

Parable of the Lost Sheep

PARABLE POINT God Cares for Us

Luke 15:3-7



In this lesson you'll help your preschoolers discover that God loves and cares for them as together you explore the parable of the lost sheep.

A Message From Mary

Wow! Is there anything more important than helping children discover that God loves them? That's the point you'll make with this lesson. God loves each child in your care. And God will go to any length to reach each child.

When I wrote the song you'll sing today, I was thinking about what a poor shepherd I'd be. Give me a hundred sheep to watch and I doubt I'd notice if one came up missing. I can't tell one sheep from another.

But this shepherd could tell. And he was determined to find that one lost sheep and bring it back to the fold. It's easy to love a shepherd like that, isn't it?

God bless you for the hugs you give, the snacks you serve, and the songs you sing. Your kindness and smiles communicate to your children the love of the best shepherd of all—Jesus!

Supply List

- Bible
- CD player
- Simple Stories Jesus Told* CD (track 1)
- lamb or sheep puppet or plush toy
- cotton balls
- small, empty cardboard box
- 1 plastic spoon per child
- animal crackers
- napkins
- one 4x6 index card per child
- markers or crayons
- disposable cups of water
- 100 pennies in a clear plastic jar
- clear tape

For Extra Fun!

Cuddles is the perfect little lamb for this lesson. Ask about Cuddles at your favorite Christian supplier, or order him at





Welcoming Activity: Where Is the Penny?

Before children arrive, place ninety-nine pennies in a clear plastic jar. Put a lid on the jar and secure it so little hands can't reach the pennies—they're a choking hazard. Tape one shiny penny to the bottom of one of your shoes with clear tape.

After you've warmly greeted preschoolers, hold up your penny jar and ask: **Can you guess how many pennies I have in my jar?** Affirm all guesses, then say: **It's a big number. I have ninety-nine pennies in my jar, but I'm supposed to have one hundred pennies here. One of my pennies is lost. Would you help me find it? I don't want it to feel lost and alone!**

With the children, search the room. Check under chairs, on the floor, everywhere. Then call the children back together and say: **We looked everywhere, didn't we? I guess my poor penny is lost. But wait—I know somewhere we didn't look! We didn't look at the bottoms of our shoes! Maybe my penny is stuck on a shoe!**

As children check shoe bottoms, let them discover that the penny is on your shoe sole. Take the penny off, place it in the jar, and again attach the jar's lid securely. Say: **Thank you for your help! Now I have one hundred pennies again. All my pennies are safe here in my penny jar.** Ask:

- **Why do you think I care about one penny when I have ninety-nine safe in the bank?**
- **If I were a teacher with one hundred children, do you think I'd care if one child were lost?**

Let children answer and then say: **Of course I would! Why do you think it would matter to me so much if you were lost?** Allow time for response.

Today I'm going to tell you a parable—a story that Jesus told to help people understand what God is like. **God is like a shepherd who takes care of his sheep.**

Good shepherds always know how many sheep they have. They know when one of their little sheep gets lost or hurt. And good shepherds take care of their sheep.

I'd like to tell you the story Jesus told—and I've brought a helper: **Shelly Sheepshanks.** Bring out the lamb puppet or plush toy. **Shelly is a lamb. Tell Shelly "hello."** Allow time for children to respond, and have Shelly enthusiastically wave, nod her head, or respond to the children in another way as you say in a slightly affected voice, **"Hi, kids! Good to see you! Let's hear that story about shepherds and sheep!"**

For Extra Fun!

It's unlikely children will find the penny without your help. If you have time, turn this into a game by telling children you know where the penny is and that if they get close to it, you'll tell them they're "warm." Help children discover where the penny is hiding!

look. He looked high... (*Shield your eyes and look up.*) He looked low... (*Shield your eyes and look down.*) He looked far... (*Shield your eyes and look out into the distance.*) And he looked near... (*Look at the ground.*) And finally he found his little lost sheep.


Shelly: Did he get angry at the sheep?

