

The Parable Of The Lost Sheep

Matthew 18:10-14

MEMORY VERSE

MATTHEW 18:11

“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A large box, paper, tape, paper clips, macaroni, rice, popped corn, sand, salt, peppercorns, beads, pebbles, small sticks or toothpicks, cotton balls, index cards, and glue.

A bowl, uncooked rice, a slotted spoon, and assorted objects such as keys, stones, erasers, small balls or marbles, brightly colored pasta and shells.

As many small wrapped boxes as the number of children in your class (in all but one put items that are completely worthless, ie. paper clips, rocks, sticks, etc. Wrap the last one shabbily and put something the children would really enjoy in it, like a small toy or prize).

As many small prizes (stickers, erasers, pencils, etc.) as the number of children in your class.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Where Is the Lost Sheep?

Cut a hole in the bottom of a cardboard box large enough for a child's hand to fit through. On the inside of the box tape a piece of paper that is large enough to cover the hole, creating a “curtain” that hides the inside of the box. The object of the curtain is to block the view of the children from seeing what they are feeling with their hands inside the box.

Glue several objects to index cards for the children to feel. You can glue paper clips, macaroni, rice, popped corn, sand, salt,

peppercorns, beads, pebbles, and small sticks or toothpicks. On one card glue some cotton balls. This card will represent the lost sheep.

Have your children sit or stand on the opposite side of you. The outside of the box should be facing them with the inside of the box facing you. Allow children to place their hands through the hole and past the paper curtain to feel the various cards you hold up for them in the box. Explain that they will be looking for lost sheep. See if they can guess the objects that you are holding up. When they believe that they have found the lost sheep have them shout out. Give several children an opportunity to look for the “lost sheep.” Use this activity to introduce today's lesson about Jesus and the lost sheep.

LESSON TIME!

Jesus was talking to His disciples, lovingly sharing with them as He always did. In the Bible, we are blessed to be able to read the actual words that Jesus shared with His beloved disciples. God inspired the authors of the New Testament to write Jesus' words down so we could learn from them. While He was talking to them, He took a little child from out of the crowd and stood the child in front of them. (Ask one of the children if they would mind standing in front of their class the way Jesus stood the child in front of the disciples.)

Jesus had been talking about many things as the child stood there. Now He brought the disciples attention back to the child. It is possible that the little child did not understand all that Jesus was saying but was so amazed by Jesus that he peacefully enjoyed being close to Him. **Children are precious to Jesus.**

As Jesus brought their attention back to the child, He said something amazing.

MATTHEW 18:10

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

Jesus gave the disciples a very serious instruction. What was it? He said, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones...” What does despise mean? It means to look down upon, to disregard, or to openly disrespect. Jesus did not want them to think of children as silly and unworthy of time or respect.

Jesus goes on to give three reasons why we must not despise, disregard, look down upon or ignore children. Let’s look at reason number one. It is in verse 10; can you find it?

Jesus’ disciples had been asking about greatness. Jesus was still answering their question from back in verse one. Jesus was saying that anyone who is truly great will not despise a child. Here is the first reason. Children have angels who minister to them, watch them, guard them, and stand in Heaven’s courts for them, always beholding the face of God. God sends His angels to watch over each child.

Children are precious to Jesus. Let’s see if we can find the second reason Jesus gives.

MATTHEW 18:11-13

"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

"What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?

"And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

Find the Lost Things

Let the children take turns digging in a bowl of uncooked rice for hidden items such as keys, stones, erasers, small balls or marbles, brightly colored pasta or shells with a slotted spoon.

Reinforce the story by reminding the children that the Good Shepherd leaves the ninety-nine sheep and does not rest until He's found that one lost sheep. Remind them that **Children are precious to Jesus.**

Here Jesus tells one of His marvelous parables. A parable is putting an earthly illustration alongside a spiritual truth. (Draw a line down the center of the blackboard; draw sheep on one side and a child on the other. Refer to these pictures as you go through the parable.) Can anyone see in the parable the second reason why we are not to despise a child?

Remember! **Children are precious to Jesus.** The second reason, a higher reason than even the angels' example, is that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came to seek and save little children just like adults. His parable is about sheep. Many people where Jesus lived were shepherds. They understood the value of each sheep. He used sheep (point to the sheep picture) to show the disciples how important each child (point at child) is to Him, the Good Shepherd.

One little child is so precious to Jesus that He would go to great lengths to find the one and bring him or her to salvation. **Children are precious to Jesus.**

So children are not to be despised because Jesus takes great interest in them. Part of His great mission is to seek and save each child.

MATTHEW 18:14

“Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

Did you find reason three? So far, we have learned that there are angels watching over children, and Jesus seeks after them as the shepherd seeks out a lost lamb. The last and best reason, however, to not despise children is that God the Father has a perfect will and a perfect plan which includes children. Children are precious to Jesus and to the Father. They are to be given time and respect and are to be lovingly taught, trained and enjoyed.

Most of your friends are probably children. Your friends should be loved, respected, and cared for by you. You should make it your mission to point them to Jesus and to be an example of Jesus' love and interest in their lives. You can minister for Jesus in the lives of your friends. You can remind them that Jesus loves them. **Children are precious to Jesus.**

The Despised Gift

Wrap as many small packages as the number of children in your class. Inside each gift put something completely worthless, like a paper clip, a rock, or a stick. Wrap one gift so that it is noticeably shabbier than the rest, but put a small toy or prize inside.

Have each child in your class draw a number from one to the number of children in your class. Allow number one to choose a gift from the pile. Next have them open up their prize. Allow number two to take another gift from the pile or to take number one's gift. Allow number three to take a gift from the pile or

number one's or number two's gift. Proceed in this manner until all of the gifts have been taken.

Have the children open their gifts. Probably, the shabbily wrapped parcel was the least favorite. If so, explain to the class that there is great value in even the least desirable looking "package." Explain that Jesus loves all people, even the smallest, seemingly insignificant, child. **Children are precious to Jesus.**

Reward the child who opens the shabbily wrapped package the privilege of passing out small prizes to the rest of the class.

Those who consider children precious, who have time for them, are demonstrating the love of Jesus. That is considered great in His eyes. **Children are precious to Jesus.**

The parable of the sheep that went astray is Jesus' way of telling you that He came and died on the cross to save you from being lost. We are all like that lost sheep until we ask Jesus to save us. Are you still a lost little lamb today? Jesus is seeking you. All you have to do to be found and rejoiced over by Jesus is believe in Him and say, "Jesus, I know I am lost in my sin and in need of your saving power and your forgiveness. Please rescue me. I want to be found by You. I want to walk with You from now on, like a sheep with it's Good Shepherd."

(Read Psalm 23 to the children. Explain that only those who have been found by Jesus, the Good Shepherd, enjoy the benefits of Psalm 23. Jesus has to be Lord of your life.)

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for seeking each of us until we were found. If any children have not responded to the gospel, give them an opportunity to do so.