

Semicontinuous
Jer. 4:11–12, 22–28
Ps. 14
 Complementary
Exod. 32:7–14
Ps. 51:1–10
1 Tim. 1:12–17
Luke 15:1–10

Lost and Found

Goal for the Session

Children will learn about God's steadfast love through the parables of the Lost Sheep and Coin and show what love means to them.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Luke 15:1–10

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Charles B. Cousar

The themes of joy and celebration are paramount in both stories. Each story ends with a statement that there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (vv. 7, 10). Neither a sheep nor a coin can repent. The issue of the two parables, therefore, is not to call sinners to repentance, but to invite the righteous to join the celebration. There is no joy or celebration, no partying or delight, among the Pharisees and scribes. Even though invited to the reception given in behalf of the joyous shepherd/woman, they cannot bring themselves to come; thereby, like the elder brother (15:25–32), they are exposed.

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Scott Bader-Saye

If for the sinners and tax collectors, doubters and skeptics, these parables are about being found, for the Pharisees and scribes they are stories about learning to rejoice. The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin both end by calling together friends and neighbors to join in the celebration. Indeed, the movement of joy pulses outward from the one to the many, from the earth to the heavens. The party takes on a cosmic scale. Rejoicing itself seems to be the *telos* of these stories, the goal toward which they move beyond the penultimate moment of finding. So salvation consists not purely or even primarily in rescue, but in being drawn into the eternal celebration.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Helen Montgomery Debevoise

These parables call the community to open its doors and rejoice. This call is repeated again and again. Sinners and tax collectors gather at the table with the Christ? Rejoice! Laugh! Be glad! They have returned home and now sit in the presence of God. The sheep who wandered off from the rest of the flock, lost in the thicket, is now safe and sound! Hallelujah! Worry no more! The coin that fell through the cracks was easily forgotten but is blessedly retrieved. We can feast! Hope is restored!

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by G. Penny Nixon

Who are the sinners? The turn of the phrase at the end of the parables provides a final twist. The sinners in this story are the ones who need repentance, the ones who need their minds changed. God rejoices when the religious insiders (in all of us) change their minds about who is in and who is out. The rejoicing happens when community is complete and there is no such category as the *one* and the *ninety-nine*. True repentance happens when our minds are changed to such a degree that we cannot see a community as whole until all are included and none are “lost.”

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Luke 15:1–10

Focus on Your Teaching

Every child in this age range will find something in the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin that touches home. Some children will recall when they were separated from a parent or babysitter. Others will instantly think of when they lost a treasured object, a blanket or a special toy. Older children may even extend that sense of loss to times when they were not included by a group of peers. Moments of lost and found are woven throughout a child's life. Through these two parables, they have the opportunity to know that they are never lost from God.

Seeking God, even I sometimes feel lost, separated from you. Hold me tightly when I feel that way. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- Bible
- offering basket
- candle and matches or battery-operated candle
- Color Pack 1, 5, 27, 28
- Discipleship Tree and leaves from Color Pack 2, 3, 4
- tape
- Singing the Feast*, 2016–2017; CD player
- Resource Sheet 1, 2
- newsprint and marker or copies of Resource Sheet 2 and pencils

For Responding

- option 1: newsprint, markers
- option 2: Color Pack 7, 8, penny, Resource Sheet 3, pencils
- option 3: stationery, markers (optional)
- option 4: *Singing the Feast*, 2016–2017; CD player; Color Pack 30

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, for option 2 of Responding, prepare the cards and sheep for the game found on Resource Sheet 3 (Shepherd's Search Game). For option 1 in Responding, print these five lines on newsprint: *Hooray! Good news! God's love is for you! Me too! Yay, God!* Before any children arrive, hide some item that is usually visible when the children gather, such as the candle or the offering basket. Display the Discipleship Tree with additional leaves (Color Pack 2, 3, 4).

Greet the children as they arrive. Invite the early arrivals to help set up the worship table. Place a green cloth on the table. On it place a Bible, an offering basket, and a candle. When the children notice the item you hid is missing, ask them to search for it. When it is found, express your joy that it is no longer lost.

When everything is ready, gather at the worship table. Point to the green cloth. Explain that it indicates that the church year season is Ordinary Time. Tell about this season, using the information on Color Pack 1. Ask children to name ways they acted as Jesus' disciples this week. Print some of their actions on leaves and tape them to Discipleship Tree.

Light the candle, a sign of Jesus' presence.

Review the signs for *glory* and *God*, and teach the sign for *highest* (see Color Pack 27). Sing "Glory to God" (track 8 on *Singing the Feast*, 2016–2017) and sign these words when they are sung.

Glory to God

Glory to God,
Glory to God,
Glory to God in the highest!

