the shepherd might be angry or disappointed and tie me to a tree without any dinner. The prodigal son thought his dad would be cold and distant, treating him like a servant. But when the shepherd, the dad, and God find their lost one they rejoice. If you can help children to understand this it will make the journey back to God much easier if they do stray later on.

Activities



Purchase the Activity Book
from the Lost Sheep Shop!

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1. Hide and Seek

Here is another activity to share how well God knows each of his sheep. Take the class outside and ask them to scatter and hide around the church or school. Keep one student with you and prepare another to not come out of hiding when the whistle is blown. Get the children to return quickly on the whistle and mass as a group. See how quickly the child with you can guess who it is that is missing from the larger group. Then send everyone out to find that one "sheep" who is missing.



2. Party Time

After you have shared Cecil the Lost Sheep, have a big celebration party like the one on the last page of the book. Have hats, streamers, and party food. Tell the kids that this is what happens in heaven when one lost person is found. You could even sing a verse of "Amazing Grace" at the party.



3. Bonus Activities

Download the file below. These are great activities for the classroom including bookmarks for kids to cut out, mazes, and pictures of Cecil to colour!

[DOWNLOAD](#)

Bible Verses

Genesis 4:2 CEV

Later she had another son and named him Abel. Abel became a sheep farmer, but Cain farmed the land.

Genesis 13:2 CEV

Abram was very rich. He owned many cattle, sheep, and goats, and had a lot of silver and gold.

Genesis 26:13-14 CEV

The Lord blessed him, and Isaac was so successful that he became very rich. In fact, the Philistines were jealous of the large number of sheep, goats, and slaves that Isaac owned.

Genesis 37:12-13

One day when Joseph's brothers had taken the sheep to a pasture near Shechem, his father Jacob

said to him, "I want you to go to your brothers. They are with the sheep near Shechem."

Genesis 47:3 NIV

Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?"
'Your servants are shepherds,' they replied to Pharaoh, 'just as our fathers were.'

Genesis 48:15 NIV

Then he blessed Joseph and said, 'May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, - may he bless these boys.'

Exodus 3:1 CEV

One day, Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian,

and Moses decided to lead them across the desert to Sinai, the holy mountain.

1 Samuel 16:11 CEV

Do you have any more sons?"
"Yes," Jesse answered. "My youngest son David is out taking care of the sheep."

1 Samuel 17:34-35

But David told him:
Your Majesty, I take care of my father's sheep. And when one of them is dragged off by a lion or a bear, I go after it and beat the wild animal until it lets the sheep go. If the wild animal turns and attacks me, I grab it by the throat and kill it.

Psalms 23:1 NIV

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

Psalms 78:70-72 NIV

He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them.

Psalms 119:176 CEV

I am your servant, but I have wandered away like a lost sheep. Please come after me, because I have not forgotten your teachings

Psalms 139:1-5 CEV

You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me. You know when I am resting

or when I am working, and from heaven you discover my thoughts. You notice everything I do and everywhere I go. Before I even speak a word, you know what I will say, and with your powerful arm you protect me from every side.

Isaiah 40:11

The Lord cares for his nation, just as shepherds care for their flocks. He carries the lambs in his arms, while gently leading the mother sheep.

Isaiah 53:6 CEV

All of us were like sheep that had wandered off. We had each gone our own way, but the Lord gave him the punishment we deserved.

Jeremiah 23:1-4 CEV

You leaders of my people are like shepherds that kill and scatter the sheep. You were supposed to take care of my people, but instead you chased them away. So now I'll really take care of you, and believe me, you will pay for your crimes! I will bring the rest of my people home from the lands where I have scattered them, and they will grow into a mighty nation. I promise to choose leaders who will care for them like real shepherds. All of my people will be there, and they will never again be frightened.

Jeremiah 31:10 NIV

Hear the word of the Lord, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: "He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd."

Ezekiel 34:1-4 CEV

The Lord God said: Ezekiel, son of man, Israel's leaders are like shepherds taking care of my sheep, the people of Israel. But I want you to condemn these leaders and tell them: I, the Lord God, say you shepherds of Israel are doomed! You take care of yourselves while ignoring my sheep. You drink their milk and use their wool to make your clothes. Then you butcher the best ones for food. But you don't

take care of the flock! You have never protected the weak ones or healed the sick ones or bandaged those that get hurt. You let them wander off and never look for those that get lost. You are cruel and mean to my sheep.

