



Session 11

Spring 2016

Early Childhood

# Finding the lost sheep

LUKE 15:3-7

## prepare

### PRAYER

God, give me wisdom to make this a loving place for every child who comes. Enfold each of us in your love. Amen.

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

To hear Jesus' stories of the lost being found

### STORY SUMMARY

Jesus was criticized for welcoming and eating with sinners. He told a story about a shepherd who left ninety-nine sheep to search for one lost sheep. When he found it he carried it home rejoicing. He called his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him. Jesus said that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine righteous people who don't have to repent.



### teaching tips for early childhood

Sessions 11-13 include three stories of the lost being found. These stories reveal God's love for each person, particularly people who are lost. Help children remember these stories. Cut and hang the "Lost and found" spiral from the resource pack. Cut out the three cards that go with the spiral (sheep, coin, and son). Hide the sheep somewhere in the room, saving the coin and son for later sessions. Children will search for the sheep and then tape it onto the spiral after the Bible story.

Copy, cut apart, and hide the pieces of the "Lost and found" Bible memory puzzle from page 92 in this guide.

Decide which Explore activities you will do, and check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared. Go to [www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras](http://www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras) to find tips for working with younger children.

# dig deeper

by Michael McKeever

Luke 15 consists of three parables concerning the lost and found. They are told in the context of a meal that Jesus shares with sinners and tax collectors and as a response to the complaint of the Pharisees concerning Jesus' practice of open table fellowship. Jesus' shared meals with sinners are a common image in Luke (5:29–32; 7:36–50; 19:1–10). We see in the parables a progression in terms of the significance of the lost item—from one of one hundred sheep, to one of ten coins, to one of two sons—as the parables build to the third and culminating example. Read together, the three parables build toward a conclusion that extends an invitation to Jesus' critics to recognize and participate in the divine celebration of repentance.

Table fellowship in Jesus' day was symbolic in terms of kinship, boundaries, and the presence of God. Numerous images and parables in Jesus' teaching depict the kingdom as a meal or a banquet, with meals signifying something about the nature of God's kingdom and how it will appear. Pharisees would only eat with other Pharisees because they could be certain that all of the food was properly tithed and prepared in a kosher kitchen. By their restrictive and exclusive table practices, the Pharisees were making a theological statement about what they believed the kingdom would look like. It would be made up exclusively of people like themselves.

By eating with all kinds of people, Jesus was also making a theological statement about the nature of the kingdom of God. In his open and inclusive form of table fellowship, he modeled a very different theological understanding of both the nature the kingdom and who will participate.

Jesus' parables told at this meal both justify and illuminate his actions. Each parable highlights a main character who experiences loss, engages in an active process of search and recovery, and invites friends and neighbors to rejoice over the recovery of the lost. The first two parables are also punctuated with a connection to the heavenly joy that attends the repentance of a sinner.



That the shepherd in the first parable possesses a flock of one hundred sheep suggests moderate wealth. As the parable goes, the shepherd apparently discovers one missing at the end of the day when he makes his daily count. Luke may, however, imply a more personal connection to the missing item in that he records the shepherd as “losing one of them,” over against Matthew’s “one went astray.” Both the search for and the exertion of carrying home of a full-grown sheep require a concerted effort, but one that is characterized by joy.

The pastoral scene of the first parable would have been familiar to Jesus' audience and enhanced by a scriptural heritage that would include Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34:11–16, where God is depicted as a shepherd. (“For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness” [Ezekiel 34:11–12].)

Heard in context, Jesus' first parable suggests that the sinners and tax collectors are strays from God's own flock. Moreover, Jesus implies that, in some sense, he is performing God's own shepherding function through such table fellowship. As in the parable, it is to be expected that the recovery of lost should receive disproportionate attention and that their finding should be accompanied with joy.

Despite the occurrence of the word *repentance* at the conclusion of the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, repentance doesn't appear to be the primary focus of any of the parables in this chapter. Neither the sheep, nor the coin, nor either of the two sons in the final parable model true repentance as Luke frames it. Each of the parables in Luke 15 is actually defined by the intense actions of the one who is searching for the lost items. Like the others, the parable of the lost sheep is less about repentance than it is about the actions of the seeker and about being found.

# gather

## supplies

- *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*
- CD player
- Toy sheep or picture of a sheep
- "Lost and found" Bible memory puzzle (from Additional resources)

## resource pack

- Bible memory poster (Psalm 145)
- "Story search" poster

## to do

- Copy and cut apart the "Lost and found" Bible memory puzzle on page 92 in this guide for use in Bible memory.

