

Looking for the Sheep

Luke 15:1-7



Preparation

Looking for the Sheep

1. INTRODUCTION TO THIS SUNDAY

This Sunday is the third in a series of four texts from the Gospel according to Luke. In this series, Jesus tells parables about who God is and how he looks at people, and how people can respond to that.



This Sunday, we will focus on Luke 15:1-7: the parable of the lost sheep.

With the **4-8 year-olds**, we will focus on the shepherd who leaves behind 99 sheep to find one sheep.

With the **8-12 year-olds**, we will focus on the festive cheer that breaks out when the sheep has been found.

2. CONTEXT OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE



Today's story is part of a series of three parables about things that were lost and are found. These three stories all show something of how God looks at people who live wrong lives. They show how much he is willing to do to find those people, and how happy he is when he has succeeded. At the beginning of today's story, Luke says the Pharisees and teachers of the Law grumble at Jesus for interacting with tax collectors and sinners. We read that very often in the Gospel according to Luke. The parable we will read next week, about the son leaving and coming back (*Bible Basics* Sunday 99), is also about that: the eldest son, who has always stayed with the father, responds like the teachers of the Law do: he is angry and indignant that the youngest son gets so much attention, when he has always done what the father wanted. In the parable of the sheep, we encounter an image that is used a lot in the Bible: God who looks after people like a shepherd. The best-known passage about this is Psalm 23, but there are others: Jeremiah 31:10, in which God brings together a flock of sheep that had been scattered. And in John 10, Jesus calls himself the good shepherd, who knows each sheep by name.

3. EXPLANATION OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE



Today's passage is about a sheep that goes missing. Immediately after this, Jesus tells another parable, about a woman who loses a coin and does everything she can to find it again. Both stories end in a celebration because the search has been successful.

On the one hand, in these parables, Jesus shows de teachers of the Law en Pharisees that what he does is good. When Jesus interacts with sinners, he is like the shepherd looking for a sheep and the woman looking for the coin. But Jesus also calls his listeners to put themselves in the shepherd's shoes and the woman's shoes: if they had lost a sheep or a precious coin, would they have done everything within their power to retrieve it, too? Yes, of course! That one sheep and that one coin would demand all of their attention at that moment. And they would be enormously happy if they found the sheep or the coin. God is as happy as that if one sinner turns their life around.

It is remarkable that it is only in the next parable, about the son leaving and returning (*Bible Basics* Sunday 99), that there is a clear "guilty party". In the parable of the sheep, the listeners don't know whether the sheep has lost its way or run away, and in the parable of the coin, it is clear that the coin hasn't been lost on purpose. Without explicitly saying so, Jesus shows that not everyone who has is considered an outcast in their community, is guilty.

With his parables, Jesus asks his listeners to look at tax collectors and sinners in a different way: they are not intruders who shouldn't be asking for Jesus' attention, but people who belong to God's "flock". Without these people, the flock is incomplete. Instead of responding with anger and jealousy when people demand Jesus' (or God's) attention – seemingly undeservedly – the listeners and later the readers of the parables should try to bring these people back to God.

Preparation

Looking for the Sheep



4. FROM THE BIBLE

4-8 years

For the younger children we focus on Luke 15:4.

Jesus said, "You leave the other ninety-nine sheep in the pasture and go looking for the one that got lost until you find it."

8-12 years

For the older children we focus on Luke 15:6.

"I am so happy I found my lost sheep. Let us celebrate!"

5. WHAT WILL YOU NEED?



4-12 years

During the Church Service

- a simple 12 or 16 piece jigsaw puzzle
- a table

4-8 years

Doing: Sheep Mask

For each child

- a cardboard plate
- a lollipop stick
- white cardboard for two sheep's ears

And also:

- wads of cotton wool
- glue
- scissors and pin prick pens

Doing: Help the Shepherd

For each child:

- the handout

And also:

- felt tip pens or coloring pencils

Doing: Find the Sheep

- a cuddly sheep toy or a picture of a sheep
- if you wish, cookies (ideally sheep shaped)

