



DAKOTA
BOYS AND GIRLS
RANCH

The Lost Sheep

God loves all of His children



Sunday School curriculum prepared by Rev. Rick Jones,
Vice President and Chaplain, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch.

Overall Lesson: *God loves all His children*

Bible lesson for the whole group:

Matthew 19:13-15

¹³ Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place His hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

¹⁴ Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” ¹⁵ When He had placed His hands on them, he went on from there.

Lesson summary: *Jesus welcomes and loves all His children. He wants you to know Him and trust Him.*

Early Youth Lesson (3-years-old to Kindergarten)

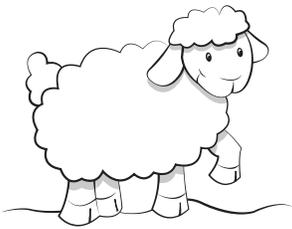
Bible story: The Lost Sheep

Luke 15:1-7

¹ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his

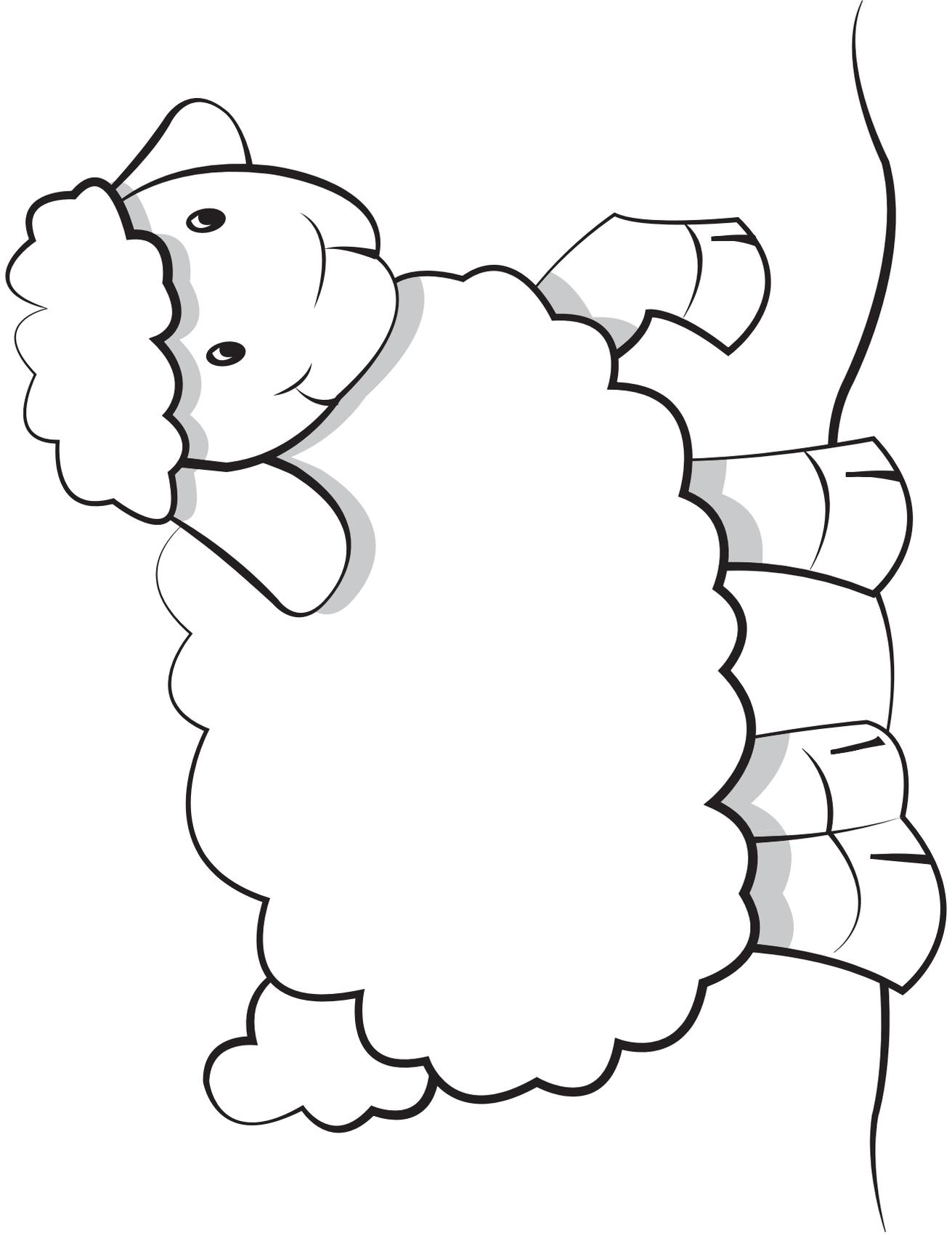
shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”



Project: Make Your Sheep

Have children decorate or color a sheep that represents them. Have them write their name on the sheep.

Alternative project: Have the children pretend to be sheep and play hide and seek with them.



Once all the children have their sheep, direct them to hide them around the room. When the sheep are hidden, go around the room looking for (rescuing) the lost sheep. Once all the sheep are found, have a little party to celebrate all the sheep being rescued.

The message:

The message we want children to learn is that God goes out of his way to find His lost sheep. He goes to such lengths that he sends His Son Jesus to rescue us and be our good shepherd. Once we are found and brought back into God's flock (Church), there is a big celebration. It is a wonderful and joyous thing to be a part of God's family.

