



Occupy Wall Street: Congregational Discussion Guide

Jesus told this parable, "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'"

– Luke 15:4-7

Jesus told us that God cares for the one lost sheep. But what would happen if the 99 were lost, instead?

The activists, young and old, who are occupying Wall Street and financial districts in other cities, are capturing the imagination of many Americans, in part because they have tapped into widely felt concerns. The Occupy Wall Street website says,

"We are the 99 percent. We are getting kicked out of our homes. We are forced to choose between groceries and rent. We are denied quality medical care. We are suffering from environmental pollution. We are working long hours for little pay and no rights, if we're working at all. We are getting nothing while the other 1 percent is getting everything. We are the 99 percent."

We may or may not agree with or even understand everything the Wall Street protestors are trying to

say but they have offered a teachable moment for our congregations. This is a good opportunity to talk about what we are doing and could be doing to help families hurt by this economy.

- 1) Do you know people in your family or our congregation who have been hurt by the current economic downturn? How have you, personally, supported them? How have we supported them, as a congregation, in these challenging days?
- 2) How does the economic downturn hurt those who have *not* lost their jobs? How have *you* been impacted?
- 3) Are the resources of the society being shared fairly? Is there some truth to the "99 percent" being left out? What does our faith call us to do around questions of fairness and sharing?
- 4) Jesus rejoiced when one lost sheep was found. What if there were 10 lost sheep (like the 10 percent unemployed rate), or 18 lost sheep (like the combined unemployed and underemployed rate) or 22 lost sheep (representing the percent of children living in poverty)? Are some of God's people (sheep) getting lost in our economy? What does our faith call us to do about that?
- 5) What more could we do as a congregation to see that the resources of society are shared with all of God's people?



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