

The Lost Sheep

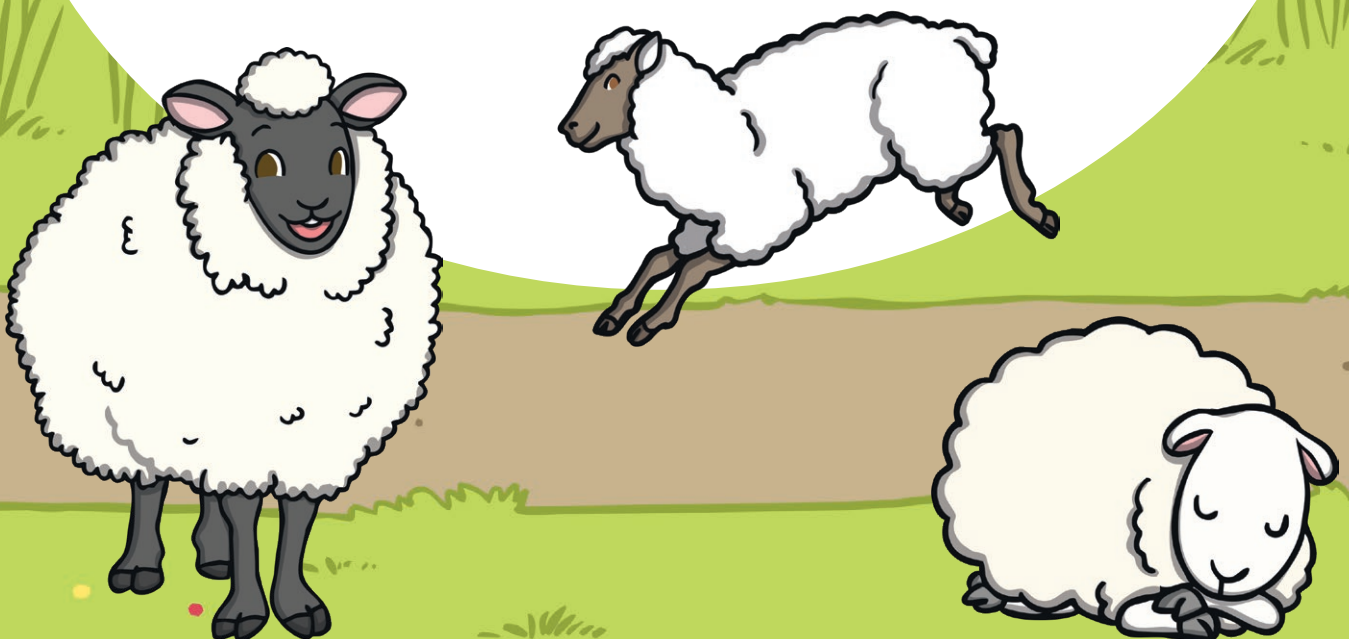
Many years ago, some of Jesus' friends thought that God loved some people more than others. They also thought that these people were more important than others. They asked Jesus, "Teacher, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Jesus asked a little child to stand with him and he told his friends that everyone is important to God. He told them a story about the Lost Sheep.

There once lived a shepherd who had a flock of a hundred sheep. He loved every one of his sheep and even named them. Every night, he counted his sheep to make sure he had a hundred.

Everyday he would help his sheep find the best green grass to eat and look for nice clean water to drink. This wasn't easy because sometimes dangerous animals, like bears and lions, would come along to try and hurt his sheep. The shepherd was brave and protected the sheep, chasing all the dangerous animals away.

If a sheep wandered away from the flock, he would call out the sheep's name. When the sheep heard the shepherd's voice, they would run back to the shepherd.



One evening, the shepherd took his sheep home and began counting his sheep. He only counted ninety-nine sheep¹. One was missing^{2 3}. The shepherd left his ninety-nine sheep in a safe place and went looking for his one lost sheep⁴.

The shepherd looked for hours behind bushes and in deep valleys. He would look everywhere until he found the one lost sheep. Finally, he found the one lost sheep. He lifted it onto his shoulders and carried him back to the other ninety-nine sheep. Now the shepherd could be happy because all of the sheep were safe.

After Jesus told this story, he told his friends that God does not look at one person and say "This person is important so they are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven or this person is not important so they are the least important in the kingdom of heaven."⁵

He told his friends that every person, even the little child standing next to him, is important to God and he does not want one single person to be lost.⁶

