

Explore It FOR LEADERS



GOD'S INVITATION

Luke 15:1-7 The lost sheep

Each child will need:

- A square piece of paper
- Colouring pens/pencils
- Scissors
- A print-out of the children's Vision and Commitment response card (if emailed in advance)

You will need:

- A green piece of material (T-shirt, jumper, pillow case... large enough to be a 'field')
- A toy figure to play the role of a shepherd
- A bag of cotton wool balls
- Reflective music (optional)
- You may wish to deliver a printed copy of the children's Vision and Commitment response card

Start It

Play a game of Guess the Image. Explain to the children that you are going to ask each of them to do a different action on their screen to help make part of a larger image. They will need to follow your instructions and then freeze while you take a screen shot of them all posed together and then share the image so they can guess what they have created.

To play the game, give each child instructions of how to position themselves in their Zoom window. Some images you could create are concentric circles, an arrow, a face, a rainbow... be creative and see what you can make together.

💡 **Say:** Sometimes it takes a while before we can see the 'big picture'. There might be other things happening which impact us, but until everything comes together we might not understand exactly what has been going on.

Screen share a zoomed-in image of a party invitation. Gradually zoom out and ask children to say what they think it is. Reveal the whole picture – an invitation to a party.

Ask: How do you feel when you receive an invitation to a party? Give children time to respond. They could be excited, happy, a little nervous, impatient...

💡 **Say:** Receiving an invitation can be really exciting and fill us with happiness as it makes us feel good when we are included by others. Today we are going to be thinking about an invitation given to each of us by God.

Tell It

The lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7)

This well-known parable has been shared in many ways. There are a number of dramas, videos, stories, reflections and a Godly Play session which communicate this short passage.

You may wish to change the Tell It section if there is another way that is more suited to the context of your group.

Explain to the children you are going to share with them a story which Jesus told: a story he told after some people didn't like what he was saying and objected to the kind of people Jesus was teaching.

You may wish to reposition your camera to focus solely on the props.

Say:

Many sinners came to listen to Jesus. Those who challenged Jesus began to complain, 'Look! This man welcomes sinners and even eats with them!' Then Jesus told them this story:

(Lay the green material to represent a field and place the shepherd in the field.)

Ask: Who could the figure represent? Allow children to respond.

Say: Suppose one of you has 100 sheep.

(Place the cotton wool balls on the material and start counting.)

Say: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7... Let's add a few. (Tip out a pile.) 97, 98, 99, 100.

Say: One day as the shepherd is counting his sheep...

(Start counting again.)

Say: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7... 97, 98, 99... he realises he has lost one of them.

(Place one of the cotton wool balls on the other side of the field.)

Ask: What do you think the shepherd will do? Allow children to respond.

Say: Jesus said the shepherd will leave the other 99 sheep and go out and look for the one lost sheep. The shepherd will keep on searching for the lost sheep until he finds it.

(Walk the shepherd to find the missing sheep.)

Ask: How do you think the shepherd feels? Allow children to respond.

Say: And when he finds the lost sheep, the shepherd is very happy. He puts it on his shoulders and goes home. He calls to his friends and neighbours and says, 'Be happy with me because I have found my lost sheep!'

(Walk the shepherd to return the missing sheep to the flock.)

Ask: Who do you think these sheep might really be? Allow children to respond.

Ask: Who might the shepherd really be? Allow children to respond.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus told this story? Allow children to respond.

Say: Jesus said, 'In the same way, I tell you there is much joy in Heaven when a sinner changes his heart. There is more joy for that one sinner than there is for 99 good people who don't need to change.'

Say: Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd.

Ask: I wonder if you have ever heard the Good Shepherd say your name?

If time allows, the following clip is a creative retelling of the story told from the perspective of the lost sheep. It could help inspire an interesting conversation with your group.

The parable of the lost sheep by TMC Youth (with heavy American accents!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlwl4Y-FasA>

Sing It

Let's celebrate the peace, love and joy God's love gives us.

'Peace like a river' from Listener Kids

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7it5W1FVtTs>

Action It

- **Say:** Thousands of years ago, God invited people to live in relationship with him. In the Old Testament you can read about how God made a promise to his people. He gave the people commandments to follow, a set of rules, so they could get along. But God's people didn't follow them. They didn't accept God's invitation to live in his love. When God sent Jesus, God made a new promise to people and invites everyone to receive his love.
- **Say:** In our story, we heard Jesus say, 'The shepherd will leave the other 99 sheep and go out and look for the one lost sheep. The shepherd will keep on searching for the lost sheep until he finds it.'
- **Say:** God promises to love us. When we are close to him or when we wander away, he loves us so much he will come and find us. It is a two-way commitment. God loves and looks after us. We love God and live our lives in way that will please him. Putting God at the centre of everything we do helps us stay close to him.
- **Say:** We are going to spend some time now thinking about lots of the different things we do in our lives, where it can be so busy that we can push God away.

Ask children to fold a square piece of paper in half and half again. Draw an arc from one corner to the other and cut along the line. (Make sure to model carefully which corners to draw from!) Open the paper out to reveal a circle. In the middle, write the word 'God'.

Give children time to write or draw in the circle lots of examples of the things they do and the places they go.

Give children some time to share the things which go on in their lives.

- **Say:** When God invites us to live in his love, he still wants us to do all the exciting things you have shared. But he also wants us to remember him: to pray, to learn about his teachings and live our lives in a loving way.

Pray It

In advance of the session, either send children the children's Vision and Commitment response card, or print and deliver so children have a copy.

You may wish to play some gentle music in the background and give children time to respond.

- **Say:** We have thought about God's promise to love us today. In our story we heard Jesus say, 'Be happy with me because I have found my lost sheep!'
- **Say:** God is so happy when we commit to receive and live in his love and when we promise to try and live our lives in a way which is pleasing to him.
- **Say:** Today you are invited to promise to receive and live in God's love. It is a special promise between you and God, and one which is not always easy to do. But we can all pray for and help each other.
- **Say:** If you would like to, you can now colour and sign your name.

Finish by praying a blessing over your group.

Explore It

Remember to send home the Explore It (For Me) and Explore It (Together) ideas for children and families.