

Rumpelstiltskin is in its first week of its final two weeks, and so this week we are thinking about the show and how it relates to the Bible. As I reviewed the script this week, I realized that one of the scriptures referenced in the show is Luke 15:4.

I'm currently participating in an in-depth study of Psalm 23, and I'm learning a lot about shepherds. The teacher is going into a good bit of depth, which is helpful because I don't know a lot about sheep or shepherds. I'm guessing that not many of you do either!

What I do know a lot about is taking care of pets. We have had a whole menagerie of pets through the years, but the one that reminds me of the lost sheep in Jesus' parable from Luke 15 is our puppy, Dottie. She is 8 months old, full of energy, and is always in trouble. Her favorite thing to do is to push open the back door and make a run for it. It seems that we are always chasing her – sometimes, even barefoot and in our pajamas!

Every class had great suggestions of ways to catch my “on the run” dog. It was obvious that they loved their own pets, identified with my issue, and knew that it was important to me that I be able to catch the dog. Anyone who had a dog, cat, or other escaping pet knew that it was important to find the pet to keep them safe.

But what if the dog has gotten into trouble all day – destroyed a library book, shredded a child's favorite blanket or stuffed animal that was needed to sleep at night, and chewed up the legs on an heirloom chair from your grandmother – and *then* gets out? Do you still go after the dog? Almost every student answered yes – some said they wouldn't be quite as happy about it, but they would not leave the dog out on its own.

That brings me back to the lost sheep. Sheep will wander. They are motivated by food and it seems like the best food is always just around the corner, so off they go. Inevitably, they end up off by themselves, lost or trapped in some type of danger – just like a lost pet.

In the parable, we are the sheep. God created us – we are fearfully and wonderfully made, but God knew that we would become distracted and go our own way sometimes. Even when we are going our own way, trapped in our sin, he is still pursuing us, just as a shepherd goes after a lost sheep. Just like I pursue Dottie when she runs out the door. There is no sin so great that God is not ready and willing to come to our rescue. In fact, the NLT translation of the parable says, “And when he (the shepherd) has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders.” When we tell God we are sorry for what we have done and acknowledge that we need his help, he carries us back to the path and allows us to start all over.

Chances are, we will wander again and again. But every signal time, God pursues us, picks us up and brings us back to safety. We are always in His sight and covered by His love. He is heartbroken when we are trapped in our sins and mistakes, but when we realize that what we are doing is wrong, he is ready and willing to forgive. When we ask for His forgiveness, he rejoices over us – just as we rejoice when we find a lost pet. What a beautiful picture of God's love for us!

KEY VERSE: And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love.
Romans 8:38a