

# The lost sheep



## Theme

Being lost and found



## Bible verses

Luke 15:3–7



## Artefact

A sheep puppet or soft toy

## Introduction

Can you remember a time when you felt lost? Perhaps you had wandered off in a supermarket, looking for sweets or ice cream. Perhaps you were on a beach when you had found someone else to play with. You might even have been walking through a wood when you were hidden by the trees. Can anyone tell me about a time when they felt lost? It can be quite frightening feeling lost. But the one thing you knew was that someone was looking for you.

Jesus told three stories about being lost and found. One was about a silver coin, one was about a son, and one was about a sheep. Like all the stories Jesus told, they are parables: they teach us more about God. This is the story of how a sheep wandered off and got lost.



## Ali Baa Baa

Slowly... close your eyes. Listen hard. Can you hear them bleating? Yes, it sounds like a whole flock of sheep. We are up on a hillside near the Sea of Galilee.

Below us, the land slopes down to the sea. Above us, the hill reaches almost into the clouds. Around us, there are sheep as far as we can see. Some are nibbling the grass by the rocks. Some are in the open. Some have climbed much higher up the hill. I don't understand how the shepherds can possibly know where they all are or how many there should be.

It's a very hard life, being a shepherd. You have to spend day and night out in the open with your sheep. What was that noise? Did you hear it? It sounded like a wolf howling. There are wolves in these hills and there's nothing they like better than sheep for lunch. Shepherds have to be very brave, because not only are there wolves but there are also bears. A bear will take a lamb from the flock if it is really hungry.

Look, the shepherd over there is trying to count his flock. It's not very easy because the sheep never keep still. But these shepherds know each one of their sheep. They even give them names.

Oh dear, he seems to be one short. Can you hear? The shepherd is calling out the name of the missing sheep. 'Ali! Ali!' The name echoes around the hills, but no sheep has come running. There must be a problem.

The shepherd is driving all the other sheep into a circle

made from rocks. They'll be safe in there. He's picked up a heavy wooden club and his long wooden crook. Do you see, there is a hook at the end of the crook? He uses it for pulling sheep out of any holes they might fall into.

Off goes the shepherd. We'll follow him from a distance. He's calling out the name of the sheep again and again. 'Ali! Ali!' It's quite a scramble over these rocks. Take care, don't fall down—the edges are razor sharp. I do hope Ali is going to be all right.

The shepherd is climbing higher and higher. He's searching behind every rock and down every hole. What a job! It's hard for us to keep up with him, but he is used to it. I hope there are no wild animals around—like hyenas or jackals. We're out of breath but he still manages to shout as he climbs. 'Ali! Ali!'

*Quiet!* Don't move. Listen. Was that a very faint baa? Yes, I think it was... and so does the shepherd. Now he is running towards that old prickly thorn bush. There's just a little woolly white bit showing. It has to be Ali.

Now we can really hear Ali baa-ing. His tail is wagging just like a dog's. The shepherd has taken out a knife and is cutting Ali free. He checks the sheep over to make sure it isn't hurt. I think it's more hungry than hurt. The shepherd lifts the sheep on to his shoulders and makes his way back to the rest of the flock.

I'm glad that's over... and so is Ali! All the shepherds have come together. They are having a party to celebrate Ali's return to the flock. Judging by the noise the sheep are making, they are having a party too. We had better leave them to get on with it.



## Follow-up

How do you think the shepherd felt when he realized Ali was missing? How do you think Ali might have felt? How did the shepherd feel when he found Ali?

## Prayer

*Dear Lord Jesus, sometimes we wander off and our families worry about us until they find us. Help us to remember that we have to let people know where we are, and not to cause them any worry. Amen*