



The Parable Of Found Sheep

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Once upon a time there was a shepherd with one hundred sheep. One day, however, the shepherd noticed that one of his sheep was missing. After giving the ninety-nine sheep some parting instructions, the shepherd left them in the open country in search of the missing sheep.

Almost immediately, some of the remaining sheep began to grumble.

“Why would he leave us behind? This makes no sense. There are ninety-nine of us here and only one that is lost.”

“I entirely agree. Mr. Shepherd should have more appreciation for the ninety-nine who are here. We’re always on time. We never wander. And we never deviate from our routine.”

“You’ve got that right! And besides, that lost lamb is always exploring places he shouldn’t. Remember that time he got himself caught in a thicket?”

“I do! But that’s the way the lambs are these days. It’s not like when you and I were lambs you know.”

“I realize that. And doesn’t Mr. Shepherd understand that these wandering lambs often return on their own? They just need some time to themselves. How does that proverb go again?”

“You mean the one that says, ‘Raise up a lamb in the way he should go and he will not soon depart from it’?”

“That’s the one! You would think that Mr. Shepherd would just be more patient—just sit back and wait—like the rest of us.”

“Well, what’s done is done. Mr. Shepherd is gone and we need to develop a plan to keep the rest of us safe.”

“But what about Mr. Shepherd’s parting instructions? When he said we need to...”

“Don’t you get it? Mr. Shepherd is not around. We need to look after ourselves. Plus, don’t you think Mr. Shepherd would want us to try and survive? Taking chances doesn’t seem prudent

given our current predicament. It's a scary world out there—lots of wolves and wild dogs. We need to stay focused on us—you know, the ninety-nine that didn't cause any trouble."

"OK, I get that. So, what should we do?"

"Glad you asked. I know some sheep from the pasture beyond the ravine, and what they did is they formed committees."

"Committees?"

"Yes, committees. Ninety-nine is the perfect number to divide into three committees. These committees will ensure that we'll be well-fed and safe for a long, long, time. You and I will each convene a committee, and we'll ask Meek if he'll convene the other."

"Sounds good. What will the committees be responsible for?"

"Well, if you're asking about our common vision, that's easy: Self-preservation. As for the distinct committee mandates, I have some ideas. We definitely need a defence committee. This group will be responsible for our safety plan. They'll make recommendations regarding protection from outsiders, and they'll be charged with showing us the best places to hide."

"Who will take that committee?"

"I will—I'm great at hiding."

"What committee do you want me to take?"

"You should take the land management committee. We need someone to make sure we don't overtax a particular part of our pasture. These sheep need to realize that if they are too active, it is hard on the environment. The best way to keep our land in good shape is to minimize our movement."

"Roger that. And the third committee? That must be the search committee?"

"Search committee?! Are you kidding me?! Have you been listening to anything I've been saying? It's dangerous out there! We're not trekking to some place we've never been before. Besides, Mr. Shepherd is out 'searching' for his precious lamb—he doesn't need us."

"I suppose you're right."

"I know I'm right. The third committee will be our food distribution committee. Meek will take that one—although he'll definitely need to be more assertive."

"You really think we need a food distribution committee? I mean, we really just eat the grass and plants around here."

"I see you've already forgotten about those sacks of grain Mr. Shepherd has."

"Oh, I did forget!"

“That grain is too valuable to be carelessly frittered away. I expect Meek will have to develop some rules governing the consumption of the grain. Don’t worry, I’ll tell him what he has to do.”

“Are you sure we shouldn’t have even a small search committee? I think there are ten or twelve sheep who are actually concerned about that lost little lamb.”

“Tell those sheep to refocus their concern inward—we have a lot of work to do around here! Let me frame this for you another way: What if Mr. Shepherd not only finds the one missing lamb, but what if he finds a bunch of missing sheep out there? If we don’t have a tight grip on that grain supply those newcomers will eat it up in no time!”

“We’re staying put then? No matter what?”

“No matter what. Remember, it’s not our fault these sheep are running away.”

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May the above parable provoke us to follow the lead of our Good Shepherd (Luke 15:3-7).