

“GREASY SHEEP”

(May/Summer Lesson)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Sally Ulrey

Key verses: Luke 15:3-7

Objective: To think about what God’s relentless, never-giving-up, always-seeking-us love looks like in our own lives

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan:

- **Hook:** Greasy Sheep (30-60 mins, depending on which version of the game you choose)
 - Have the youth search for, capture, and bring back “lost sheep” to the fold
- **Book:** Lost Sheep—Luke 15:3-7 (10 mins)
 - Compare the game to what it might have been like for the Shepherd to seek that one lost sheep
- **Look:** Lost & Found (10 mins)
 - Create some artwork to show times we’ve been lost and found
 - Discuss the times we’ve run away and/or been lost, and the times God has found us
- **Took:** Perseverance (5-10 mins)
 - Write a prayer on the back of the artwork

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- Trash bags (one for every 5 or so youth; the big 30 gallon ones work best)
- Game/Activity Supplies:
 - Option 1:
 - Shaving Cream (one can for every 4 or so people)
 - water hose & access to spigot
 - Food Coloring or Craft Paint
 - White Paper
 - Parchment Paper
 - OR Option 2:
 - Cotton Balls or Fiber Fill
 - Packing tape
 - White Paper & lots of colors of craft paint, including grey
- Bibles

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Greasy Sheep (Hook, 30-60 mins)

In this section, we will give the youth an analogy to use when talking about the relentless love God displays in seeking us. Youth will be divided into teams of about 5. One volunteer will be the sheep (make sure they know what this will entail). The rest of the team will get to dress this person up as a sheep, then go and seek them and bring them back into the fold.

- **Dress the Sheep up.**

Option 1: Messy version using shaving cream (this will add 30 mins to your time for clean up, and it is CRAZY, but it is fun). Basically, this will devolve in to a shaving cream fight, so you have got to set some ground rules and have a plan for clean-up. We usually do this as a part of a water day or messy game day.

- The youth who has volunteered to be the sheep gets the trash bag. Their team gets the can of shaving cream and can make them look like a sheep.
- Tips:
 - Do a safety briefing before you give out the cans. (None in the eyes. Let the youth who is becoming the sheep add shaving cream to cover their bathing suit areas. Talk about the safe zone.)
 - Make sure there is a safe zone where anyone can go to get away from the action. This is a “challenge by choice” game, so they can opt in to play, but if they are done or frustrated or not feeling it, they need a place to opt out. Have an adult with clean towels in case of accidental shaving cream near eyes, where the youth can go to get a wipe.
 - Again, this is a “challenge by choice” game, so if the volunteer is ok with shaving cream in the hair, fine; if not, don’t put it there.
 - Explain what will happen at the end for clean-up. We usually have a hose and just spray them down one at a time.

Option 2: Clean version using cotton balls/fiber fill and packing tape. Youth who volunteers to be the sheep gets the trash bag, and the others decorate it with cotton balls or fiber fill to make the volunteer look like a sheep.

- **Explain & Play.** Explain the rules and objectives. Objective is to bring the sheep back in to the fold. Seek them, and keep relentlessly (but lovingly) bringing them back. Don’t give up; persevere. The rules are whatever boundaries work for your space, and to not hurt each other (see safety briefing above).
 - First, explain how to dress the volunteer as a sheep.
 - Next, explain that the sheep will have a head start to be released in to the wild, and the team’s job is to bring that sheep back in to the fold.
 - Take the “sheep” aside and tell them that the point is for them to make it a little bit difficult for the teams to get their sheep back, and once they’re “caught” they can escape and run away again, etc., but we don’t want the teams to get super frustrated to the point that it’s not in good fun.
 - After they have dressed the sheep, release the sheep into the field, giving them about a 10 second head start.
 - Release the teams to bring the sheep back into the pre-determined fold
 - The point is that it will take perseverance to keep seeking and bringing back the sheep
- **Observe.** As the leader, make some observations about times you noticed perseverance, or any times when the analogy of the Good Shepherd seeking the sheep and the idea of relentless, never-giving-up, always-seeking love of God comes into play.

