

Parable Of The Lost Sheep

UPPER 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:

- 1 large poster board
- Several sheets of colored construction paper
- Scissors, markers, and glue

Get Ready:

- Cut out sheep shapes from the construction paper. Make sure you have one sheep per child, plus one extra.
- Write each child's name on a sheep, leaving the extra one blank.

Do This:

1. Hide the sheep with names around the room before the class starts, but keep the extra sheep (the 'lost sheep') with you.
2. Tell the children they are shepherds, and each must find the sheep with their name on it. Once they find their sheep, they should return to the 'fold' (a designated area in the room).

3. After everyone has found their sheep, show them the 'lost sheep' and explain that one sheep is still missing. Discuss how God feels when even one person is lost and how important it is to Him that they are found.

4. Together, search for the 'lost sheep.' Once found, celebrate by attaching the sheep to the poster board and writing 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep' at the top. Discuss the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.

Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- A small plush sheep or a sheep cutout for each child
- A large room or outdoor space
- Blindfolds
- "Lost Sheep" labels
- A bell or noise-making item
- A "Shepherd's Staff" (this can be a stick or a long spoon)
- A "Sheep Pen" area marked with tape or a rope circle

Get Ready:

- Label one sheep as "Lost Sheep" and hide it somewhere in the room or outdoor space before the children arrive.
- Set up the "Sheep Pen" in a visible area.
- Prepare the Shepherd's Staff.

Do this:

1. ****Introduction****: Read Luke 15:3-7 to the children. Explain that they will be participating in a game that helps us understand the joy of finding something that was lost, similar to how God feels joy when a sinner returns to Him.

2. **Find the Lost Sheep**: Blindfold one child who will play the role of the shepherd. Give them the Shepherd's Staff. The other children are the "sheep" and must quietly hide around the room or area. The shepherd's goal is to find the "Lost Sheep" by using the bell or noise-making item. The "sheep" can make soft sheep noises to guide the shepherd, but only the "Lost Sheep" has a bell that rings every 30 seconds. The shepherd has to listen carefully to find the "Lost Sheep" among the others.

3. **Sheep Pen Gathering**: Once the "Lost Sheep" is found, the shepherd guides them to the "Sheep Pen." Then, the shepherd must find and guide the rest of the sheep to the pen using only the sound of their voices. Each found sheep joins the search by helping to call out to the others.

4. **Reflection**: After all sheep are gathered, discuss how the shepherd felt when they found the "Lost Sheep" and how the sheep felt being found and brought back together. Relate this to how God rejoices when one sinner repents and returns to Him.

5. **Switch Roles**: Allow other children to play the role of the shepherd, repeating steps 2-4, to give everyone a chance to participate.

6. **Conclusion**: Gather the children and reflect on the parable's meaning, emphasizing God's endless love and joy for every person who finds their way back to Him. Encourage the children to think of ways they can help others feel loved and included, just like the shepherd did for the lost sheep.

Snack Activity: Lost Sheep Cupcakes

You'll Need:

- Cupcakes (pre-baked, any flavor)
- White frosting
- Mini marshmallows
- Black decorating gel
- Small candy eyes
- Pretzel sticks (for the fence)

Get Ready: Make sure the cupcakes are cool before you start decorating. Gather all your decorating materials so they are easily accessible.

Do this:

1. Spread white frosting evenly over the top of each cupcake to create the 'field' for your sheep.
2. Stick mini marshmallows all over the frosted top to resemble the fluffy wool of a sheep.
3. Use two small candy eyes for each cupcake and place them near one edge to make the sheep's eyes. Use the black decorating gel to draw a smiling mouth and legs.
4. Break the pretzel sticks in half and arrange them around the edge of each cupcake to create a small fence, symbolizing the safe return of the lost sheep.
5. As you enjoy your Lost Sheep Cupcakes, discuss Luke 15:3-7 and how God rejoices when one sinner returns to Him, just as the shepherd rejoices when he finds his lost sheep.

Game Activity: Lost Sheep Tag

You'll Need:

- A large open space, preferably outdoors
- Bandanas or fabric strips for half of the participants

- A bell or a small noisemaker

Get Ready: Designate one child as the shepherd. The rest of the children are sheep, with half being 'lost sheep' wearing bandanas. The playing area is divided into two: one side is the 'safe pen' and the other is the 'wilderness'. The shepherd starts in the safe pen, and the lost sheep start in the wilderness.

Do this:

1. On 'go', the shepherd must find and tag the lost sheep in the wilderness. When tagged, the shepherd gives them a bell to ring, symbolizing their joy of being found. The sheep then remove their bandana and run to the safe pen.
2. The game continues until all the lost sheep are found and have returned to the safe pen. Each time a sheep is saved, everyone cheers to celebrate their return, reflecting the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.
3. Once all the lost sheep are found, discuss Luke 15:3-7, emphasizing how God rejoices when one lost sinner returns to Him. Encourage the children to think about how they can help bring others to God's safe pen.

Craft Activity: Lost Sheep Mobile

You'll Need:

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

- Hole punch

Get Ready: Read Luke 15:3-7 together and discuss the meaning of the parable. Explain how God rejoices when one sinner repents and returns to Him, just like the shepherd rejoices when he finds his lost sheep.

Do this:

1. Cut out sheep shapes from the white construction paper. You'll need at least one sheep per child, but encourage making more to create a fuller mobile. Use the black paper to cut out small heads and legs for your sheep.
2. Glue the cotton balls onto the sheep's body to make it fluffy. Then, glue the head and legs onto the sheep.
3. Once the glue has dried, use the markers to add details like eyes or a smile to the sheep's face.
4. Punch a hole at the top of each sheep and tie a piece of yarn or string through it. Make sure the strings are of varying lengths.
5. Tie the other end of each string to the wooden dowel or stick, spacing the sheep out evenly.
6. Finally, attach a longer string to the middle of the dowel to hang your mobile.

As you work, discuss how each sheep on the mobile represents a person God loves and rejoices over when they return to Him. This craft serves as a visual reminder of God's love and the joy in repentance.

Prayer Activity: The Lost Sheep Prayer Adventure

You'll Need:

- A large room or outdoor space

- Printed pictures of sheep (one per child)
- A hidden 'sheep pen' area
- Bible or printed scripture of Luke 15:3-7

Get Ready: Before the kids arrive, hide the sheep pictures around the room or outdoor space, making sure one is more hidden than the others. Designate an area as the 'sheep pen.'

Do this:

1. Start by reading Luke 15:3-7 together, discussing the joy of finding something that was lost and relating it to how God feels when a sinner returns to Him.
2. Explain to the children that they will be shepherds on a mission to find the lost sheep. Each child must find a sheep picture and bring it to the sheep pen. However, they should know one sheep is harder to find, symbolizing the one that the shepherd goes out of his way to find.
3. Once all sheep are found and returned to the pen, gather the children and lead them in a prayer. Thank God for His relentless love and for rejoicing over every person who returns to Him. Encourage the children to pray for friends or family they wish would come to know God's love.