

# LESSONS FROM GOD'S ANIMALS

## ***BIBLE CLASS LESSONS FOR LIMESTONE BIBLE MINI-CAMP***

Children are interested in animals and we are interested in them knowing the Word of God. These four lessons attempt to blend these two interests. As has been the case, these outlines are merely suggestive of what might be done for the classes. The lessons have been chosen with an eye toward the availability of ancillary materials. We hope they will prove beneficial.

Lesson 1:       **The Boy and the Pigs** (The Prodigal Son of Luke 15)

Lesson 2:       **The Man and the Great Fish** (Jonah)

Lesson 3:       **The Shepherd and the Sheep** (The Lost Sheep of Luke 15 and Psalm 23)

Lesson 4:       **The Man Who Was Reminded by the Rooster** (Peter, Luke 22:34, 54-62)

**What follows here is a non-exhaustive list of animals referred to in the Bible.**

Apes  
Asses  
Badger  
Bats  
Bears  
Behemoth (perhaps a hippopotamus or elephant (Job 40:15))  
Boar (Psalm 80:13)  
Camel (Matthew 19:24)  
Cattle  
Chamois (mountain sheep--Dt. 14:4-6)  
Coney (rock dwelling rabbitsized "little cousin of the elephant")  
Dogs (Job 30:1, Prov. 26:11, Matt. 15:26-27)  
Deer (Dt. 14:3, 1 Kings 4:22-,23)  
Fox (Judges 15:14)  
Goats (used 130 times, 50 references to kids) Greyhound (Prov. 30:31)  
Hare (Lev. 11:4-6, Dt. 14:7)  
Harts (male deer, Isa. 35:6)  
Hinds (female deer)  
Horse (Gen. 47:17)  
Leopard  
Leviathan (Job 41:1, Psalm 74:14, perhaps crocodile or dinosaur.  
If the later, then these animals coexisted with man contrary to popular evolutionary hypotheses.)  
Lions (1 Peter 5:8)  
Mule (2 Samuel 18:9)  
Roe  
Sheep (Genesis 4:2, Psalm 23, Luke 15)  
Swine (or pigs: Prov. 11:22, Isa. 65:2-4, Mt. 7:6, 2 Peter 2:22, Luke 15:15-16)  
Weasel (Lev. 11:29)  
Whale (Perhaps closest to the "great fish" of Jonah. That beast was surely a sea creature prepared specifically for the purpose intended by a supernatural act of God.)  
Wolf (Isa. 11:6, 65:25)  
**Other non-mammalian:**  
The Sponge  
Coral  
Fish  
Frogs and Toads  
Snakes  
Lizards  
Tortoise  
Birds, including Hens and Roosters

# LESSON 1 : THE BOY AND THE PIGS

## Introduction:

Luke 15:11-32 has the story of the Prodigal Son. Here was a boy who wanted his inheritance from his father ahead of time so he could go out and spend it on a good time. After all his money **was** gone he found himself with a terrible job: feeding pigs. Feeding pigs can be a smelly and messy thing even now, but for a Jewish boy it was especially bad since for him the pig was an "unclean" animal.

### I. Points Worth Pondering:

- What is an "unclean" animal (Leviticus 11:7)?
- Does the prohibition about unclean animals **apply** to **us** today? (No. This provides an opportunity to talk about the difference between the Mosaic and Christian Covenants).

### II. Think about these words'as you read the passage:

Luke 15:12	greed
Luke 15:13	instant gratification
Luke <b>15:14</b>	destitution
Luke 15:15-17	desperation
Luke 15:18-19	penitence
Luke 15:20	joy and compassion
Luke 15:21	forgiveness
Luke 15:21-24	happiness
Luke 15:25-30	anger, jealousy, greed again with the elder bother.
Luke 15:31-32	gladness

### III. A possible approach for young children here is to stress that (1) **this boy did a very bad thing.**

And that (2) **he "came to his senses" only when he was down and out in the pig pen.**

Further, (3) **he was afraid his father might not take him back.**

He was afraid was because he had

- (1) **embarrassed** his father by being such a foolish boy,
- (2) he had **hurt** his father's feelings, and
- (3) he was himself **humiliated** and thus diminished in his own eyes.

## Conclusion:

The key here is to stress that the father did take him back because of his great love for his son. The father did not pretend that the wrong he had done was right, but when the boy admitted he was wrong, the father was happy to accept him again.

**The lesson of how God, our Father, loves us is plain to see.**

## LESSON 2: THE MAN AND THE GREAT FISH

### Introduction:

The book of Jonah is a historical book. The things in it really did happen. Of course, God used miracles in the life of Jonah. There was truly a "great fish" that swallowed Jonah. We usually think of this fish as not a fish but a whale because that is the only creature we can imagine doing such a thing. But it is important to remember that this creature was prepared specially by a miracle of God to get Jonah's attention. And it surely did!