- **Mini-Discussion.** After you settle them back down (if you do the shaving cream version, this means clean up with water hose, and probably that the lesson will happen outside, since they'll be wet), lead a mini-discussion on what it took to bring the sheep back in to the fold:
 - Ask them to share funny stories of when they were having a tough time
 - Ask them when/if they ever wanted to give up
 - Share your own observations about their perseverance
- **Timing:** the dressing up should take about 10 mins, and then give them 10+ mins to play the game, and 10 mins to debrief the activity

Transition: There is a story Jesus told about a Shepherd who relentlessly sought his lost sheep. Let's read it.

Lost Sheep (Book, 10 mins)

In this section, we'll look at the parable of the Lost Sheep, and explore some points that show God's relentless, never-giving-up, always-seeking love for the lost and the outsider. Eventually, we will use this parable and the game as an analogy to help us understand sheep and ourselves. Warning: every analogy breaks down at some point. So, for example, if one of the teams literally dragged a sheep back kicking and screaming (all in good fun), you could still debrief on how God is not forceful or violent in God's pursuit of us. So whether the analogy matches, or breaks down, it's still a good jumping off point for discussion.

- Read the passage (below for your reference).
- Ask some questions:
 - What is the shepherd giving up to seek the lost sheep?
 - (the safety of his 99 other sheep, which is probably all his assets and livelihood)
 - What does it mean that they are left in the "open country"?
 - (probably that they are unprotected)
 - So given that, how important was it to the shepherd to seek and find that one lost sheep?
 - (pretty much THE MOST important priority)
- Compare the game to this Scripture
 - How was the game like this Scripture passage?
 - When did you see the most important priority (to seek and find the lost) displayed in the game?
 - When did you see the relentless, never-giving-up, always-seeking perseverance in the game and in the Scripture?

Luke 15:3-7 (NIV)

³Then 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? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and 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.

Mini-Lecture: (Say something like)

Obviously, this parable is written to tell us something about God as our shepherd. The most important thing to the shepherd in this story is seeking out his lost sheep, even more important than the safety and comfort of the rest of the flock (although, in comparison to the dangerous circumstances the lost sheep is in, the flock is relatively safe and comfortable). The shepherd goes to the ones who need it the most, and he risks everything else for his top priority of seeking and bringing that lost sheep into the fold, even when it is difficult.

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Lost & Found (Look, 10 mins)

In this part, they will think about when they have been the lost sheep and when they've been the found sheep. First, they'll have some time to do an artistic reflection activity. Then, they'll discuss life application questions in small groups.

Reflection (5 mins)

Option 1: Shaving Cream Art

- Have a station with the left over shaving cream (have a couple extra cans on hand, in case they used all of it in the game), as well as the food coloring/craft paint, parchment paper (a sizable sheet per youth), and some white paper.
- Pass out supplies and instructions
- Give the youth some time to complete the activity.

Option 2: Art

- Same activity, just no shaving cream. Pass out the paper and paint and instructions.

Discussion Questions (5 mins)

In groups, have them share their artwork and discuss the reflection questions.

Perseverance (Took, 5-10 mins)

This is the reminder that God pursues them, and they should pursue others to bring them in to community, especially those who might feel like outsiders.

Written Prayer

On the back of their artwork (if dry) or on a separate sheet, have them write their own prayer,

- thanking God for the times that God and God's community found and celebrated them
- asking God for the ways they need to be found and pursued and loved
- asking God to help them find and pursue and love the outsiders they see

Youth Shaving Cream Art Reflection Instruction Sheet

- When have you felt like the lost/run-away sheep?
 - Use the plain shaving cream to create a picture on your parchment paper representing when you were running away from God/community or when you felt lost or like an outsider.
- When have you felt like the found sheep? The one who was brought back and celebrated? OR in what areas do you really wish you could feel that way, but maybe don't yet?
 - Add drops of color throughout the shaving cream to represent the joy of being found, celebrated, part of community. And then swirl it around create a beautiful work of art.
- Take your heavy-weight paper and lightly press it in to your swirly shaving cream artwork and set aside to dry
- Be ready to explain your art if you are so inclined.

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Youth Art Reflection Instruction Sheet

- When have you felt like the lost/run-away sheep?
 - Use the grey paint to create a picture on your paper representing when you were running away from God/community or when you felt lost or like an outsider.

- When have you felt like the found sheep? The one who was brought back and celebrated? OR in what areas do you really wish you could feel that way, but maybe don't yet?
 - Add colored paint throughout the grey to represent the joy of being found, celebrated, part of community.

- Set art aside to dry

- Be ready to explain your art if you are so inclined.