

Parable Of The Lost Sheep

LOWER ELEMENTARY LESSON PLAN

Theme: God rejoices when one sinner returns to Him.

Scripture: Luke 15:3-7

Memory Verse: Luke 15:6 - 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'

The Children's Sermon

Parables are often described as earthly stories with heavenly meanings. Jesus used these stories that took what His disciples and followers knew to be true and helped them understand a new concept.

In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd knew his sheep well. The 99 sheep were safe together, and they depended upon each other. The lost sheep, however, was in grave danger on its own. This lost sheep would get colder on its own and was an easier target for predators.

Each sheep has great value to the shepherd. It's unthinkable to the shepherd to lose just one sheep—no matter how many sheep he has. It was completely worth it to spend the time and energy to search for the one lost sheep.

Jesus was mocked and judged for spending time with sinners—though that's exactly who He came to save. Jesus intentionally sought out those who were discarded by society, those who were considered beyond help.

It makes sense that a loving God would forgive a sinner who had gone astray and then repented. But the fact that God eagerly searches for each and every sinner and joyfully celebrates the sinner's return, shows His extravagant love for each of us.

Now, let's dive deeper into the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Imagine you have a favorite toy, one you love more than all the others. You play with it every day, and it makes you very happy. But one day, you can't find it. You look everywhere, under your bed, in your toy box, but it's not there. You feel sad and miss it a lot. Then, one day, you find it behind the couch! You are so happy and thankful to have it back. This is how the shepherd felt about his lost sheep.

The shepherd had 100 sheep, but one wandered away. Even though he still had 99 left, that one lost sheep was very important to him. He didn't say, "Oh well, I still have 99 sheep. That's enough." No, he went out to look for that one lost sheep because it mattered to him just as much as the others.

When the shepherd finally found the lost sheep, he was so happy that he didn't even think about how tired he was from searching. He joyfully put the sheep on his shoulders and carried it back home. He was so happy that he told all his friends and neighbors, "Come and celebrate with me! I found my lost sheep!"

This story teaches us how much God loves each one of us. Just like the shepherd in the Parable of the Lost Sheep, God doesn't want to lose even one person. He loves each of us so much that He searches for us and is very happy when we come back to Him.

Sometimes, we might feel like we are the lost sheep. We might feel alone or scared, like we are far away from God. But the good news is that God is always looking for us.

He wants us to be safe with Him, just like the shepherd wanted his lost sheep to be safe.

Pray: Dear Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd. We are thankful that you came to save those who are lost. Amen.

Bible Memory Verse

Luke 15:6 - 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'

You Will Need:

- Colored paper
- Scissors
- Markers
- Glue
- Stickers or glitter (optional)

Get Ready:

- Cut out sheep shapes from the colored paper ahead of time.
- Set up a table with all the materials spread out for easy access.

Do This:

1. Give each child a paper sheep and ask them to decorate it with markers, stickers, or glitter. Encourage them to be creative!
2. While they work, talk to them about the story of the lost sheep and how happy the shepherd was to find it. Relate this to how God feels when a sinner returns to Him.
3. After they finish their sheep, gather the children in a circle and have them share their sheep with the group. Lead them in saying the memory verse together,

emphasizing that just like the shepherd rejoices over the found sheep, God rejoices over every person who comes back to Him.

Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- A small plush sheep or a picture of a sheep
- A large piece of green felt or a green blanket (to represent a field)
- Small paper hearts (one per child)
- A "Shepherd's Staff" (this can be a stick or a long piece of cardboard)
- A small box or container (to represent the sheep's pen)

Get Ready:

- Lay the green felt or blanket in the middle of your teaching area to represent the field.
- Place the plush sheep or picture of a sheep at one end of the field.
- Hide the small paper hearts around the room, but not too hard to find.
- Place the shepherd's staff and the small box/container near the field.

Do this:

1. **Introduction**: Start by telling the children that today they're going to learn about how much joy God feels when someone who was lost finds their way back to Him. Explain that they'll hear a story Jesus told about a shepherd and his sheep to help us understand this better.

2. **Interactive Storytelling**: Have the children sit around the "field." Hold up the plush sheep or picture and say, "This sheep represents someone who is lost and needs to find their way back to God." Place the sheep at the far end of the field. Explain that

the shepherd (you, holding the shepherd's staff) loves his sheep so much that he will go out and look for it until he finds it. Walk around the field, pretending to search for the sheep, and then joyfully pick it up and say, "When the shepherd finds his lost sheep, he is so happy that he carries it back home on his shoulders." Place the sheep in the small box/container, explaining that this represents the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.