- I. Here is a way to organize the book of Jonah:
  - A. Jonah was a man with a mission to preach to the people of Ninevah (1:1-2).
  - B. Jonah became a deserter and disobedient (1:3).
  - C. Jonah was disciplined by God. There was a storm and Jonah was cast into the sea and thus into the "fish" (1:4-17).
  - D. Jonah became sorry and repented in the "fish" (2:1-10).
  - E. Jonah became God's Prophet and preached in Ninevah (3:1-10).
  - F. Jonah became angry and had to be rebuked by God again (4:1-11). His attitude about the repentance of the people of Ninevah was not good.
  
- II. Points worth Pondering:
  - A. A great lesson of Jonah is that when you have something to do that you know you should do but don't really want to do, you had better just go ahead and do it.
  - B. Jonah learned this the hard way and we see by the end of the book that he did not learn the lesson altogether as well as he should have.
  - C. Remember, however, that God has put this lesson here to help us to do better than Jonah did.
  - D. J. W. McGarvey said: "Jonah learned, and through his valuable experience millions have learned, that when God enjoins a disagreeable duty, it is far easier to go and do it, than to run away from it."
  
- III. Jonah's experience can be summed up in a way that teaches how we may deal with God in our own lives:
  - A. We may run away from God, like Jonah did in Chapter 1.
  - B. We may run to God, like Jonah did in Chapter 2.
  - C. We may run with God, like Jonah did in Chapter 3.
  - D. But we may also run ahead of God, like Jonah did in chapter 4.

### Conclusion:

God will not send a special fish to straighten us out today. But we do have the Bible to help correct us. Be sure that you are running **with** God everyday.

## LESSON 3: THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP

### Introduction:

Sheep are mentioned more often than any other animal in the Bible. The people of Israel traded, ate, and used sheep in their religious lives. The earliest mention of them is Genesis 4:2 (Abel kept sheep).

Sheep "wear out" the land so people who tend them must move from one place to another, hence the nomadic life of the shepherd. Water was very important, thus shepherds were careful to know about reliable water sources. Since sheep are not God's most intelligent creation, they require close attention from the shepherd. Shepherds came to know each member of the flock so well that they named each sheep.

Sheep were used for milk, food, wool, and for leather. Even their horns would be used for containers and as trumpets. Nothing about a sheep was wasted.

Remember that sheep were often sacrificed to God under the Patriarchal Dispensation and the Law of Moses. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is the final and complete sacrifice for man's sin (see 1 Peter 1:18-19).

### I. A Study of Psalm 23

#### A. Verse 1: **God's Promise of Possession**

1. The sheep of Israel could not survive without a shepherd to supply their needs. They would die of thirst and starvation, in other words, of "want.,,
2. We also would die, spiritually, without our loving shepherd. We are the sheep of His sheepfold (see John 10).

#### B. Verse 2: **God's Providence**

1. Sheep need good pasture which the shepherd must find and provide.
2. They also need still water. Sheep will not drink from a rapidly moving stream. The shepherd would find a well pool or dam up a stream to form a still pool.
3. In the same way, God provides all that we need today for life and for the eternal life to come. We have the bread of life (God's Word--Matthew 4) and Jesus is the Living Water (see John 4).

#### C. Verse 3: **God's Preservation and Reproof**

1. When the sheep got off the trail or "out of line" the shepherd would call them by name or, if that failed, use his staff to correct them.
2. Just like children who sometimes do wrong things, Christians can get off the right path today. God uses His Word to reprove and correct His people (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 4:2-4) and get us back on the right track.
3. God has elders (also called "pastors" and "shepherds") in the church today who have the responsibility to watch for our souls. They use the Word to guide and sometimes correct us.

#### D. Verse 4: **God's Protection**

1. There were dangerous places through which the shepherd had to lead his sheep., The "valley of the shadow of death" may well have been a nickname for a place

inhabited by robbers who wanted to steal the shepherd's flock and perhaps even rob and kill the shepherd.

2. As the shepherd protected the sheep, God protects us today. In order to be protected, we need today attention to God's Instructions for Living, the Bible.
3. If we do what is right, we will be safe, just **as** if God were standing close by with his rod and staff.

E. Verse **5: God's Preference**

1. Here David reflects on the fact that God is helping him (a feast, anointing oil) even in the face of his enemies.
2. God was with David. He has promised to be with us also, if we are faithful to Him (see Hebrews 13:5-6).