8-12 years

To Start Off

- a balloon
- shaving foam
- a razor
- if necessary, towels and an apron

Bible Passage

- a bible

Doing: Sheep Battle

For each child:

- the handout
- a pen

Doing: Festive Sheep

For each child:

- a cupcake
- ten white marshmallows (small and cylinder-shaped)
- a clean pair of scissors

And also:

- pink sheet fondant
- white frosting or buttercream
- brushes
- water

Doing: Sheep Garland

- an empty plastic bottle, its bottom cut out
- an old sock (ideally a sports sock)
- a rubber band
- soap suds (consisting of: one tablespoon of dishwashing detergent, eight tablespoons of water, a tablespoon of sugar)

Building blocks of the Sunday

Looking for the Sheep

During the Church Service



6. CHILDREN'S MOMENT IN THE SERVICE

Missing

The children will hear Jesus' parable about a missing sheep. The shepherd has 99 sheep left, but the flock won't be complete until it has 100 sheep.

What do you need?

- a simple 12 or 16 piece jigsaw puzzle
- a table

In preparation:

- Remove one piece from the box and hide it somewhere around where the children will be during the children's moment.

Let's start!

- Show the box with the jigsaw puzzle.
- Ask one or two children to make the puzzle as quickly as they can.
- The children will discover a piece is missing.
- Discuss with the children what they think of the puzzle now. Ask the children whether they would make the puzzle again.
- Have the children look for the missing puzzle piece.
- Add that piece to the puzzle.
- The puzzle is now complete. The children experience how important that one piece is.
- During the children's service, the children also hear a story about something that is missing.

During the Children's Service



7. TO START OFF

4-8 years

On the Shoulders

In the story, the shepherd is looking for a missing sheep. And when he has found it, he carries it on his shoulders.

Let's start!

- Sing and dance the song "Head, shoulders, knees and toes."
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.
And eyes and ears and mouth and nose.
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.
- Sing the song again, leaving out the word "shoulders" but singing all other lyrics. The movement for the shoulders is still made.
- Sing the song again, singing only the word "shoulders".
- Ask the children after the Bible story what this game had to do with the story they just heard. .

8-12 years

Shaving Sheep

This sheep shaving game is sure to turn into a party!

What do you need?

- a balloon
- shaving foam
- a razor
- if you wish, towels and an apron

Let's start!

- Inflate the balloon and rub it in with shaving foam.
- Ask a child to remove the shaving foam from the balloon using the razor without causing the balloon to burst.



Tips

- Provide the child shaving the sheep with an apron.
- Place towels under the balloon with shaving foam.

Building blocks of the Sunday

Looking for the Sheep

8. PRAYER AT THE START OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE



Good God,
You always look after us and you are faithful.
You also want to look after us.
In the Bible we read that you are like a shepherd.
You love us like a shepherd loves his sheep.
You come looking for us if we have gone too far away from you.

You are happy when people love you.
You celebrate when people believe in you.
Thank you that you keep looking for us until you find us.
Amen.



Tip

Sit down in a circle for this prayer. You could light a candle.

9. BIBLE STORY



4-8 years

Luke 15:1-7

Tell the story to the children. While you talk or after reading the story, look at the picture together. Ask the children to look carefully and say what they see. You could also use the older children's Fact File for more information.



A Sheep is Missing!

Jesus likes telling stories. With those stories, he wants to teach people something. Today he tells a story to the teachers of the Law. As always, they disagree with something Jesus does:
“Look at the people coming to listen to Jesus! They're all bad people. There are even some tax collectors. They take our money and give it to the enemy, the Romans. I don't understand why Jesus doesn't chase them away,” the teachers of the Law say to each other.
But Jesus hears what they are saying, and he tells them a story:

“Imagine,” Jesus says to the teachers of the Law. “You are a shepherd and you have 100 sheep. Each day, you count whether they are all still there.

‘1...2...3...’ and a little later ‘97..98..99 and...’ Oh no! One sheep is missing. The hundredth sheep is missing. What would you do?

Of course you'd immediately leave behind those 99 other sheep to go looking for that one sheep!