Teacher: Not at all. He said, "I've found my sheep! I'm so happy!" He put the sheep on his shoulders and carried the sheep all the way home. He called his friends and neighbors and said, "Let's have a party! I found my lost sheep!"

Shelly: What a great shepherd! But I have a question.

Teacher: What's that?

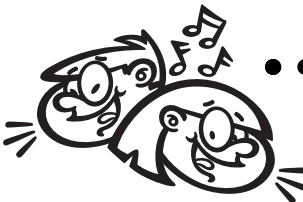
Shelly: Why did Jesus tell that story? To remind us sheep not to get lost?

Teacher: It's always good to not run away and get lost. But that's not why Jesus told us the story. Jesus wanted us to know that he's like the shepherd. Do any of you children remember what shepherds do for their sheep? (*Affirm answers.*) Good shepherds take care of their sheep. And  **God takes care of us!** Turn to a friend and tell your friend one way God takes care of you. (*Pause as children talk together.*) Good job! It's time to say goodbye to our friend, Shelly Sheepshanks. Say "goodbye," kids!

PARABLE POINT

Place your sheep puppet or stuffed animal where it's not visible to the children and continue.

Sing and Celebrate: "Farmer and the Sheep" (track 1)



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This fun song is perfect for waking up and looking surprised! As you lead this song, feel free to create motions to go along with the words. Lead children in these actions during the chorus:

- When the shepherd is supposed to be asleep, have children pretend to lay their heads on their hands, then wake up.
- When the lyrics say the shepherd couldn't sleep, have children wag their fingers back and forth.

And as always, let children move to the music. It's easier if children are standing, so go through the song while they're on their feet.

! Allergy Alert


Be aware that some children have food allergies that can be dangerous. Know your children, and consult with parents about allergies your kids may have. Also be sure to read food labels carefully as hidden ingredients can cause allergy problems.



“I Care” Card Craft

PARABLE POINT 

Give each child a 4x6 index card. Explain what you’re asking children to do *before* you distribute markers.

Say:  **God cares for us just like a good shepherd cares for his sheep. We can care for others, too.**

Today let’s think about how we can care for our moms or dads. Usually our parents take care of us, but today we’re going to take care of them!

Maybe we can show we care by helping set the table, or by picking up our toys, or by giving our moms or dads a big hug. On your card draw a picture of yourself doing something that shows you caring for your mom or dad. We’ll take our cards home and give them to our moms or dads.

Encourage children to talk with you or other adults as they draw. Ask about what they’re drawing, compliment their cards, and make sure you put a name on each card so you can send it home with the correct child at the end of class.


Sheep Roundup Game



Give each child a plastic spoon. Place an empty box near the center of the room. Scatter white cotton balls all around the room.

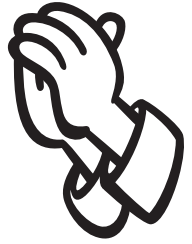
Ask children to pick up the cotton balls with their spoons and drop the cotton balls in the box.


Say: **You’ll have to move fast—we can only herd our sheep back safely to the “sheep pen” as long as the music is playing.** Play “Farmer and the Sheep” (track 1) as you and the children round up your sheep.

Consider playing the song several times to make sure all the sheep get home to the sheep pen safely. Thank your children for being good shepherds who care for their sheep—just like  **God cares for us!**

PARABLE POINT 

Together Prayer: Thank You, Lord



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Say: We have a good shepherd who cares for us. It's God! Let's think of ways  God takes care of us, such as making sure we have food. Or he gives us parents who love us. Or he lets us come to church and be with friends.

Now let's take turns thanking God for what he does. I might say, "Thank you, God, for letting me be with my friends here today. I love these kids!"

Let's close our eyes, fold our hands, and take turns thanking God for something.

Be clear about your expectations. Don't force any child to pray—but do be clear that it's OK to pray, and that we should thank God for being a good shepherd and caring for us. Help children know when to pray by softly inviting them to pray by name, taking turns as you go around the circle.

Teacher Tip

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Gather your children in a circle, and encourage them to bow their heads and fold their hands—that posture will help them focus. Form more than one circle if you have other leaders in your room who can lead prayer circles too.
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