

The Lost Sheep

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Every person matters to God. He goes after the lost, and heaven rejoices when one sinner repents, so we should welcome people the way Jesus did.

Bible passage: Luke 15:1–7. Read it before class.

Memory verse: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." *Luke 19:10 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a tray, 10 small objects (a pencil, a coin, a crayon, a spoon and so on), a towel, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.

Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Put the 10 objects on the tray and cover it with the towel.

1. Opening game: What's Missing? (5–10 minutes)

Uncover the tray for 20 seconds while kids look carefully. Cover it, take one object away without anyone seeing, and uncover it again. Who can say what is missing? Play a few rounds, taking away a different object each time. Ask: *How did you notice that just one was gone? Would you have noticed if there were a hundred things?* Say: "Jesus told a story about a man who had a hundred sheep, and he noticed when just one was missing."

2. Bible story: Lost and Found (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Luke 15. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Who came to Jesus. Look up Luke 15:1. ("Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.") **Drew near** means came close. **Publicans** were tax collectors who took money for the government, and many people did not like them. **Sinners** were people known for doing wrong. They all came close because they wanted to hear Jesus.

Who grumbled. Look up Luke 15:2. The **Pharisees** (religious leaders who were very strict about keeping rules) and the **scribes** (men who copied and taught God's law) **murmured**, which means they grumbled. They said, "This man **receiveth** sinners, and **eateth** with them." That means, "He welcomes sinners and eats with them." They thought Jesus should stay away from people like that.

The story Jesus told. Look up Luke 15:3. Jesus answered with a **parable**, a story that teaches a lesson. **Look up Luke 15:4.** Jesus asked: which of you, if you had a hundred sheep and lost one, would not leave the ninety and nine in the **wilderness** (wild, open country) and go after the lost one until you find it? The man did not give up after a short look. He kept going **until he found it**.



Found! Look up Luke 15:5. When he found it, he **layeth** it (laid it) on his shoulders, **rejoicing**, which means full of joy. He carried it the whole way home. **Look up Luke 15:6.** At home he called together his friends and neighbors and said, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." He wanted everyone to share his joy.

What it means. Look up Luke 15:7. "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." **Likewise** means in the same way. **Repenteth** means turns away from sin and back to God. Jesus was answering the grumblers: the man was full of joy over one found sheep, and in the same way heaven is full of joy over one sinner who turns back to God. That is why Jesus welcomed sinners. Later He said it plainly: "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. The Pharisees and scribes grumbled because Jesus welcomed sinners (15:2). Why do you think Jesus answered with a story instead of an argument?
2. The man still had 99 sheep. Why did one lost sheep matter so much to him?
3. The man carried the sheep home rejoicing (15:5). What does that show us about how God feels when someone comes back to Him?
4. The man called his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him (15:6). Were the grumblers rejoicing? How should we feel when someone comes to God?
5. Is there someone at school or church who gets left out? What could you do this week to welcome them the way Jesus did?

Recall questions

1. How many sheep did the man have? (*An hundred, Luke 15:4*)
2. Where did he leave the ninety and nine? (*In the wilderness, 15:4*)
3. Where is there joy when one sinner repents? (*In heaven, 15:7*)

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **Son of man** is a name Jesus called Himself, **is come** means has come, **seek** means look for, and **lost** means far away from God. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.



5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The man went after his lost sheep until he found it, and Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: find one person who is often left out, and welcome them: sit with them, ask them to play, or invite them to church.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Luke 15:1: Who drew near to hear Jesus? (*All the publicans and sinners*)
2. Luke 15:2: Who murmured? (*The Pharisees and scribes*)
3. Luke 15:2: What did they say about Jesus? (*"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them"*)
4. Luke 15:3: What did Jesus speak to them? (*This parable*)
5. Luke 15:4: How many sheep did the man leave in the wilderness? (*Ninety and nine*)
6. Luke 15:5: Where did he lay the sheep? (*On his shoulders, rejoicing*)
7. Luke 15:6: Whom did he call together when he came home? (*His friends and neighbours*)
8. Luke 19:10: What did the Son of man come to do? (*To seek and to save that which was lost*)

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that every person matters to You, and that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Help us welcome people the way Jesus did, and help us be glad, not grumpy, when someone comes to You. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks, "Am I a lost sheep?": answer simply and gently. The Bible says all have sinned (Romans 3:23), so everyone needs Jesus. The good news is that Jesus came looking for us, and heaven rejoices when anyone repents (Luke 15:7). Encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor.