You'd cry out:

‘Sheep! Sheep! Where are you?’ You'd walk around and look, walk around and look, walk around and look, walk around and look, until ... in the distance you'd hear something.

‘Baa! Baa! Baa!’

That is the sound of your hundredth sheep! You'd immediately run to the sound and see your sheep lying there. Its leg is stuck in a gap between the rocks. It is in pain. You'd carefully pull out its leg from the rocks and carry it on your shoulders. You'd carry it all the way home. You'd be so happy! You'd call all your friends and neighbors and you'd say, ‘Come over right now! I'm throwing a party, because my sheep was lost, and now I've found it.’”

The story is over. Jesus nods at the teachers of the Law. “Now do you get it?” he asks. “When people do bad things, God is very upset. These people are like sheep who've walked away from their shepherd. They are walking away from God and that makes God sad. He goes looking for them. As long as it takes until he's found them. And when he finds them, there is a celebration in heaven!” The teachers of the Law frown, but Jesus continues, “I am happy when bad people come to listen to me. Perhaps my stories will bring them back to God. Wouldn't that be great?”

Building blocks of the Sunday

Looking for the Sheep

9. BIBLE STORY

4-8 years

Luke 15:1-7

The Lost Sheep

One day when many tax collectors and other outcasts came to listen to Jesus, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law started grumbling, “This man welcomes outcasts and even eats with them!” So Jesus told them this parable:

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them—what do you do? You leave the other ninety-nine sheep in the pasture and go looking for the one that got lost until you find it. When you find it, you are so happy that you put it on your shoulders and carry it back home. Then you call your friends and neighbors together and say to them, ‘I am so happy I found my lost sheep. Let us celebrate!’ In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine respectable people who do not need to repent.”

10. FACT FILE



Shepherds

In Biblical times, shepherds looked after sheep, goats and sometimes also camels.

A shepherd had three important tasks:

- 1 He had to ensure his animals had enough to eat and drink.
- 2 He had to protect his flock from wild animals.
- 3 He had to ensure his animals were not stolen by robbers.

In Biblical times, leaders or kings were sometimes compared to shepherds. That meant they looked after their people well.



11. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Below, there are two kinds of questions you can discuss: “knowledge questions” and “thinking questions”. You can look up the answers to the knowledge questions, for example in the story. But the thinking questions can keep your group thinking. There are no wrong answers in those!

4-8 years

- Can you tell Jesus’ story in your own words? Just give it a go!
- How many sheep does the shepherd have? How many has he lost?
- How does the shepherd feel when he discovers a sheep is missing?
- Who comes looking for you when you go missing?
- Why is the shepherd so incredibly happy when he’s found the sheep again? He still owns lots of sheep, doesn’t he?

6-8 years

- What do you think this story Jesus tells has to do with God?

8-12 years

- Why does Jesus tell this story?
- Have you ever lost something that was really important to you? How did you feel when you found it again?
- The shepherd from the story is so happy he’s found his sheep again, he decides to give a party straight away. Who does he invite?
- Why do you think the shepherd wants to share this good news with others?
- Have you ever experienced something great that you’d immediately tell others? Tell us more about it.

10-12 years

- Why do you think God is happier with one person who turns his life around, than with 99 other people who don’t have to change?

Building blocks of the Sunday

Looking for the Sheep

12. DOING



4-6 years

Sheep Mask

God is looking for us like a shepherd looks for the sheep that's gone missing. The children make happy sheep masks.

What do you need?

- For each child
- a cardboard plate
 - a lollipop stick
 - white cardboard for two sheep's ears

And also:

- wads of cotton wool
- glue
- scissors and pin prick pens

Let's start!

- The children cut out the inside of the plate, leaving just the rim.
- The children cut out the two sheep's ears and attach them to the top.
- The children glue wads of cotton wool on the plate's rim.
- The children glue the lollipop stick at the bottom end of the rim.
- The children hold the mask by the lollipop stick and look through it.



Tip

Make a nice picture of the "flock".

