#### Lesson 3:

#### Parables of the Good Shepherd and Lost Sheep

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:

Luke 15; John 10

MEMORY WORK:

John 3:16

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Jesus loves me and takes care of me.

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| **LESSON STARTS HERE** |

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever been to a farm or a zoo? The animals need people to take care of them. A shepherd is someone who takes care of sheep. Jesus told some special stories about shepherds and sheep. We are going to talk about one of those stories today.

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Jesus and His apostles were in the Temple area and were still being followed by a large crowd. Jesus said that there was no way anyone could please God without choosing to follow His Son. In spite of His powerful message and the miracles He performed, most of the Pharisees refused to believe in Jesus.
2. Jesus compared Himself to the door/gate of a **sheepfold**, i.e., the only way into the loving care and protection promised by God. Jesus also called Himself the Good Shepherd. He used two everyday things familiar to the Jews (a door to a sheepfold and a shepherd) to teach a powerful lesson about obeying a loving God.

**Sheepfold:** a pen or enclosure to protect sheep from wild animals, especially at night

**NOTE:** The door and the shepherd were easy for the Jews of Jesus’ day to relate to, but they

were also familiar from Old Testament scriptures:

* God is often portrayed as the Shepherd of Israel (Genesis 48:15; 49:24; Psalm 23:1; 28:9; 77:20; 78:71; Isaiah 40:11).
* The Jews (the nation of Israel) were God’s chosen people under the Old Law and were

called God’s “flock” (Psalm 74:1; 78:52; 79:13).

* Religious leaders and false teachers who divided and destroyed God’s people were often

portrayed as enemies of the flock (Jeremiah 23:1-2; Ezekiel 34).

1. During cooler winter months, sheep were often kept inside a sheepfold at night. Shepherds had to constantly watch out for robbers and wild animals. Sometimes thorn branches (briars) were put on top of the stone walls to discourage thieves. It was very common for the shepherd to lie down in front of the gate/door as another way to keep thieves out. He would use his staff, rod, and sling to fight off wild animals. Jesus is like the door to the sheepfold, that keeps His sheep (His followers) safe from spiritual danger. But we cannot be in the sheepfold and be protected by Him without going through Him (becoming a Christian).
2. Sheep often wander away from the flock, and the shepherd has to be willing to go find the sheep. If a sheep gets into water, it will quickly drown because its wool is so heavy. The shepherd has to guide his sheep away from deep water to good pasture, away from danger (Psalm 23). Jesus, again, compared Himself to a Good Shepherd that will search for a sheep if it is lost. In other words, if a Christian (His sheep) stops behaving like a Christian (he leaves the sheepfold), Jesus will try to help bring the sheep back into the fold.
3. The shepherd was willing to do anything necessary to protect his flock. His sheep were his livelihood, providing food, clothing, and an income for his family. But a “hired hand” who did not have so much invested in the flock might not be so willing to risk his own life for the sheep. Jesus compared the hired hand (John 10:12-13) and strangers (John 10:5) to ungodly religious leaders and false teachers who were not interested in the spiritual welfare of God’s people. [Jesus used the analogy of wolves in sheep’s clothing in Matthew 7:15, as did Paul in Acts 20:28-30.]
4. In contrast, Jesus compared Himself to:
	* the Door through which His sheep could enter for protection and security (John 14:6).
	* the Good Shepherd Who knew each one of His sheep individually and would do anything to save them—even give His life to protect them, which is what He did.
5. In John 10:10, Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” But thieves (false teachers, ungodly leaders) do not care about the sheep like the Good Shepherd does.
6. The Good Shepherd knows and cares for every one of His sheep. Jesus knows each one of us, cares about each one of us, and died for each one of us. As in the parable, Jesus will look for the one that is lost and needs His help.

**NOTE:** The Greek in John 10:10 literally says “that they may **keep on having** life,” i.e.,

**eternal life** (John 10:28). “Abundant” here means life overflowing!

1. Relate to the children the parable of the shepherd looking for the one lost sheep.

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL VISUALS (note disclaimers):

##### Betty Lukens’ felt pieces. Lesson 134 in the Betty Lukens manual

* ABeka Flash-a-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book;)
* Free Bible Images – Saved on flash drive. Can be presented on classroom tv. Script included in lesson file. This lesson has two files: 03A has basic information about shepherds, sheep, and sheepfolds in Bible times; 03B is the parable of the lost sheep.

