

Parable of a Lost Sheep

Scripture Reference: [Matthew 18:10-14](#)



Suggested Emphasis: Even though God has made everyone on the earth, each person is important to Him.



Background
Study



Story
Introduction



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Story Overview:

Jesus told a parable about a shepherd who had one hundred sheep. When one of the sheep got lost, the shepherd searched and searched until he found it.

Background Study:

You can find this same parable in Luke 15:1-7. Jesus seems to have told this parable

more than once. In Matthew's account Jesus has a little child stand in front of the audience as he tells the story. He is answering one of the disciples' questions concerning "who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1-4). The parable of the lost sheep is used to help the audience understand that God is not just concerned with the "greatest" in the kingdom. He does not want even one little child to be lost (Matthew 18:14).

In Luke's account Jesus told the parable to help the Pharisees understand that God loves each and every sinner. The Pharisees did not understand why Jesus was spending so much time with the sinners. They thought they were more important than the "sinners" and that he should spend time with them. In the parable Jesus showed that he did not spend all of his time with faithful Jews (the 99 sheep) because he wanted to go out searching for those lost in sin (the one sheep).

In both cases, the people Jesus was speaking to would have been very familiar with sheep. Shepherds were common in the first century. A shepherd led his flock in and among the hills of Palestine searching for the best grass and water. Bears, leopards, jackals and even hyenas were known to roam the hills of Palestine. The shepherd often risked his life to protect the sheep from these dangers.




Sometimes a sheep would fall down a crevice and the shepherd had to climb down and pull it to safety. It would have been common for a shepherd to carry a sheep on his shoulders (Luke 15: 5).

A shepherd spent a great deal of time with his sheep and most likely knew each one by name. Every sheep was important and his goal is to keep every one of them safe.

This is the kind of care that God has for mankind. He knows each of us by name. He does not want even one of us to go astray. Mankind had gone astray and God sent his son, Jesus, to find us.

Satan is the predator of mankind (1 Peter 5:8) and he prowls around like a roaring lion trying to find someone to devour in the spiritual sense.

Other Scriptures to help in your study: Isaiah 53:6; Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34; Matthew 10:6-11; John 10:1-18; Psalm 100:3; 1 Peter 2:24-25

-  [What happened before this story?](#)
-  [What happens after this story?](#)
-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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Way to Introduce the Story:

(Hide a house or car key before students arrive) When the children are ready to begin the story, tell them that you are going to pretend that you lost your house (or car) key. Show the children all of your other keys and explain what they are used for. Then explain that even though you have all of the other keys - - - the house key is very important to you. You really need to get into your house when you go home today and only that key works. Let the children help you hunt for the key. After they have found the key settle them all down for the lesson. "In today's lesson we are going to learn about a shepherd who had a lot of sheep. One of those sheep got lost . . ."

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The Story:

Some of Jesus' followers thought that God loved some people more than others. They thought that some people were important and some people were not important. They asked Jesus a question, "Teacher, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Jesus asked a little child to come stand by him. He told his followers that even a little child is important to God. Everyone is important to God.

Jesus wanted his followers to understand this better so he decided to tell them a story to help them understand. This kind of story is called a parable. This is the parable of the Lost Sheep.

Once a shepherd had a flock of 100 sheep. The shepherd loved every one of his sheep. He even had names for his sheep. Every night he would count his sheep to

make sure that all 100 were there.

He helped the sheep find the best green grass. He looked for nice clean water so his sheep could have a nice drink when they were thirsty.

Sometimes dangerous animals like bears and lions would come and try to hurt his sheep. The shepherd protected the sheep and chased all of the dangerous animals away from them.

Sometimes the sheep would wander away from the rest of the sheep and the shepherd had to call out the sheep's name. When the sheep heard the shepherd's voice he would run back to the shepherd.

What would it mean if the shepherd counted his sheep and he counted only 99? That would mean that one sheep was missing. How do you think the shepherd felt? What do you think the shepherd would do? Do you think the shepherd would just say, "Oh, well, who cares? I'm just happy that the 99 sheep are okay. I won't worry about just one little sheep. One little sheep is not very important anyway."

What would you do if you were the shepherd?

The shepherd would leave the 99 sheep in a safe place and then he would go and look for the lost sheep. He would look behind bushes and in the deep valleys. He would keep looking everywhere until he found the sheep.

When he finally found the sheep he would be so happy! He would lift the sheep up onto his shoulders and carry him back to the other ninety-nine sheep. At last, the shepherd could be happy because all of the sheep were safe and well.

After Jesus told this parable he explained what it meant. God does not look at one person and say, "This person is important. She's the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." And he doesn't look at another person and say, "This person is not important. He is the least in the kingdom of heaven."

Every single person - even the littlest child - is important to God. He does not want even one single person to be lost.

Did you know that you are important to God?

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Ways to Tell the Story:



This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion. [Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

A slideshow and set of illustrations from the Lumo Project can be downloaded directly from [Free Bible Images](#). Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

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Review Questions:

1. In the Parable of the Lost Sheep, how many sheep did the shepherd first have in his flock? 100
2. In the Parable of the Lost Sheep, what did the shepherd do when one of his sheep got lost? Looked for it until he found it.
3. If everyone in the world was obeying God and only one person did not believe in him, would God care about that one person? Yes! Each and every person is important to God.

Song Suggestions:

- I Just Wannabe a Sheep
- Ha-la-la-la
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- If you know anyone with a baby lamb this is definitely the day to bring it to class to let the children pet it and have a look!
- Sheepskin factories often sell sheepskin scraps and off-cuts. Use a laundry marker to write Psalm 100:3 on the back of the scrap. Give each child one of these to take home.
- Bring a large bag of cotton-wool balls to class. Have children count out 100 of them. Use these to represent the 100 sheep and review the story. You can then play a game by letting the children take turns hiding and finding one of the “sheep”.
- Have one child hide his eyes or face a corner of the room. Let the other children take turns “bleating” like sheep. If the “shepherd” can recognize his sheep then that sheep becomes the shepherd and sits in the corner while the original shepherd then becomes a sheep.
- [Click here](#) for printable instructions for a “Find the Sheep” game using recycled bottle caps.
- If you have the opportunity to play outside then let the children play a lost sheep version of “Marco Polo”. Mark off an area that all children must stay inside of. One child stands in the middle of the area and is designated the shepherd. That child is blindfolded. The object of the game is for the blindfolded child to “find” one of his sheep by touching them. Then that sheep becomes the shepherd. The shepherd can call out “Where are my sheep?” Each time the shepherd says this all the sheep must say “baa”.
- Our elders are shepherds (1 Peter 5:1-4). Ask them to come to class and talk

about how each member is important. (Let them know ahead of time what parable you are covering today.)

Crafts:

- For a craft idea draw a simple lamb (or copy one from a child's colouring book) and then let the children glue cotton wool on it.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Parable of a Lost Sheep" printables to print on A4 size paper](#)

[Click here for "Parable of a Lost Sheep" to print on Letter size paper \(USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and worksheets about the parable of the lost sheep \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about parables in general \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Craft: Cute yarn sheep \(sweetgrace.typepad.com\)](#)
- [Craft: Adapt this craft for Abel, the shepherd, made from an empty toilet paper roll and make a generic shepherd \(dltk-bible.com\)](#)
- [Snack: Cute lamb cupcakes \(catholicinspired.com\)](#)
- [Lost sheep and coins anagrams/word searches \(dltk-bible.com\)](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-parables-teachings/>

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