F. Verse 6: **God is Our Permanent Shepherd**

1. One day the shepherd would leave his sheep. He could become ill or perhaps die.
2. But God is not like that. He will be our Shepherd forever, even when we go to live with Him in heaven forever.

## II. **The Shepherd and the Lost Sheep: Luke 15:3-7**

- A. In Luke 15 there are three lost things:
1. A **sheep** that was lost, knew it was lost, but did not know the way back.
  2. A **coin** that was lost, didn't know it and didn't care. Coins are incapable of knowing anything. Some people seem to be incapable of much spiritual knowledge.
  3. A **boy** who was lost, knew it, and knew the way home.
- B. We've already studied the boy. The lesson about the coin is essentially about the diligence required in seeking the lost.
- C. The "lost sheep" takes advantage of the familiar simple minded of sheep. Note these things:
1. The 99 would not be left defenseless. They would be in a sheepfold, under the care of an assistant.
  2. But it is the shepherd himself that would go and seek diligently for the lost sheep.
  3. Notice the rejoicing over the saving of the lost sheep.
  4. Verse 7 may very well have some irony in it. Jesus knew His audience of scribes and Pharisees and that they did not think they were lost at all. But all are lost (Romans 3:23). He is reminding them in a backhanded way of their unfounded spiritual pride.
  5. Jesus is showing these men how hardhearted they are. This lesson is repeated in the figure of the elder brother.

### Conclusion:

God made substantial use of sheep. Let us strive to be good sheep by carefully following the Good and Loving Shepherd.

## LESSON 4: REMINDED BY A ROOSTER

### Introduction:

- A. If you have lived on a farm or in the country you know what the crow of a rooster ("cock"--KJV) means. He is reminding you that it is time to get up and get about the day's activities.
- B. There was a disciple of Jesus named Peter who on one occasion was reminded of a number of things by the crowing of a rooster.
- C. Read Luke 22:31-33 and 54-62, John 21:15-17.

### Discussion:

#### **I. Peter: Proud and Powerful**

- A. Peter had been a fisherman. As such he would have been a strong, powerful, and independent man. Such men can sometimes be a bit proud. And pride centered in one's self is not good (Proverbs 29:23, 16:18).
- B. Peter made brash statements (Luke 22:33).
- C. Peter did brash things.
  - 1. He did, after all, follow Jesus in His difficulties, yet from a distance (John 18:16).
  - 2. He cut off Malchus' ear. Note that Peter was likely right handed (most people are). The Bible says he cut off this man's right ear. If you think about it, it seems likely that Peter was aiming to cut off Malchus' head, not just his ear (Luke 22:47-50, Mt. 26:51-52, John 18:10-11).

#### **II. Peter: Carelessly Bold**

- A. Another example of Peter's boldness and brashness was when he told Jesus that he would never let Him down. Have you ever told somebody something and then not been able to follow through?
  - 1. In Luke 22:33 Peter said that he would go to prison, even die with Jesus.
  - 2. But Jesus said that Peter would deny Him before the rooster (or the cock) crowed three times (thrice).
- B. Later Peter refused to be identified with Jesus. (See Luke 22:54-62).

#### **III. Peter: Reminded by a Rooster**

The Rooster's Crow May have reminded Peter of these things:

- A. To **say** is one thing, to **do** is another. (See James 2:16).
- B. It is **Hard to Hide** Who You Are.
  - 1. People knew that Peter was a Galilean and a disciple of Christ.
  - 2. He tried to deny it three times. It never worked.
  - 3. Remember who you are all the time. Others most certainly will remember who you **say** you are!
  - 4. Always be careful about your influence: Someone **is** always watching you!
- C. When Jesus **says** something, it is the **truth!**
  - 1. Note that this memory caused Peter to weep **bitterly** (Luke 22:61-62).
  - 2. When we do wrong things today, after knowing they are wrong, having been warned by our parents or Bible teachers, might we cry also?

3. Peter could have avoided this painful situation by being more careful with his bold statements and by being truly brave enough to admit he was a disciple of Christ.
4. Note John 14:15, 8:32.

D. Peter could have also remembered the **dangers of foolish pride** (once again, Proverbs 29:23, 16:18).

Conclusion:

- A. It is important to "remember that Peter was indeed sorry for the mistake he made. Peter and Jesus were able to talk about his (Peter's) future before the Lord ascended (John 21:15-19).
- B. Peter went on to become a great apostle of Christ (Acts 2, *etc.*). Remember that though you will make mistakes, like Peter did, you can overcome them and go ahead to do great things. You'll be helped in this by remembering the things that the rooster helped Peter to remember.