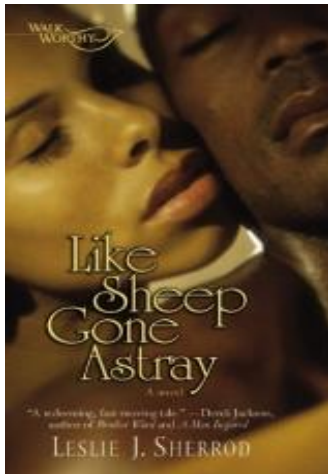


Like Sheep Gone Astray

by Leslie J. Sherrod



About the Book

Anthony Murdock seems to be a true Mighty Man of God. His focus on success and pursuing God's abundance has helped him become a top executive at the hottest new company in Maryland. He's won the heart of an upscale, ambitious woman and has finally returned to his roots as a minister-in-training at his childhood church.

But he's also made the kind of mistake that is slowly tearing at his peace of mind—and threatening to destroy everything he's worked to build. Now, to make things right, Anthony will have to stay one step ahead of enemies open and hidden—and untangle secrets from his family's past he never could have expected. And he must at last confront and repent the personal greed and misguided pride that have driven him for far too long if he is to regain his reputation, recapture his self-respect—and walk in the fullness of his calling.

Discussion Guide

1. Anthony's sermon on Sunday seemed to preach as much to his own spirit as to the congregation. Have you ever spoken words to someone else that proved to be a Word to you as well? If you had that opportunity now, what Scripture text would you be "preaching"?
2. Terri doesn't comprehend Anthony and others at Second Baptist Church who are seemingly obsessed with Jesus and the Bible. "They don't understand that there's more to life than religion," she complains. She thinks they're fanatical; someone else might call them faithful. What do you think? What kind of churchgoer are you? What do Scriptures such as Romans 12: 1-2 and Hebrews 10:24-25 suggest about the kind of churchgoer we should be?
3. Pastor Green prays for Anthony, saying, "Do what you've got to do to make things right, whatever it takes." Does that prayer inspire you? Encourage or challenge you? Or terrify you? Why?

- 4.** Throughout this novel, characters deal with the issue of wealth and the power, status, and stumbling blocks that are associated with money. In Chapter 2, Pastor Green speaks about spiritual status and blessings in relationship to material blessings. What do you think about his spin on a "prosperity gospel"? How does it relate to Jesus' attitudes about money (e.g., Luke 18:18-27)?
- 5.** "Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith" (Proverbs 15:16). What has been your experience with the principle laid out in this proverb (which Anthony recalls was one of his Aunt Rosa's favorites)?
- 6.** Being mindful of his own desperate need for a second chance, Eric gives that chance to Nikki. There's another expression related to second chances: "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." How do you know when the generosity of a second chance may result in a "fool me twice"? Do you offer a second chance based on faith or reason or some combination of both? Why? How does our willingness to trust people reflect our trust in God?
- 7.** Terri compares her pursuit of peace, esteem, and status through wealth, success, and possession with the peace evident in the worshippers at Second Baptist. Do you have peace? If so, what is its source? If not, where have you sought it-in the past and now? What does Scripture say about the source of true and lasting peace? (See John 14:27; 16:32-33; Romans 5:1; 15:17; Colossians 3:15.)
- 8.** In answer to his own question "Who do I trust?" Anthony remembers the words of Proverbs 3:5. Whom do you trust? Why? What is the evidence of your trust? What does it look like to place your trust in God?
- 9.** Sister Porter offers counsel to Terri about her faltering marriage with Anthony by quoting Ephesians 5:21-33, and noting that even Paul called the marriage relationship a mystery (v. 32). How have you experienced mystery in a relationship-with a spouse or with Christ? Is that mysterious element a source of celebration or frustration to you? Why? How might you work to remove the frustrating aspects and retain the celebratory ones?
- 10.** Eric faces an all-too-common dilemma: the church and its people have let him down. At first, it seemed they just didn't follow through on their promises, which would be disappointing enough. But then it becomes clear that they have believed a false report and judged him harshly on that basis. How do you respond when other Christians let you down? How does the relationship about Paul and John Mark offer counsel or encouragement (see Acts 15:36-41; 2 Timothy 4:11)?
- 11.** Anthony repeatedly asks such questions as "How did I end up in this place? Why is this happening to me?" When have you asked such questions about your life situation? What answers did you find? How were those answers key to ensuring you didn't repeat your mistakes?
- 12.** Anthony is tempted to "overlook" the extra money in his pension; he can easily justify doing so! But his spirit is uneasy. Why? How do you handle financial "windfalls" from a bank error in your favor or incorrect (excessive) change from a cashier or other mundane sources? Why should God care about such little amounts of money? (See Proverbs 16:11; 20:23; Micah 6:11; Luke 16:10.)

13. Anthony finds inspiration and motivation in Judges 16. Read it yourself. What does the story of Samson say to you in whatever challenging situation you may be facing? How might you be called to claim a Samson-like victory in that circumstance?

14. Ironically, both Anthony (in his fraudulent actions) and Terri (in her adulterous desires) are saved by exposure. How is such exposure an answer to Pastor Green's prayer? In what way(s) has God allowed exposure of your sin to save you from perpetuating that transgression-or worse?

15. Anthony gradually discerns that his financial issues are the product of a generational curse, handed down from his biological father. What experience do you have with generational curses? What does Exodus 34:5-7 seem to say about them?

16. "Terri laid aside every conviction she held about independence, self-determination, and standing on her own two feet. . . . She wanted nothing more than to find a place to rest her hurting heart and head." It isn't necessarily a bad or wrong thing to do or desire-but it can be dangerous if we don't choose our "resting place" wisely. When have you felt that way, and what resting place did you choose? (See Matthew 11:28-29; Hebrews 4:9-10.)

17. Eric had carefully prepared a speech for city council, but when the moment came, he balled it up, tossed it aside, and spoke from his heart. Scripture says that the Spirit will give us words to speak when our own fail (Mark 13:11; Romans 8:26). When have you experienced such inspired speech? Where does human preparation leave off and the Holy Spirit take over?

18. In this story, as in real life, preachers and politicians are often lumped together in a category marked "suspect and/or corrupt." What do the two groups have in common that make them vulnerable to corruption? How do scriptural catalogs of leadership qualities (e.g., 2 Timothy 3:1-13) offer counsel and caution to those in leadership- both in the church and in the world?

Author Bio

Leslie J. Sherrod lives in Baltimore, Maryland with her husband and two children. A former human service professional, she now enjoys living life at the pace of her three-year-old, joining in the imaginative possibilities of her five-year-old, and hoping to find a moment to write something in between. She also loves Bible study, good food, good movies, museums, and any other special times out with her husband and friends. **Like Sheep Gone Astray** is her debut novel.

Favorite Web Sites:

www.amazon.com - I might visit this site a little too much?

www.expedia.com - Sometimes just envisioning a vacation can do wonders for your day.

www.worldrelief.org - This world is too small, and our material blessings too fleeting not to see the needs of mothers, fathers, and children worldwide just like us ? and to help!

www.Bible.com - I use this site for writing, for research, for living, for moving, for being ? you get the point.

www.clubmom.com - Great resources, great rewards!

Critical Praise

"A redeeming, fast-moving tale of wrong choices and second chances that keeps you guessing till the end"

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