Ezekiel 34:12 NIV

As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

Amos 1:1

I am Amos. And I raised sheep near the town of Tekoa.

Micah 5:2,4 CEV

Bethlehem Ephrath, you are one of the smallest towns in the nation of Judah. But the Lord will choose one of your people to rule the nation—someone whose family goes back to ancient times. Like a shepherd taking care of his sheep, this ruler will lead and care for his people by the power and glorious name of the Lord his God.

Matthew 10:30 CEV

Even the hairs on your head are counted.

Luke 5:33 NIV

John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.

Luke 6:2 CEV

Some Pharisees said, "Why are you picking grain on the Sabbath? You're not supposed to do that!"

Luke 11:42 CEV

You Pharisees are in for trouble! You give God a tenth of the spices from your gardens, such as mint and rue. But you cheat people, and you don't love God. You should be fair and kind to others and still give a tenth to God.

Luke 11:37-38 NIV

When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal.

Luke 14:35 CEV

If you have ears, pay attention!

Luke 15:1-7 CEV

Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus.

So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them." Then Jesus told them this story: If any of you has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the ninety-nine in the field and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends and neighbours and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found my lost sheep." Jesus said, "In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to."

Luke 15:8-10 CEV

Jesus told the people another story: What will a woman do if she has ten silver coins and loses one of them? Won't she light a lamp, sweep the floor, and look carefully until she finds it? Then she will call in her friends and neighbours and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found the coin I lost." Jesus said, "In the same way God's angels are happy when even one person turns to him."

Luke 15:31,32 CEV

His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be

glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."

John 3:1 NIV

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

John 10:3-4 CEV

But the gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd, and he goes in through it. The sheep know their shepherd's voice. He calls each of them by name and leads them out. When he has led out all of his sheep, he walks in front of them, and they follow, because they know his voice.

John 10:14-16 CEV

I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and they know me. Just as the Father knows me, I know the Father, and I give up my life for my sheep. I have other sheep that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them together too, when they hear my voice. Then there will be one flock of sheep and one shepherd.

John 19:39 CEV

Nicodemus also came with about seventy-five pounds of spices made from myrrh and aloes. This was the same Nicodemus who had visited Jesus one night.

Acts 15:5 CEV

But some Pharisees had become followers of the Lord. They stood up and said, "Gentiles who have faith in the Lord must be circumcised and told to obey the Law of Moses."

Acts 26:4-5 CEV

All the Jews have known me since I was a child. They know what kind of life I have lived in my own country and in Jerusalem. And if they were willing, they could tell you that I was a Pharisee, a member of a group that is stricter than any other.

Hebrews 13:20 NIV

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep.

1 Peter 2:25 CEV

You had wandered away like sheep. Now you have returned to the one who is your shepherd and protector.

1 Peter 5:2-4 CEV

Just as shepherds watch over their sheep, you must watch over everyone God has placed in your care. Do it willingly in order

to please God, and not simply because you think you must. Let it be something you want to do, instead of something you do merely to make money. Don't be bossy to those people who are in your care, but set an example for them. Then when Christ the Chief Shepherd returns, you will be given a crown that will never lose its glory.

Revelation 22:3 CEV

God's curse will no longer be on the people of that city. He and the Lamb will be seated there on their thrones, and its people will worship God.

The End



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Cecil the Lost Sheep Sheepdog School

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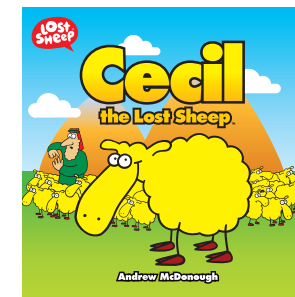
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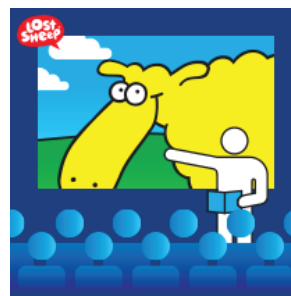
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