



Lost and Found

Goal: To know grace in being found.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 15:1-10

On the surface, it's two simple stories about counting, missing something, searching, and celebrating in the finding. A man has 100 sheep, and at the end of the day, he counts them. One is missing. If you had 100 sheep and one got lost, would you leave the flock to search for the lost one until it is found? (v. 4). That's what he did. When the lost sheep was found, he carried it home and invited his neighbors to come over and celebrate.

A woman has 10 silver coins. She counts them and one is missing. "Who wouldn't light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until that coin is found?" we are asked, for that is what she does. And when she finds the coin, she invites her friends to celebrate.

The man noticed that one sheep was missing and the woman, her coin. They were not complete, even missing just one. These are parables, however, so there's always a sideways twist or another level to discover. Jesus doesn't just tell a story about sheep or coins for no reason. Look back at verses 1 and 2 and see the set up for these two stories, and then the third one that is going to truly drive the point home.

God wants everyone to be included in the realm of God's love and care. One person, even just one of us, is worth the search. God loves us, and in response to God's love, we work to include, not exclude, to invite and welcome, to see those who seem to be lost and hidden from sight. And we rejoice when one who was lost is found.

. . . In your experiences with the children

Some children like to collect things—like dolls, trading cards, toy cars, or stuffed animals. And a child knows when one of them is missing. The collection is not complete. Children will be able to hear this parable from many points of view: the man who lost one sheep or the woman who lost one coin, the need to search, the one that was lost, the other 99 sheep or 9 coins, and the neighbors who came to celebrate. Help the children connect this parable with their own lives at home, in their neighborhood, or at school. Is there a child who sits alone at lunch? Is there someone who doesn't have a friend to play with on the playground? God's loving family is not complete when someone is missing.

. . . In your relationships with the children

Children in your group may have had the experience of losing something or someone, or being lost, separated from family or a school group. They may also have had the experience of finding a pet or person who was lost or not in the right place. These experiences will help children connect with this parable Jesus told. The one missing was just as important as those who were safe. Children can be encouraged to think about children they know whom no one sees or notices. How can they be included and shown God's love?

*O God, I thank you that when I am lost you don't stop finding me.
Help the children know that they have been found. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More

(SCM) i-iv, 4, 4a, 4b, 18, 22

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

purple cloth

six votive candles
(purple if possible)

Who Counts? by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, pcusastore.com

Responding

Claiming

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Celebrating

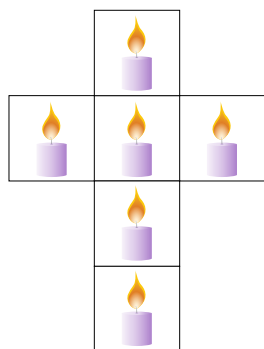
SCM 4c

Offering

copies of **GN 2**, cotton
balls

Extra

copies of **GN 3**



GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii-iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Obtain *Who Counts?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), pcusastore.com.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG**

Play “Jesus Loves Me” as children arrive. Greet each child by name and with the words “Grace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to say the same words to you.

Quietly, ask a child to hide the Bible somewhere in the room.

Tell the children that this is the fourth Sunday in Lent. Invite the children to prepare the space for Lenten worship using the purple cloth. Have them place six votive candles in the shape of a cross in the space. Turn on all the candles. See the sidebar for placement of the candles.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

When all is ready, tell the children that you can’t find the Bible. Talk about where you left it, what might have happened to it, and ask if anyone remembers putting it away. Talk about how it feels to have lost something that is so important. Ask the children to search for the Bible. Be really happy when it is found. Invite the person that found the Bible to place it on the worship table.

Singing

Play and sing “Jesus Loves Me”—**SCM 22**. Each time they sing the word “love,” ask them to hold their hands near their hearts. When they sing “Bible,” hold up the Bible they just found and cheer.

T *For children struggling with transitions, set clear expectations and let them know how long activities should take.*

Praying **T**

Point out the votive candles. Remind the children of the tradition to extinguish, or put out, a candle each week throughout the six Sundays of Lent. This is to remind us that even though Jesus was teaching and healing and serving people, some people were not happy with his actions. They wanted to put out the light that Jesus brought to the world. Have a volunteer turn off four of the candles.

Pray together, thanking God for everyone who is in your group.

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.
Thank you for (*name each child*).
We remember . . . (*invite the children to name the children who are not with us today*).
Watch over them as a shepherd watches over the sheep or a woman keeps track of her coins.
Amen.

Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.



Preparing to Hear the Story LD A

Encourage the children to make sheep sounds. Show **SCM 4a** and **SCM 4b**. Invite conversation on what they know about sheep. Ask:

- What are sheep like? (*They wander off, there are many kinds of sheep, they climb hills, and so forth*)
- Has anyone seen, smelled, or touched a live sheep?

Explain to the children that Jesus tells a story about a lost sheep and a lost coin to help them learn about God's grace.