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS:

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I Am a Sheep – Refer to the Songbook

**“The Lost Lamb” (Click to** **Hear)**

Author: Unknown\*

(Tune: “Mary had a Little Lamb”)

The shepherd had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb. The shepherd had a little lamb, who wandered far away.

The shepherd was so very sad, very sad, very sad.

The shepherd was so very sad; his little lamb was gone.

The shepherd went to look for him, look for him, look for him. The shepherd went to look for him; he sought him everywhere.

Then the shepherd jumped for joy, jumped for joy, jumped for joy.

Then the shepherd jumped for joy; he found his little lamb.

We are God’s little lambs, little lambs, little lambs. We are God’s little lambs; He loves and cares for us!

### SUNDAY

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Sack puppets. Help the children make sheep sack puppets;four- and five-year-olds can probably draw the eyes and mouths on their own. Help the children glue cotton balls (“wool”) on the sacks.
* Little lost lamb: Before class, hide a small, stuffed sheep somewhere in the classroom. After telling the story, stop and tell the class you have a sheep that is lost. Ask the children to help you find it. As your class looks for the lost sheep, talk about how you miss the sheep and how important it is to find it. When the sheep is found, act very excited, and tell them thank you for finding the sheep. Then talk about how happy God is when we stop doing wrong things and obey Him (i.e., when we’re not lost any more).
* Pipe Cleaner Shepherd’s Staff. – Put brown or tan pony beads onto a pipe cleaner and bend into the shape of a shepherd’s rod.
* Lost Sheep Box – Templates and detailed instructions are in lesson file. Finished craft should look like picture below.

### Wheres the Lost Sheep? Match Box Bible Craft for Sunday School from www.daniellesplace.com

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Review Sunday’s lesson. (See [Review Questions](http://www.apcurriculum.com/dcirfol/4-24-32RQ.pdf) for example questions.)
2. Spend more time talking about the relationship between sheep and the shepherd, about God’s love and care for us. Emphasize to the children that God gave them families to take care of them. If they ignore instructions and warnings from their families, they may get hurt or find themselves in bad situations. They must obey the grown-ups who are in charge of taking care of them, just as sheep must obey the shepherd if they want to stay safe.

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Sheep and Shepherd Tic-Tac-Toe: Divide the class into two groups: the sheep and the shepherds. Draw a Tic-Tac-Toe diagram on the board. Let each group have a turn answering review questions. Play the same as regular tic-tac-toe, but use sheep and shepherd die cuts instead.
* Gathering Sheep Relay Game – Before class, blow up some white balloons and draw a sheep face on them with a Sharpie. Set up two chairs at one end of the room and establish a starting point. Divide the class into two teams. When the game begins, one person from each team should gently push a sheep with his shepherd’s rod (a Christmas candy cane) into the sheepfold. The object of the game is to be the first team to get all his sheep into the fold (between the chairs). It would be a good idea for the teacher to be on the end with the sheepfold to make sure no sheep escape. Once the sheep is in the sheepfold, the student should WALK back to his team and give the rod to the next person. Remind the students that “beating” the sheep or launching them into the air will hurt the sheep. Hurt or killed sheep can’t stay in the sheepfold and will not count towards winning the game.

### Review Questions

1. What is a sheepfold?
	1. A protective fence to keep sheep in
2. What would try to harm the sheep at night?
	1. Robbers and wild animals
3. What could a shepherd have used to protect his flock?
	1. A rod, a staff, and a slingshot
4. What do sheep often do?
	1. They wander away from the flock.
5. What will happen if a sheep gets into water?
	1. (It will likely drown, because its wool gets heavy when it gets wet.
6. What was a good shepherd willing to do for a lost sheep?
	1. Search and risk his life to find the sheep and protect it
7. What would a hired shepherd do for a lost sheep?
	1. Not much, because the sheep did not belong to him. So they were not as valuable to him.
8. What does this parable teach us?
	1. That Jesus wants us to be rescued spiritually from being lost in sin
9. What is Jesus compared to?
	1. A good shepherd

Additional Notes / Activities Performed & Curriculum Feed Back

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