6-8 years

Help the Shepherd

The shepherd leaves his 99 sheep behind to look for one missing sheep. The children help the shepherd look.

What do you need?

- For each child:
- the handout

And also:

- felt tip pens or coloring pencils

Let's start!

- The children color the boxes in the right colors.
- The missing sheep shows up!

4-8 years

Find the Sheep

The shepherd owns a hundred sheep, but he has lost one. Just like the shepherd, the children look for the sheep until they've found it.

What do you need?

- a cuddly sheep toy or a picture of a sheep
- if you wish, cookies

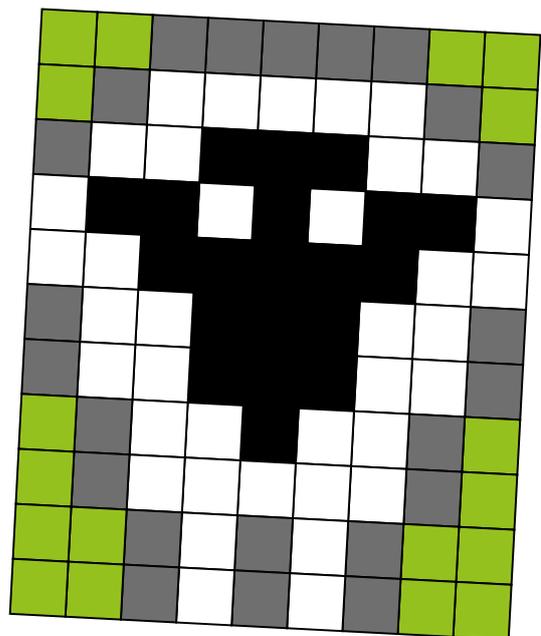
Let's start!

- Hide the sheep before the children's service.
- Tell the children that you've lost one sheep.
- Have the children look until they've found the sheep.



Tip

Celebrate, for example with sheep-shaped cookies. You can hand them out when the children have found the sheep. You could also repeat the game: when the sheep has been found, one child can hide it again.



Building blocks of the Sunday

Looking for the Sheep

8-12 years

Sheep Battle

The shepherd goes looking for the missing sheep. But that search is not without danger. And yet, he wants to look for the sheep. In this game, the children try to find the dangers for the shepherd and his sheep.



What do you need?

For each child:

- the handout
- a pen

Let's start!

- Divide the group into pairs.
- Each pair sit with their backs towards each other.
- Both children draw five dangers for the shepherd and his sheep in the grid on the handout.
- One child now names another child's coordinates, for example E2.
- Is there a danger in that box? Then the child says 'Baa.'
- Then he or she says what danger the other child has found.
- If there is no danger, next time, try another coordinate.
- Now it's the other child's turn.
- Who has found all the other's dangers first?

E					
D					
C					
B					
A					
	1	2	3	4	5

Dangers:

- = a lion
- ▲ = a ravine
- = a thorn bush
- ◆ = a river

8-12 years

Festive Sheep

When you have a party, tasty things are part of the deal. The children make a sheep cupcake, so they can digest today's story in a very merry way.

What do you need?

For each child:

- a cupcake
- ten white marshmallows (small and cylinder-shaped)
- a clean pair of scissors

And also:

- pink decorating fondant
- white frosting or buttercream
- brushes
- water

Let's start!

- Carefully cut the marshmallows into smaller pieces.
- Make a sheep's head using decorating fondant.
- Coat the cupcake in frosting or buttercream and put the sheep's head on it.
- Now make the fleece: Place a layer of marshmallows on the frosting behind the head.
- Rub the first layers of marshmallows with a wet brush. Now stick a second layer of marshmallows on top of the first. This way, you cover the entire sheep.
- Baa appétit!



Tip

You can make the eyes look even more real if you use a bit of chocolate.

8-12 years

Sheep Garland

The shepherd is so happy he's found the sheep that he throws a party. He invites his neighbors and friends. The children make a sheep garland out of soap suds.

What do you need?

- an empty plastic bottle, its bottom cut out
- an old sock (ideally a sports sock)
- a rubber band
- soap suds (consisting of: one tablespoon of dishwashing detergent, eight tablespoons of water, a tablespoon of sugar)

Let's start!