Hearing the Story

Invite a child to find Luke 15 in the Bible and place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 4** or use the story audio. Use your voice, expressions, and feelings to convey the sadness when the sheep is lost, how happy the shepherd is when the sheep is found, and how happy the woman is when the coin is found. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Reflecting on God's Grace MS

Have the children create skits from the story or read a storybook to them about the lost sheep and coin.

For the skits, form two groups of children with an adult or helper with each group. One group will be the Sheep group and the other will be the Coin group. The Sheep group will hear Luke 15:1-7 and the Coin group will hear Luke 15:1-2, 8-10. As the story is read, the children can act as the shepherd or woman, sheep or coins (one of each which gets lost), and friends to celebrate. Give the children a few minutes to choose roles and practice. Then invite each group to act out their story for the others.

For the storybook, read the first two stories, "One Hundred Sheep" and "Ten Coins" from *Who Counts?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso.

After the skits or the storybook, tell the children that Jesus used stories like these to help us understand God better. Ask:

- With whom do you think Jesus was comparing the shepherd? the sheep? the woman? the coins?

- ▼ How does this story help you understand God’s love and care for you?
- ▼ Why do you think Jesus told these two stories?
- ▼ Where do you see God’s grace in these stories?

Singing

Sing “God Gives Us a Gift (Dios nos da un regalo)”—**SCM 18**.
Turn off the candles.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace

Ask the children to listen to the song “God Gives Us a Gift (Dios nos da un regalo)”—**SCM 18**. After you play it, ask:

- ▼ Who in today’s Bible story might have sung such a song? Why?
- ▼ Why is being found a gift?
- ▼ How is the shepherd like God?
- ▼ How is the woman like God?
- ▼ How do you feel knowing God is like the shepherd who lost one sheep? Like the woman who lost a coin?
- ▼ When do you want to give thanks to God?

Sing the song together, then give each child a copy of **GN 1** and markers. Invite the children to draw a picture expressing the joy of being found. Encourage the children to take their pictures home and share them with their friends and family.

Celebrating God’s Grace



*Before the session, fold **SCM 4c** in half and glue the halves together.
Cut the sheep and coin apart.*

Play “Find the Sheep, Find the Coin” to celebrate the grace in being found.

- ▼ Have the children close their eyes or bury their heads in their arms so they cannot see.
- ▼ Choose a volunteer to hide the sheep.
- ▼ When the sheep is hidden, invite the children to be shepherds and look for the sheep.
- ▼ The one who hid it can say “Hot” when children are getting close to the sheep’s location or “Cold” when children are straying from the hidden sheep.
- ▼ When the sheep is found, invite all to jump and shout, “Hooray!”
- ▼ Repeat the game with the coin.



When the sheep and coin have been found, call out, “Come and celebrate with me! We have found the sheep that was lost! We have found the coin that was lost!” Encourage the children to celebrate together with a dance, cheer, or group hug.

Lb *Don't assume what children can or cannot do with regard to participating in activities. Think of multiple ways children may be able to participate without feeling excluded.*



Offering God's Grace

L

Before the session, cut out the sheep bank, ears, and tail from GN 2 for each of the children in your group. Cut the opening for the coins.

Tell the children that one way we can remember the found sheep and found coins is to make a sheep bank and find “lost” coins to put in the bank and give as an offering. Give the children the patterns you have prepared for them. Show the children how to fold along the dotted lines and glue the tabs to make the sheep cube. Instruct the children to cover their banks with cotton balls and glue the ears and tail on their sheep.

Encourage the children to find “lost” coins to put in their banks. Ask them where might be good places to find coins. Some places may be on the floor of the car, under couch cushions, by the laundry, and on sidewalks. Suggest that they do not take money from family members but only use found coins to fill their banks.

Invite the children to bring their banks as an offering to the church at a time of their own choosing.

Extra Activity

C

Ask the children to talk about a time when they lost something in their room and had a hard time finding it. Distribute copies of GN 3. Tell the children that the items below the line need to be found. For some, this will not be much of a challenge; for others, it may seem a little more difficult. Use the bonus box to fill the time gap (17 hearts, 16 stars); then have those children help others who have not found the items. Have some fun with the page.

Ask:

- ▼ Which item have you lost at some point?
- ▼ What have you found to be helpful in finding the lost items?
- ▼ Was there a time when you helped find something or someone that was lost?
- ▼ Can we ever get “lost” from God?

Remind the group that God loves us just the way we are and that God is always close to us, even if we feel faraway from God or even if we get lost from God's way.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to gather and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Listen to and sing “Jesus Loves Me”—**SCM 22**. Wonder together what this song says about Jesus and his relationship with us. Ask the children what connections they can make between this song and the stories about the shepherd and the woman.

Invite children to tell what they will remember about today’s story. Wonder what they will tell their families and friends about God’s love.

Pray the following prayer or one of your own choosing.

Dear God, thank you for these stories Jesus told about your never-ending love for us. You are like the shepherd and the woman because you don’t ever give up on us. You rejoice when we are in your presence. Amen.

Bless each child, saying, “(Name), you are God’s own beloved child. Go with God’s grace.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

