



## The Lost Sheep

(based on Luke 15:1-7)

Some people that the religious leaders didn't like came to eat with Jesus. When the religious leaders saw this, they shook their heads. "This man is friendly with the wrong people," they complained. "He even shares his food with them."

Jesus could see that they didn't understand, so he told them a story to help them learn about God's loving ways.

Once a shepherd had a flock of 100 sheep. This shepherd loved the sheep and looked after them carefully. Every morning, he would lead the sheep up the hillside. He helped the sheep find the best plants to eat. He looked for fresh running water, so his sheep could 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 the dangerous animals away from them.

In the evening, the shepherd led the sheep down the hillside to a safe place. Every night, he would count his sheep to make sure that all 100 were there.

One night, as the shepherd was counting the sheep, he counted only 99 sheep. The shepherd counted again just to be sure. Only 99 sheep were there.

"Oh no!" cried the shepherd. "One of my sheep is missing! Where can it be?"

The shepherd left his flock and went out to look for the lost sheep. He searched the hills and the slopes. He looked behind rocks and bushes. He called and called the sheep's name and listened for the sound of that sheep's cry.

Finally, the shepherd heard a little 'baa.' He saw the sheep and rushed to its side. The shepherd lifted the animal onto his shoulders and carried it home.

The shepherd was so happy to find his lost sheep. "Come!" he called to his friends and neighbors. "Come and celebrate with me! I have found the sheep which was lost!"

Jesus turned to the religious leaders and said, "Now do you understand? God is just like that shepherd. Every single person is important. He does not want to see anyone lost. God is happy when everyone is included."



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(based on Luke 15:1-7)

Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

### Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Discuss with your children if they have ever lost anything. How did it feel while the item was lost? How did it feel when the item was found?
- We must really care about our stuff. The average American spends at least 16 minutes a day looking for lost items. Common items are the remote control, glasses, socks, and keys. What do you lose? What do you do when you lose something? Do you look for it? Why or why not?



### Responding to God's Grace

- Has your family ever been separated in a store or park? How does it feel to have lost someone and how does it feel to find them?
- Talk about times when you lost something important and somehow you got the item back. How did it feel to be reunited with the lost item?
- Have you ever lost a pet? What did you do? People with lost pets walk the area calling the pet's name, drive around, put up flyers, and post on Facebook. Imagine the joy of the person and the pet when the animal returns home.

### Celebrating in Gratitude

- Play Find the Thimble. If you don't have a thimble, use another small item. Take turns hiding the thimble, and let the person who finds it call out, "I found it!"
- Play Hide and Seek or Sardines, the opposite of Hide and Seek. There's joy in being found.
- Read *The Runaway Bunny* and remember that God wants to find us and care for us.
- Pray:

*God, we thank you for loving us so much that you always want to find us. We are so glad to be found. Amen.*