

Getting Into God's Club

Scripture Reading — Luke 15:1-7

*“Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?”
—Luke 15:4—*

American Express has marketed its credit card with a bold statement: “Membership has its privileges.” The card is promoted as the key to getting the life you deserve, with its benefits for “members only.”

The Pharisees grumbled that Jesus was spending too much time with unsavory people. To them, Jesus was giving the impression that sinners could gain entrance into an exclusive club: the family of God.

Jesus detected the disease of self-righteousness at work in the Pharisees. In *Tell It Slant*, author Eugene Peterson describes it well: “Only men and women who become Christians are capable of and have the opportunity for some sins, with self-righteousness at the top of the list.”

Jesus' first listeners to his parable of the lost sheep were probably enraged. Why would a shepherd leave the 99 “club member” sheep in the open country to find one who had walked away from his membership privileges? Jesus wanted to drive home the unsettling point that lost sheep can enter God's family through Jesus Christ. He willingly seeks lost sheep for his club of grace and mercy. Once found, Jesus brings the new member to his friends and neighbors to celebrate.

Our membership privileges are earned not on our own righteousness, but on Christ's alone. Welcome to the club!

Prayer

Jesus, help me fight the disease of self-righteousness with your medicine of grace alone. May I never suppress my joy when you bring others into your kingdom. Amen.

Devotion topics: [Christianity](#), [God](#), [Jesus](#), [God's Kingdom](#)

Written by Reginald Smith — <https://today.reframemedia.com/authors/reginald-smith>

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