



GOD OF THE
OUTCAST

ONLY OUTCASTS INVITED

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THE BIBLE LAB

YES, NO & MAYBE

1. At night, I am uncomfortable when I see young men in hoodies and sagging pants approaching me.
2. I hang out with homeless people regularly.
3. There have been times that I felt God couldn't use me because my life was a spiritual mess.
4. God needs us to build trustworthy reputations within our community in order to use us.
5. God chose the shepherds because they were the only ones who wouldn't give Joseph and Mary a hard time about putting a baby in a food dish.

DIG DEEPER

READ Luke 2:8 & 9

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

◦ When you were younger, what did you hear about these shepherds? Why did you think they were included in the nativity?

- ∞ What were shepherds really like in the time of Jesus?
 - » What was their social status, their legal status, and their religious status?
 - » With what type of persons in our society today might you associate these shepherds?

THE CONTEMPORARY SHEPHERD'S REPUTATION:

- **The Mishnah**, Judaism's written record of the oral law, also reflects this prejudice, referring to shepherds in belittling terms. One passage describes them as *"incompetent"*; *another says no one should ever feel obligated to rescue a shepherd who has fallen into a pit.*
- **Jeremias** documents the fact that shepherds were *deprived of all civil rights*. They *could not fulfill judicial offices or be admitted in court as witnesses*. He wrote, "To buy wool, milk or a kid from a shepherd was forbidden on the assumption that it would be *stolen property*."
- **In Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, Jeremias notes:** "The rabbis ask with amazement how, in view of *the despicable nature of shepherds*, one can explain why God was called '*my shepherd*' in Psalm 23:1."

- **Smug religious leaders maintained a strict caste system** at the expense of shepherds and

DIG DEEPER... CONTINUED

other common folk. *Shepherds were officially labeled “sinners”*—a technical term for a class of despised people.

READ Luke 2:10-14

10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, **14** “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

° Why do you think the shepherds were “terrified?” What first thoughts would come to your mind if a host of angels appeared before you?

∞ What does God’s choice of the shepherds say about His character?

∞ Why do you think God chose the outcast shepherds over the priests?

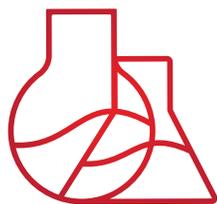
∞ Why didn’t God announce Christ’s birth to the wealthy and influential (see Luke 18:23-25)?

READ Luke 2:15-20

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17** When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. **20** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

∞ What does it say about God’s character that He would ask the shepherds to *come as they are*, instead of giving them some ceremonial cleansing rituals to go through first?



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MY PRAYER...

1. What is God calling me to “go and see” in this season of my life?
2. How am I allowing my spiritual uncleanness to come between me and God?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?