## media connections

- *Let the Children Come to Me: Songs Inspired by the Parables of Jesus* by Kevin Johnston (CD also available)
- *Lily Gets Lost!* by Jane Simmons
- Psalm 104 from *Psalms for Young Children* by Marie-Hélène Delval
- YouTube search for "He Knows My Name" by Imani Milele Children's Choir and "The Baa Baa Song, He's the Good Shepherd" sung by Sibling Harmony (first part)

## BUILD COMMUNITY

Welcome the children and gather in a circle. Sing the words below to the tune of "The Wheels on the Bus." During each verse, give the named child a toy sheep or a picture of sheep to hold. Pass it to the next person and continue singing until everyone has been named.

**The sheep in the field, they sing God's praise,  
sing God's praise, sing God's praise.**

One sheep came to \_\_\_\_\_ (name) to say,  
we're glad you're here today!

## WORSHIP TOGETHER

Have children look for the sheep and shepherd on the "Story search" poster from the resource pack as you sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd" from the *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*, track 20.

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Join hands and say a prayer about following God's leading. Pray:

Leader: **God, every morning, when the sun shines,**

All: *we follow you!*

Leader: **Every noontime, when we eat lunch,**

All: *we follow you!*

Leader: **Every evening, when we lie down,**

All: *we follow you! Amen.*

### Bible memory

Use the "Lost and found" Bible memory puzzle on page 92 in this guide. Have children search for the hidden pieces of the verse and put them together again. Save the pieces for use in sessions 12–13.

**You are good to everyone and you take  
care of all your creation.**

—Psalm 145:9 (CEV)

# experience

## SHARE THE STORY

Open the Bible to Luke 15:3 and show children the words of the Bible story. Say:

**The stories Jesus told are for you, for me, for all people.**

Lay out a green cloth to be a field. On one side, place a blue cloth to represent water. Set out several rocks on the other side to represent dangerous places. Set out tent cards from the resource pack as you tell the story. All of the sheep cards will be used. You will also need the Shepherd story figure from page 91 in this guide.

The Bible story is found on the back of the story picture in the resource pack. Follow the instructions there for placement of props and tent cards.

## WONDER AND REFLECT

Together, reflect on the Bible story. Allow children to respond aloud or simply think about the questions.

- I wonder how the lost sheep felt on its own, away from all the others.
- I wonder how long the shepherd looked before finding the sheep.
- Imagine being carried by a loving shepherd.
- I wonder what the shepherd and friends did to celebrate.
- I wonder if you have ever been lost or afraid.

Have children look for the hidden sheep (see To do) and tape it on the “Lost and found” spiral from the resource pack. Note the progression on the spiral: the shepherd searched for the sheep, found it, and then called friends to celebrate.

## PEACE NOTES

Just as the shepherd notices every sheep, God also sees, knows, and loves each person. Play a simple game in the manner of “Simon says.” Say, “God sees people who . . .” and then describe something people do. Have the group act out this action. For example, when you say, “God sees people who are sleeping,” the children could rest their heads on their hands. When you say, “God sees people who are building,” the children could pretend to hammer. When you say, “God sees people who are cooking,” the children could pretend to stir a soup. Invite children to suggest other actions.



## Finding the lost sheep

**Luke 15:3–7**

## supplies

- Bible
- Tape

## storytelling props

- Green cloth (field)
- Blue cloth (water)
- Several rocks
- Shepherd story figure (from Additional resources)

## resource pack

- Story picture
- Tent cards (all of the sheep cards)
- “Lost and found” spiral and sheep

## to do

- Prepare the three tent cards that show sheep. Fold them so they stand upright.
- Copy and cut out the Shepherd story figure from page 91 in this guide. Mount it on a small block or paper roll so it stands upright.
- Prepare the “Lost and found” spiral from the resource pack. Hide the sheep picture that goes with the spiral somewhere in your meeting space.

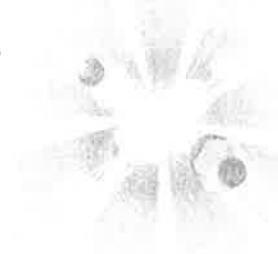
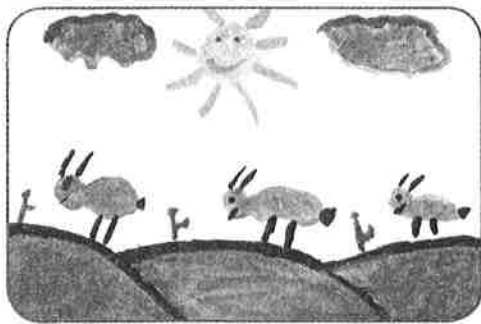
# explore

## CREATE

Provide art supplies so children can make a story picture. Pieces of ribbon, tissue paper, or cloth could become grass, water, and rocks. Pull apart cotton balls so children can easily glue the cotton on to make sheep. Alternatively, watercolor paints would work well for this story. Some children may want to make a picture connected to their own life experience. For instance, a child might show a time they were lost or felt scared.