You may choose to sing one of the following songs with the children to reinforce the lesson:

“I Am Jesus; Little Lamb”

by Henrietta L. von Hayn, 1724-1782

1 I am Jesus' little lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am;
For my Shepherd gently guides me,
Knows my need, and well provides me,
Loves me every day the same,
Even calls me by my name.

2 Day by day, at home, away,
Jesus is my Staff and Stay.
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me,
Into pleasant pastures leads me;
When I thirst, He bids me go
Where the quiet waters flow.

3 Who so happy as I am,
Even now the Shepherd's lamb?
And when my short life is ended,
By His angel host attended,
He shall fold me to His breast,
There within His arms to rest.

Hymn #648

The Lutheran Hymnal

YouTube recording: <https://bit.ly/2cXN7W2>



Jesus Loves Me
LSB #588; ELW #595

1 Jesus loves me, this I know,
for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong;
they are weak, but he is strong.

Refrain:

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

2 Jesus loves me he who died
heaven's gate to open wide.
He will wash away my sin,
let his little child come in.

[Refrain]

3 Jesus loves me, this I know,
as he loved so long ago,
taking children on his knee,
saying, "Let them come to me."

[Refrain]

Older Youth Lesson (Grades 1-5)

You may want to add the following passages to your discussion:

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

John 10:11-18

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Ezekiel 34:11-16

¹¹ “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.

¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

¹³ I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. ¹⁴ I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.”

Talking Points:

Use these passages about Jesus as the Good Shepherd and God taking care of His sheep to explore how God’s care for His people parallels how shepherds care for their sheep.

Ask questions like:

What kinds of things do shepherds do for their sheep?

How does God provide for you the same way shepherds care for their sheep?

Middle school and High school Lesson

With this age group, you have the opportunity to dive deeper into how the Good Shepherd cares for His flock.

Likewise, there is a great opportunity to teach older children about Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch and how we provide care to those “sheep” who may be lost or have been pushed away from the group through trauma, tragedy, and turmoil in their lives.

Consider using these passages in conjunction with the good shepherd motif:

1 Corinthians 12:12-28

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.

Matthew 25:31-40

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

Project:

Ask students, or small groups of students, to draw a body part on a piece of tagboard. One group makes a right leg, another group makes a left hand, while another group makes a torso, etc. Then, have them come to the front of the room, one-by-one, to assemble this mismatched body under a picture of Jesus' head. They have just put together the Body of Christ. Each piece is different, just like each of us is different, and yet we all have a place in the body of Christ.

You can then explain that children who have been abused, neglected, and abandoned; or those facing issues of mental illness, addiction, or traumatic life experiences still have a place in the Church (the Body of Christ). Use the 1 Corinthians passage to show how those of us who have been treated as if we have no honor are given special honor in the Church (those who have been mistreated receive mercy and healing in the Church). Likewise, the Body of Christ (the Church) is the place where those who have been subjected to the terrible brokenness of this world can find peace, community, and strength through all the other members that love them as Christ loves them.



The work of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is focused on exactly this. We help bring special healing/honor to those whose honor has been taken. We provide our care for those whose modesty has been taken from them. As the Matthew 25 passage proclaims, we care for the least of these brothers and sisters as Christ has cared for us.

For the deepest divers, add this passage:

Exodus 3:7-10



⁷The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Discussion points:

God's Promised Land was to be a place of sanctuary for His people. It was a place of rest, security, comfort and stability. It was flowing with milk and honey because it was providing for all their needs. *How does having a place where you can live and call your own provide God's blessings?*

The Promised Land is no longer a geographic place, but it very much still exists. The promised Land was Israel, and the Church is the new Israel. *How do we, as the Church, provide the same blessings that the Promised Land did?*

The Promised Land was flowing with milk and honey. Why these two items? What does milk do for us, especially when we are very young? *(It provides all the sustenance and nurturing that we need. It is the daily source of life and nourishment.)*

What about honey? What is unique about honey compared to every other food source in the world? *(Honey is the only food that never spoils! It can crystalize and harden but if it is heated up it is just as good as new. Try putting a bottle of hardened honey in a bowl of hot water, it re-liquifies. Honey is a sweet treat that never goes bad.)*

So, if the Church is the new Promised Land, shouldn't it be flowing with milk and honey? Where do you see the Church handing out God's grace in a way similar to milk and honey?

The Sacraments! The Lord's Supper is a reoccurring source of forgiveness and grace. Whenever we receive it, we are receiving the ongoing spiritual nourishment we need for our lives of faith. That is milk! Baptism is the honey. Baptism is a one-time promise that you are God's child. Nothing can ever take that promise away. Just as honey will never spoil, Baptism is the never-spoiling assurance that you have been given salvation. The Lord's Supper and Baptism are the milk and honey of the Promised Land of God's Church.

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch

The children at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch come to us hardened by the tough times they have experienced. For some of our kids this is the first time they have slept in a bed, or not gone to bed hungry, or had anyone listen to their deepest pains and fears. For many it is the first time they have been told of Christ's love for them. When they come to the Ranch, we look at where they have come from, understand them, and help them to heal. We immerse them in love and kindness. And just like the honey returns to its former state, children can learn to see the world differently, and feel the love of God through those who care for them.

Your congregation is holding a Honey Sunday today as a reminder of God's love for you. Purchasing a bottle of honey supports the kids at the Ranch, and reminds them that they, too, are loved by God. Please pray for our precious Ranch children—that they find hope and healing and feel God's love.



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