



I have noticed in recent years there seems to be a lack of discipleship among new converts. They are either pushed into positions of leadership too early or they are left alone after the salvation experience. I also realize that some of the responsibility needs to be placed upon the new convert. Many times they fail to benefit from God's fullness. I am a strong believer that the fullness of God is grasped in a continuing experience. In Philippians 3:10, Paul prayed, *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."*

However, in the modern church, there is no thirst for seeking God. When I was a boy, we did not need to call a revival or schedule a special preacher to seek God. We just had a desire to hear from God. Today, we have lost the ability to seek Him. We seek the comfort of others to increase our spiritual awareness.

These efforts are in vain. Only getting alone with God will get you closer to Him.

In the book of Genesis, God used six days for creation. *"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was **very good**. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day"* (Genesis 1:31). However in Genesis 2:18, *"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be **alone**; I will make him a help meet for him."* Then in verses 21-22, *"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."*

Notice, when God's work was done, Adam did not look upon Eve and notice her beauty. He recognized that she was the missing part of him. *"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man"* (verse 23). In order for marriages to work, spouses need to realize the other person has the missing part. When they are together, they become one. *"Therefore shall a man **leave** his father and his mother, and shall **cleave** unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh"* (verse 24).

This same principle of marriage has to be applied with Christ and His bride (the church). We have to desire to be "one" with Christ and be aware He fulfills the missing part. I heard a preacher make this statement, *"We are married to God, but we are sleeping in separate rooms."* In Revelation 3:20, Christ speaks to the church at Laodecia *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."* Once God was in their midst (Revelation 1:13), but He is now on the outside wanting to gain entrance again.

The root of our text is soul winning. However, I would like to look at this familiar passage from a different perspective. We see three items that were lost - a sheep, a coin and a son. I would like to focus on the shepherd who lost the sheep, the woman who lost the coin and the father whose son was lost. They all had three things in common:

1. They knew what they had.
2. They knew something was missing.
3. They sought for its' return.

If you do not know what you lost, you don't know it's gone. If you don't know it's gone, you can't get it back. We, as the church, need to recognize that something is missing and God is tired of being the missing part.

We need to be like the woman who lost the coin. She had ten coins and lost one. Instead of being satisfied with the nine, she became aggressive. She came to the point that nine was not enough. She had ten coins and she wanted to be complete. She began to *"sweep the house."* I do not know how long it took her to find the missing part, but the Bible says she *"diligently"* sought for its' return. So when we realize that there is something missing we need to sweep. If you have lost your joy, sweep. If you need healed, sweep. If your children are rebellious, sweep. Many are guilty of making this statement, *"If God wanted me to have it, He would have given it to me."* To me that is being too passive. If you had something and you lost it, it is rightfully yours for the taking. Be bold enough to sweep until you get it back!

The shepherd had a flock of 100 sheep, but one went astray. Anyone in the business would tell you that you need to protect the "99" and let the "one" go. Those people are satisfied with being *"almost."* We see this attitude among many believers today. *"Almost"* healed, *"almost"* blessed, *"almost"* happily married, *"almost"* victorious over sin. The devil would love for you to stay in this state. You are always living beneath your potential. It is God's will that we be whole, complete and full of the Holy Spirit. We should not want to be an *"almost"* praiser or an *"almost"* tither. We ask ourselves, "Why isn't it working, Lord?" I believe He would reply, *"You gave me 99 and I want 100."* The sheep was in trouble and no one knew but the shepherd. You may be able to put on a pretty facade and fool most people. However, the Shepherd knows if you are in trouble. He starts adding up your praise and your faithfulness and notices that something is missing. People get on your nerves easily because something is missing. You have negativity problems because something is missing. You jump from church to church because something is missing. You blame the pastor, church leaders or the congregation. If you would be honest with yourself the problem is you! Are you satisfied with the fact that something is missing?

Let us notice the father whose son forsook him to chase his own wordly lusts. I firmly believe that everyday his father set the table for his son. I feel he went out to the porch and looked up the road because he was concerned for his lost son. His son was far from home. It was natural for the pigs to be in the mud, but he knew better. He could not get comfortable. Such is the case when someone has tasted of the goodness of God and falls prey to Satan's devices. Thankfully the son, *"came to himself"* (Luke 15:17). He had everything planned out. *"Here's what I'm going to say. Here's what I'm going to do."* Then everything was changed - *"when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him"* (verse 20). This is a wonderful picture of what God will do if we return to Him. The son and the father were both missing something - each other. However, it was up to the son to make his mind up and return to his father. When we determine to run to God, He will run to us and meet us halfway.

There is a common thread that connects all three of these instances. It is not the lost items nor the people who lost them. It is the fact that when the lost items were found, the people rejoiced in their victory. Praise always completes the puzzle!!

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