

One Lost Sheep?

by Kiersten Tolton, Children's Ministries at Family Life Centre

Does God really care about One Lost Sheep? In the ministry to children, there are often times of great joy and opportunities to see the fruit of your labour. However, there are many situations where struggles persist and valleys that cause one to become disheartened. This opens up the door to Satan's lies: such as "Just give up," or "God doesn't really care," or "Is it worth it?"

I have the blessing of running the Children's Programs at the Family Life Centre. After one very rough Boy's Club, I felt myself slowly letting down my guard and believing these lies. I cried out to Jesus. "Do you really care?" Of course, I had heard and read the story of The Lost Sheep in Luke 15: 3-7 and Matthew 18: 10-15, but God revealed the truth of those Scriptures to me in a very personal way.

Last year, along with the Children's Programs at the Family Life Centre,

I was also a Teacher's Assistant at our Christian school on Pritchard Avenue. That is where I met Brandon. Not only was he completely defiant to any leadership, he was violent and had several outbursts every day. I worked with him during the month of September and struggled to see this grade two boy through the eyes of the Lord. I was finally allowing God to build a love in my heart for him. When he was expelled from the school, I asked God in confusion, "Don't you care about Brandon? Why are you taking him away from me when I am

just now starting to build a workable relationship with him?"

God answered me quite quickly when Brandon started to attend our Kids Club next door at the Family Life Centre. At this point God expanded my connection with Brandon by including his mother and sister. Although Brandon was often asked to leave partway through the club because he put other children in danger, I felt I was at least able to maintain a link with him.

In the summer I was informed that the Child and Family services had taken Brandon away because of a crime he had committed. Again, I brought questions to the Lord. "Why God? If you take him away, it's like you are giving up on all the progress he has been making." Hearing no response, my prayers turned to asking God to place someone else in Brandon's life that would speak and represent the truth and the love of

Christ to him.

It wasn't till the end of the summer that I started to notice a change in Brandon's mother. She had been coming to our Women's Programs for several years here at the Family Life Centre, but had never been one to share her feelings. She had been popping her head into my office once a week. It started with a simple question about Kids Club for her

daughter and soon grew to conversations about her desire to make positive changes in her life for her children's benefit. During a Ladies Program one Wednesday, as we were eating lunch together, the mother told me where the boy had been placed. I sat in shock as I realized that the shelter was located on the same street as my house. I prayed silently,

"Oh Lord, you amaze me. How little faith I have." Trying to regain my composure, and not scare this woman with my tears, I asked, "May I visit

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him?" I explained to her where my house was and she was delighted that her son would have another visitor.

That weekend as I was cleaning the house, God reminded me of Brandon and I decided to walk down the street to say "Hello." I didn't know if anyone would be home or if I would be allowed to come in, but I felt I should obey God's promptings. After ringing the doorbell and waiting a few moments, I turned and began walking home. Then, surprise, Brandon ran out of the house and onto the sidewalk. "You came!" he exclaimed with a bright smile. I spoke with him briefly and set up a time to meet with him the next day.

As I walked home, I felt Jesus had spoken The Lost Sheep parable to me again through Brandon's life. I felt privileged to be an instrument of God seeking people. I realized how personable our Lord really is. All the lies the evil one had tried to

sneak into my head were crushed with these statements of truth. Jesus cares about Brandon! He doesn't give up on anyone! Brandon is important because every person is valuable to the Lord! Again I cried out to God, this time for His forgiveness and prayers of thanks-

giving. "Lord, I'm sorry I doubted your faithfulness. Thank you for letting me be a part of your work in redeeming lost souls." I personally experienced the truth in Matthew 18:14, "That's how it is with your Father in heaven. He doesn't want any of these

little ones to be lost."

This past month, upon approval from Brandon's Social Worker, I have started regular visits. I may not be the only one God uses to speak into Brandon's life, but I can know for certain that Jesus continually cares, and is searching, for all people. "The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost." Luke 19:10

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