Repeat three times

Pray, inviting the children to echo each phrase after you:

*Dear God / be our guide / as we seek / to learn more about you /
and how to follow / in the ways of Jesus. / Amen.*

All: Amen! (Clap twice.)

Extinguish or turn off the candle.

Recall how the lost item was found earlier. Suggest that they listen for missing things in the Bible story today.

Exploring

Ask a child to get the Bible from the worship table and find Luke 15. Recall that a parable is a story of comparison that teaches a religious truth, and that Jesus often told parables to teach about God. Keep the Bible open to Luke 15 as you tell the story from Resource Sheet 1 (Two Parables).

After the story, ask:

- ✪ What do you think the Pharisees and the scribes thought about these parables?
- ✪ What do you think the tax collectors and sinners thought about these parables?

Copy the Venn diagram from Resource Sheet 2 (Lost Sheep and Lost Coin) on newsprint if your group is larger than five. Have copies of Resource Sheet 2 for children who want to complete it for themselves.

Look at Color Pack 5 and 6 and recall the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. Ask the following questions and record the answers on the Venn diagram on Resource Sheet 2 (Lost Sheep and Lost Coin). See the directions on the resource sheet for recording the information. Ask:

- ✪ What is lost in each story?
- ✪ Who solves the problem? How?
- ✪ How does the story end?
- ✪ What did Jesus want all the people to learn about God from these stories?

Suggest that when we know that God never wants to lose us, to be apart from us, we want others to know about God's love too.

Responding

Offer at least two options so the children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest children who can work on their own.

**EASY
PREP**

1. **Celebration Prayer** Prayer can be noisy or quiet. This prayer can be very noisy, but it provides a moment for the children to express great joy about God's love for everyone. Show the group the sentences you wrote on newsprint. Read the sentences in unison. Have the children echo them, copying the emotion with which you say them. Try lots of ways: whisper, shout, clap a beat as you say them, or emphasize each syllable. Ask:

- ✪ Where can you take this good news message?

Challenge the children to take this message to others this week.

2. **Game** This game will help the children appreciate the work of the shepherd and it shows the depth of God’s love for them. Lay Color Pack 7 and 8 on the floor or table. Make piles of the cards cut from Resource Sheet 3 (Shepherd’s Search Game), matching the pictures. Give each child a sheep cutout and a pencil. Have them write their name on the sheep.

To play the game, one child flips the penny and moves one space for “heads” and two spaces for “tails.” If the child lands on a space with a symbol on it, the child takes a card from the matching pile, reads the card aloud, and follows the instructions. Play until all the sheep reach the shepherd. After the game, ask:

- ✧ What was hard about being a sheep in the game?
- ✧ What made things right for the sheep in the game?

Remind the children that Jesus said that God is like the shepherd. God will always keep them close. Invite volunteers to say sentence prayers, giving thanks for God’s love.

3. **Who’s Missing?** Some children may wonder about people who feel lost or forgotten today. This activity ministers to such persons. Ask:
- ✧ Who in our community or church might feel lost or forgotten today?

They will probably identify people who are homebound, people who have recently moved to the community, people who are sick. Brainstorm ways the group might assure such people that they are not forgotten by God or by the church. Choose one idea to do, such as send cards or show kindness to new students.

4. **Sing of God’s Loving Care** The first stanza of “Behold, I Am with You” (track 3 on *Singing the Feast*, 2016–2017), which is repeated throughout the song, is a good reminder of the parables of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin for the children to take with them. Read the words together on Color Pack 30. Listen to the song. Then sing it together. Encourage the children to remember the first stanza. Sing or read it together several times slowly, so the words can penetrate their hearts.

Behold, I Am with You

Behold, I am with you,
(Behold, I am with you)
 And will keep you wherever
 you go *(and will keep you
 wherever you go).*
 And will keep you wherever
 you go *(and will keep you
 wherever you go).*

Repeat

**I’m Gonna Live
 So God Can Use Me**

I’m gonna *live* so God can
 use me
 anywhere, Lord, anytime!
 I’m gonna *live* so God can
 use me
 anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna *work* . . .

I’m gonna *share* . . .

I’m gonna *care* . . .

Closing

Gather at the worship table. Light or turn on the candle. Sing “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (Color Pack 28 and track 10 on *Singing the Feast*, 2016–2017).

Print two or three ideas on leaves and add them to the Discipleship Tree.

