

Godly play. The Lost Sheep. Luke 15:1-7

You will need: a large square of green felt. Smaller circle of brown or black felt. Shepherd. Sheep. All kept in a gold box with a lid (all parables are told from a gold box, so just make one and transfer each parable into it as needed if you wish).

The Script (*actions are shown in italics*):

This box has a parable inside (*at first clutch the box, then place in centre of the circle*).

The box is gold, and gold is very precious. Parables are even more precious than gold to Christians.

The box has a lid (*tap it*), sometimes parables are hard to get inside.

The box looks like a present, Christians believe that parables are presents given to us long ago. You don't have to earn them or buy them, they already belong to everyone.

Let's look inside! (*pull the box from the centre to rest beside you and open the lid to form a screen between the contents and the children*)

Take out green felt square and play with it for a short while.

I wonder, what might this be? (*allow time for the children to call out answers and perhaps interject with a few of your own ideas, eventually smooth out the felt in front of you*)

(*now take out the brown circle*) I wonder what this could be? Perhaps it can help us with the parable. (*again you can take suggestions from the children, eventually place it in one corner of the green felt*)

At this point, once the wondering about the felt pieces is finished, you keep your eyes on the story and must remain engaged in it, without giving any more eye contact to the children, until the storytelling is complete.

There was a man who did such amazing things - said such wonderful things - that great crowds of people followed him everywhere. One day some important people asked him;

"Jesus, why do you make friends with bad people? We wouldn't have anything to do with their sort.

So he said to them; Imagine a shepherd. (*put the shepherd on the board*)

He has (*put the sheep down one by one*) one hundred sheep. That is a lot of sheep. The shepherd loves his sheep, he stays with them all day and at night he sleeps in the field to watch over them and keep them safe. The sheep come when they are called and follow him (*show the sheep following the shepherd, except for one which wanders onto the brown felt. **Take your time***) all the way home.

When the shepherd counts them in. One two, three ... ninety-nine ... One sheep is missing. Where can it be? What can have happened? The shepherd is worried. He leaves the others and goes looking for the lost sheep (*move the shepherd away from the flock and begin the search for the lost sheep*). He goes back to the hillside where the sheep had been. He searches everywhere; in the field and in the places of danger. And then the shepherd finds it in a place of danger. He hurries to rescue it. The shepherd puts it up on his strong shoulders and carries the sheep all the way home (*as you say this sentence you move*

the shepherd and the sheep back towards the flock!) The shepherd is so happy, the sheep was lost, but now it is found.

Now it's time to look up from the story and engage in the verbal wondering. Be patient, sometimes it takes the children a while to feel happy to speak. Sometimes the quietest children are doing the deepest wondering!

I wonder if the shepherd has a name?

I wonder where this place could really be? (*point to the field and the hillside*)

I wonder if you have ever been in a place of danger? (*point to the brown felt*)

I wonder if the sheep have names? (*point to the sheep*)

I wonder who the shepherd could really be?

I wonder who the sheep could really be? (*point to the lost sheep*)

I wonder where this whole place could really be? (*sweep your hand above the entire scene*)

Jesus said: Sometimes people lose their way and do wrong things, but God never stops loving them. His story is saying God is calling them. He wants to rescue them and set them free.

Once the verbal wondering is over, begin to return all the objects carefully into the box. Don't hurry, naming each piece as you return it.

I wonder what work you would like to do now to continue your wondering?

Don't feel obliged to ask all the wondering questions and feel free to be lead to make more, depending upon where the wondering goes. Each time you deliver the story new questions and answers will emerge. Ensure you try not to close down the wondering with a prescriptive answer.

Try to allow as much choice as possible during the individual response time. If possible this work should be evidenced with photographs or small group discussion. The children's work during the individual response time is personal and should not be shared unless the child requests it. Children will gain the most from individual response time if they are fully relaxed and the pace is slow.