3. **Heart Hunt**: Tell the children that just like the shepherd searched for his lost sheep, they're going to search for something special too - little hearts that represent God's love for us. Send them to find the hidden paper hearts around the room. Once all the hearts have been found, gather the children back and explain that each heart they found is a reminder of how much joy there is in heaven over one person who comes back to God. Encourage them to keep their heart as a reminder of God's love and joy over each one of us when we choose to follow Him.

Snack Activity: Lost Sheep Cupcakes

You'll Need:

- Cupcakes (pre-made or bake your own)
- White frosting
- Mini marshmallows
- Chocolate chips
- Pretzel sticks
- Small paper flags (or make your own with paper & toothpicks)

Get Ready: If baking your own cupcakes, do this ahead of time to allow them to cool before decorating. Prepare a small workstation for each child with all the decorating materials they'll need.

Do this:

1. Spread white frosting over the top of each cupcake to act as the 'wool' of our lost sheep.
2. Stick mini marshmallows all over the frosted top to make the sheep extra fluffy. This represents how precious each one of us is to God, just like each sheep is important to the shepherd.
3. Use two chocolate chips for the eyes and break a pretzel stick in half for the ears, placing them appropriately to make a sheep's face.
4. Write or print Luke 15:3-7 on the small paper flags. Attach the flags to toothpicks and stick one in each cupcake. Explain to the children that just like the shepherd rejoices when he finds his lost sheep, God rejoices whenever one sinner returns to Him. The cupcake they've made represents the joy of being found by God.

Game Activity: Lost Sheep Tag

You'll Need:

- A large open space
- Bandanas or small pieces of cloth
- A bell or any sound-making object

Get Ready: Designate one child to be the Shepherd and give them the bell. All other children are sheep and each gets a bandana to tuck into their waistband, representing their wool.

Do this:

1. The Shepherd stands at one end of the play area with the bell, and the sheep stand at the other end.

2. When the game starts, the Shepherd rings the bell and turns their back to the sheep, counting loudly to ten. The sheep try to quietly sneak up and get past the Shepherd to the other side.

3. If the Shepherd turns around, all sheep must freeze. If the Shepherd sees any sheep moving, they call out the sheep's name, and that sheep must return to the start. The Shepherd can only turn around three times before reaching ten.

4. The first sheep to touch the Shepherd without being spotted wins and becomes the next Shepherd. Everyone celebrates the 'lost sheep' that was found, reminding us how God rejoices when one sinner returns to Him.

Craft Activity: Lost Sheep Mobile

You'll Need:

- White and black construction paper
- Cotton balls
- Yarn or string
- A coat hanger or stick
- Scissors
- Glue
- Markers

Get Ready: Cut out several sheep shapes from the white construction paper and one from the black construction paper. These will represent the flock and the one lost sheep that was found.

Do this:

1. Glue cotton balls onto the sheep shapes to make them fluffy. Leave one side of each sheep shape unglued so you can write on it.

2. On the white sheep, have the children write things they are thankful for that God provides. On the black sheep, write 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' from Luke 15:6.

3. Punch a hole at the top of each sheep shape. Cut the yarn or string into various lengths. Tie one end of each string to a sheep and the other end to the coat hanger or stick. Hang the mobile up as a reminder that God rejoices when one sinner returns to Him.

Prayer Activity: The Lost Sheep Prayer Adventure

You'll Need:

- A small, fluffy sheep toy or a picture of a sheep
- A blindfold
- A small basket or box to serve as the 'sheep pen'

Get Ready: Place the sheep toy or picture in a hidden but safe spot in your classroom or teaching area. Set the 'sheep pen' in a central, visible location.

Do this:

1. Begin by reading Luke 15:3-7 together, focusing on how the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep to find the one that is lost. Explain that just like the shepherd, God is happy when someone who was lost finds their way back to Him.
2. Tell the children they will go on a 'sheep rescue mission'. Blindfold one child at a time and gently spin them around. The other children can guide the 'shepherd' by giving warm/cold hints to find the lost sheep.
3. Once the 'shepherd' finds the sheep, they should carry it back to the 'sheep pen'. Celebrate the return of the lost sheep with a short prayer, thanking God for always

seeking and welcoming us back, just like the shepherd rejoices when he finds his lost sheep.