- Pull a sock over the bottom of the bottle.
- Secure the sock to the bottle using a rubber band.
- Dip the bottle with the sock in the suds.
- Carefully blow into the bottle opening.
- Which of the children can make the longest sheep garland?



Tips

- The sugar in the suds make sure the bubbles don't burst too quickly.
- 16.9 fl oz (500 ml) bottles work best.
- Ideally, do this experiment outside.

Building blocks of the Sunday

Looking for the Sheep

13. BLESSING

In the Bible, there is a blessing for all people. It is a wish that we often hear at the end of a church service. And we say this blessing to each other:



“May the Lord bless you and take care of you; May the Lord be kind and gracious to you; May the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.”

Numbers 6:24-26



Tips

- Stand in a circle and hold hands.
- Let three children say one sentence each, or say the entire blessing together.

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Jesus said, “You leave the other ninety-nine sheep in the pasture and go looking for the one that got lost until you find it.” – Luke 5:4

Handout (6-8 years) - Help the Shepherd
Looking for the Sheep

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63
64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72
73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81
82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99

Green 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 18, 64, 72, 73, 81, 82, 83,
89, 90, 91, 92, 98, 99

Grey 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 17, 19, 27, 46, 54, 55, 63,
65, 71, 74, 80, 84, 86, 88, 93, 95, 97

Black 22, 23, 24, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 39, 40, 41,
42, 43, 44, 49, 50, 51, 58, 59, 60, 68

Handout (8-12 years)

Looking for the Sheep

“I am so happy I found my lost sheep. Let us celebrate!”

Luke 15:6

SHEPHERDS

In Biblical times, shepherds looked after sheep, goats and sometimes also camels.

A shepherd had three important tasks:

- 1 He had to ensure his animals had enough to eat and drink.
- 2 He had to protect his flock from wild animals.
- 3 He had to ensure his animals were not stolen by robbers.

In Biblical times, leaders or kings were sometimes compared to shepherds. That meant they looked after their people well.



SHEEP GARLAND

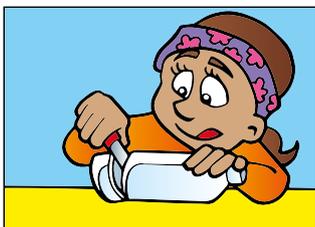
The shepherd is so happy he's found the sheep that he gives a party. And festive garlands cheer up any party!



WHAT DO YOU NEED?

- * AN EMPTY PLASTIC BOTTLE
- * SCISSORS OR BOX CUTTER
- * AN OLD SOCK (IDEALLY A SPORTS SOCK)
- * A RUBBER BAND
- * SOAP SUDS (CONSISTING OF: ONE TABLESPOON OF DISHWASHING PETERGENT, EIGHT TABLESPOONS OF WATER, A TABLESPOON OF SUGAR)

1 GENTLY CUT OUT THE BOTTOM OF THE BOTTLE.



2 SECURE THE SOCK TO THE BOTTLE USING A RUBBER BAND



3 DIP THE BOTTLE WITH THE SOCK IN THE SUDS



4 CAREFULLY BLOW INTO THE BOTTLE OPENING.



! MAYBE AN ADULT CAN HELP YOU.

HOW LONG CAN YOU MAKE YOUR SHEEP GARLAND?

Handout (8-12 years) - Sheep Battle

Looking for the Sheep



SHEEP BATTLE

The shepherd goes looking for the missing sheep. But that search is not without danger. And yet, he wants to look for the sheep. Will you help him find the dangers?

Find a partner, sit with your backs towards each other and draw five dangers on your handout. Your partner does the

same. Take turns naming a coordinate (for example E2). If that coordinate on your partner's handout has a danger in it, he or she has to say "Baa" and tell you what danger you've found. Continue until you know where all the dangers are.



E					
D					
C					
B					
A					
	1	2	3	4	5

Dangers:

-  = a lion
-  = a ravine
-  = a thorn bush
-  = a river