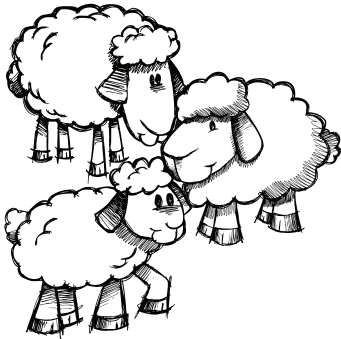
Close with this benediction:

*Wherever I may wander / Wherever I may be / I’m certain of God’s loving
 care / God’s care is over me.*

Tell the children that you hope to see them next week.

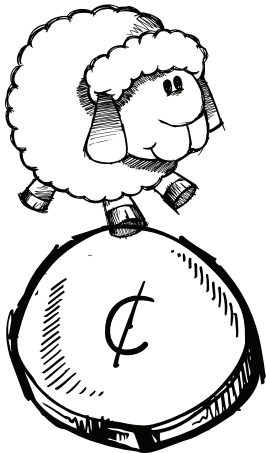
Two Parables based on Luke 15:1-10

Jesus continued on the road to Jerusalem. People walked with him and then had to go back to their homes. But the 12 disciples Jesus had chosen to follow him stayed. But not everyone was happy with Jesus. Some of the Jewish religious leaders, Pharisees and scribes, frowned when they saw Jesus talking to tax collectors and sinners. They grumbled, "This Jesus talks to sinners. He even eats with them. Unheard of!"



Ignoring their comments, Jesus told these parables:

What if you had 100 sheep and one day, one sheep was missing. When you counted them, there were only 99. What would you do? Wouldn't you leave the 99 sheep who were gathered together and go off to find the one sheep that was missing and maybe in danger? When you found your missing sheep, what would you do? You would be so happy that you would invite your neighbors to celebrate with you.



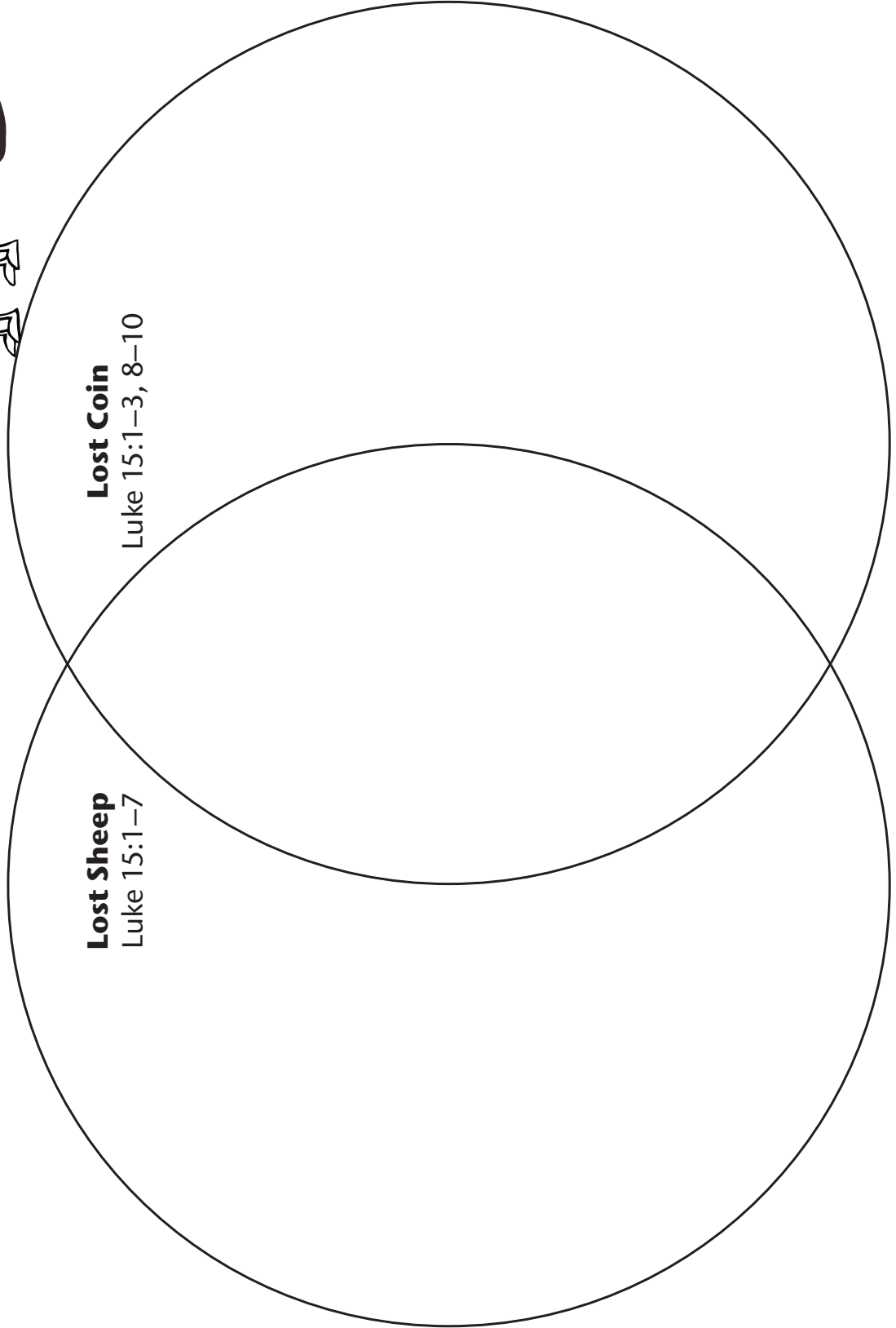
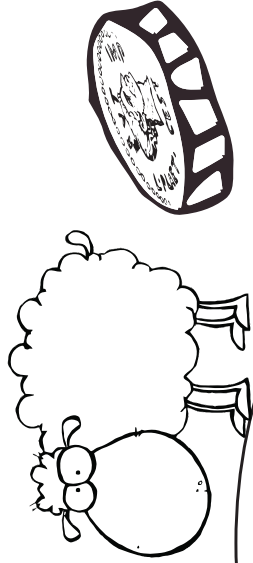
Or what if you were a woman who had 10 coins, precious coins? Then one day, you counted your coins and there were only nine coins. You counted them again, just to be sure. But you only had nine coins. Wouldn't you clean the cupboard and sweep the floor? Wouldn't you light a lamp so you could search every corner? What would you do when you found the missing coin? You would be so happy that you would invite your neighbors to celebrate with you.

