

Parable of the Good Shepherd

Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:1-7

Jesus' story of the shepherd who searches for the one sheep that is lost and leaves the ninety-nine to do so provides the framework for all other references to Jesus as our shepherd. This story, found in both Matthew 18 and Luke 15, was told in today's lesson, but the presentation also incorporated Jesus' reference to himself as the Good Shepherd (from John 10) and elements of Psalm 23, perhaps the most familiar—and comforting—of all psalms: “The Lord is my shepherd...”

How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive

way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. A smaller version of the materials used in today's Godly Play presentation is available for home use; to order, contact Godly Play Resources (1-800-445-4390 or www.godlyplay.com) and ask for the “Miniature Parable of the Good Shepherd.”

Whether you read the presentation or simply listen as your child shares what was received in today's lesson, ask the Wondering questions printed in the left column. Remember, there are many right answers! Be open to what the parables can mean to you and your child. God will teach you new meanings every day. Parables cannot ever be all used up. Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying “Amen.”

The Presentation

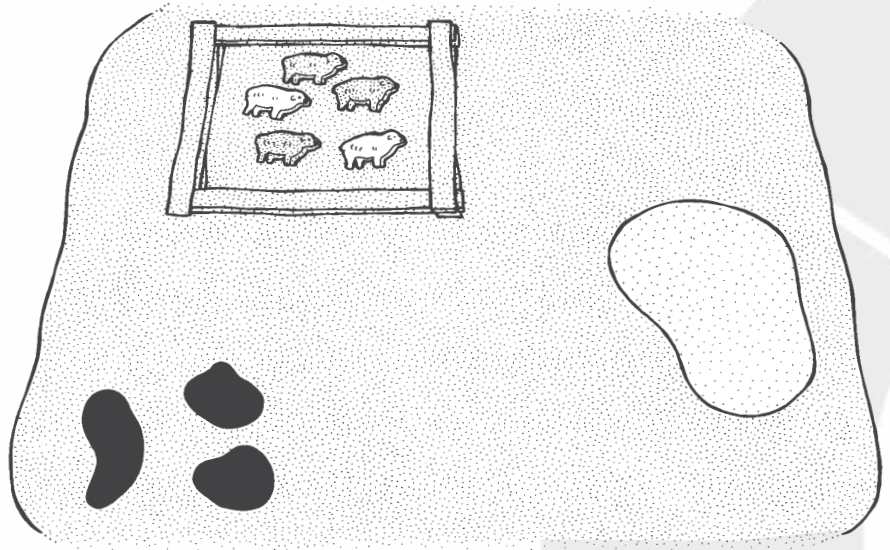
There was once someone who said such amazing things and did such wonderful things that people followed him. They couldn't help it. They wanted to know who he was, so they just had to ask him.

Once when they asked him who he was, he said, “I am the Good Shepherd. I know each one of the sheep by name. When I take them from the sheepfold they follow me. I walk in front of the sheep to show them the way.

“I show them the way to the good grass and I show them the way to the cool, still, fresh water. When there are places of danger I show them how to go through.

Wondering

- **I wonder** if the sheep have names?
- **I wonder** if you have ever been lost? I wonder if you have ever been found?
- **I wonder** if the Good Shepherd has ever called your name?



“I count each one of the sheep when they come back and go inside the sheepfold. If one of the sheep is missing I would go anywhere to look for the lost sheep—in the grass, by the water, even in places of danger.

“And when the lost sheep is found I would put it on my back, even if it is heavy, and carry it back safely to the sheepfold.

“When all the sheep are safe inside I am so happy that I can’t be happy just by myself, so I invite all of my friends and we have a great feast.”

When the wolf comes, the Good Shepherd stays between the wolf and the sheep. The Good Shepherd would even give his life for the sheep, so they can come back safely to the sheepfold.

Godly Play Understanding Play (Part 7)

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. To fully enter into Godly Play, we need to be deeply aware of what makes *real* play and what distracts or detracts from it.

We conclude our seven-part examination of real play, *Godly Play*, by looking through the window of play at the theme of love, which Paul so beautifully celebrates in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is entered into freely, is engag-

ing and engaged, is pleasurable and it is not done for any outside goal. Love also nourishes other aspects of life: it is the creative process that draws two lovers together, and sometimes, when possible, creates new people.

Love is a special kind of play. It participates fully in life at all levels—physical, biological, psychological, social and spiritual. Love is what is most important in life, because it is life, well lived, and because it can create life.