### supplies

- Paper
- Glue
- Art supplies, such as ribbon, tissue paper, cloth
- Cotton balls
- Watercolor paints and brushes (optional)



## MOVE

Hide cotton balls to represent sheep. Children will be shepherds and each find one “lost sheep.” Celebrate with a simple snack when all the lost sheep have been found. Alternatively, you could hide stuffed animals to represent the lost sheep.

### supplies

- Cotton balls or stuffed animals
- Snack items
- Paper towels

## RETELL

**Large spaces:** Have the children pretend to be shepherds and sheep. Spread out a green sheet or blanket to be a field. A long blue cloth could be a river. Boxes could be rocks. The shepherd could lead the “sheep” around the room. Each child could take a turn as the lost sheep.

**Small spaces:** Use props on the floor or tabletop. Provide a green cloth (field), blue ribbon (river), cotton balls (sheep), rocks, and a story figure (shepherd). Give the “sheep” names and move them around the scene.

### supplies

- **Large spaces:** green blanket, blue blanket, boxes
- **Small spaces:** green cloth, blue ribbon, cotton balls, rocks, one story figure

## DISCOVER

Precut the puzzle on page 3 of each Early Childhood leaflet, or have children cut the pieces independently if they are able. Use the double-sided puzzle and the song “One Sheep Got Lost on the Mountain” from page 91 in this guide. Sing verse 1 as children put together the green side of the puzzle. Flip the puzzle pieces over. Sing verses 2–3 as children complete the blue side of the puzzle. Flip the puzzle pieces over again. Sing verse 4 as children complete the green side again to show the reunited flock.

### supplies

- Early Childhood leaflets
- “One Sheep Got Lost on the Mountain” (from Additional resources)
- Scissors

## other ideas

- Make handprints in salt dough as a reminder that each person is loved by God.
- Sing the version of the story on page 1 of the Early Childhood leaflet.
- Play the “I spy” game described on page 2 of the Early Childhood leaflet.
- Make thumbprint sheep by finger painting with white paint on green paper.

# bless

## PRAY

Lead the children around the room as you listen to or sing “I Know My Sheep” from the *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*, track 16. Song lyrics are at the back of this guide.

Gather in a circle. Pray:

**God, you care for each of us like a shepherd cares for sheep. Keep us safe this week. Amen.**

## SEND

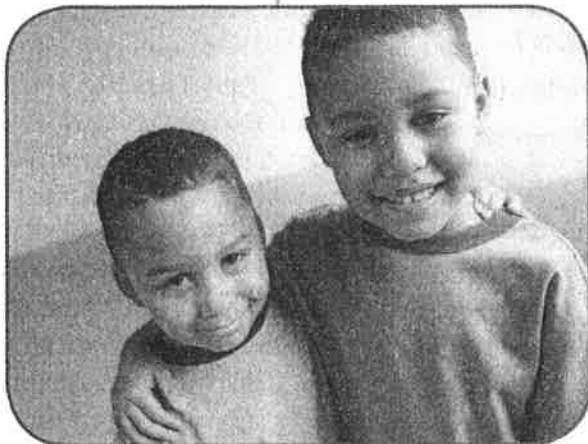
Send each child with a blessing. You may wish to place a hand on each child’s arm or shoulder. Say:

\_\_\_\_\_ (name), **God knows you and loves you.**

Make sure to send leaflets home with the children. Let families know that there is a free download of the song “I Know My Sheep” on the Shine website ([www.ShineCurriculum.com/Music](http://www.ShineCurriculum.com/Music)). Instructions for downloading the free song are on the back of the Early Childhood leaflet.

## supplies

- Early Childhood leaflets
- *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*
- CD player



*For the story about the shepherd and the sheep, I took the children to a church member’s farm and had him tell about his sheep. Children got to bottle feed some of the little lambs.*

—Fannie Mae Stichter  
Wakarusa, Indiana

## leader’s closing prayer

*Caring Shepherd, your love searches me out whenever I stray from the embrace of your fold. Your grace always welcomes me back to a new beginning with you. Thank you. Amen.*