You know, God is like that shepherd and that woman. When one girl, one boy, one woman, or one man finds their way to God, God celebrates too.

I wonder what the Pharisees and the scribes, those Jewish leaders who were upset with Jesus, thought about these two parables.

Lost Sheep and Lost Coin

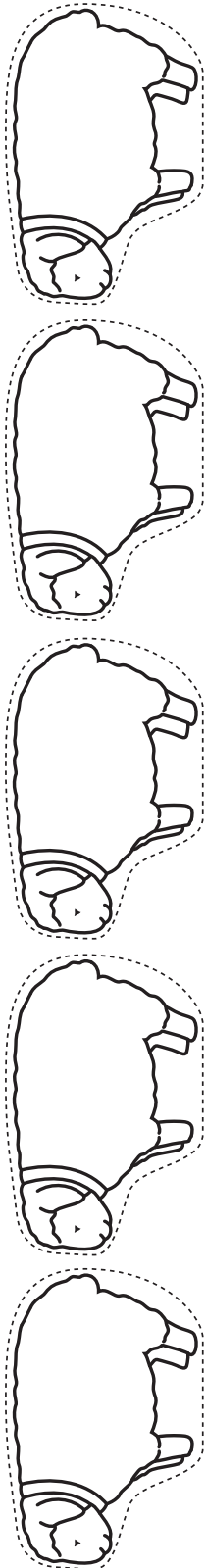
Directions: Review the parables Jesus told. In the circle on the left, list things that are found only in the parable of the Lost Sheep. In the circle on the right, list things that are found only in the parable of the Lost Coin. Where the two circles overlap, list things that are in both parables.



Lost Sheep
Luke 15:1-7

Lost Coin
Luke 15:1-3, 8-10

Shepherd's Search Game



 Your shepherd finds fresh water for you. Go ahead 2 spaces.	 You get away from a wolf! Go ahead 1 space.	 You find the lost sheep! <i>Everyone</i> gives high-fives and moves ahead 1 space.	 You encourage a tired friend to keep going. Move ahead 1 space.	 You invite everyone to a party. <i>Everyone</i> moves ahead 2 spaces!
 You eat too much grass and get a tummy ache. Go back 1 space.	 You are stuck on a bush. Stay where you are.	 You didn't hear the shepherd call. Go back 2 spaces.	 You're lost in the dark. Go back 1 space.	 You are hiding from the shepherd. Go back 1 space.
 Where do we read God's Word? Go ahead 1 space!	 Where in the Bible do we find stories about Jesus? Go ahead 1 space.	 Jesus' followers are called _____. Go ahead 1 space.	 True or false: In Jesus' story, the shepherd found the lost sheep. Go ahead 1 space.	 Name another story Jesus told about something lost. Go ahead 1 space.
 You get confused and take a wrong turn. Go back 1 space.	 You answer when the shepherd calls you. Say "baa" and go ahead 1 space.	 You are happy to follow the shepherd. Go ahead 2 spaces.	 Your wool will be used to make a sweater. Go ahead 1 space.	 You recognize your shepherd's voice. Go ahead 1 space.