

# God's Sheep

## Parable of the Sheep and Goats

*Matthew 25:31-45*

**Lesson Highlights:** This week we will be using the parable of the Sheep and Goats to begin the discussion about helping others, but more specifically as Eugene Peterson says in the message translation, "someone who has been overlooked or ignored". This discussion will begin some conversation around noticing those we sometimes overlook. And why would Jesus tell this story to his closest friends, what might he be wanting them to know or do?

### Mixer: "Step In If..."

Have everyone stand in a circle.

Call out statements like:

- "Step in if you've ever attended a birthday party."
- "Step in if you've ever hung out at a friend's house."
- "Step in if you've ever tried something new."
- "Step in if you've ever felt left out."
- "Step in if someone has helped you when you needed it."
- "Step in if you've ever seen something unfair."
- Step in if you've ever invited someone to join you.
- Step in if you've ever noticed someone being left out.
- Step in if you've ever had to wait for your turn.
- Step in if you've ever shared food, time, or kindness.
- Step in if you've ever listened to someone's story.

Kids step into the circle if it applies to them.

### **Read Together the Parable in Matthew 25:31-45 (The Message)**

JESUS TOLD THE DISCIPLES A STORY:

**31-33** "When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to his right and goats to his left.

**34-36** “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation. And here’s why:

I was hungry and you fed me,  
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,  
I was homeless and you gave me a room,  
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,  
I was sick and you stopped to visit,  
I was in prison and you came to me.’

**37-40** “Then those ‘sheep’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?’ Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.’

**41-43** “Then he will turn to the ‘goats,’ the ones on his left, and say, ‘Get out, worthless goats! You’re good for nothing but the fires of hell. And why? Because—

I was hungry and you gave me no meal,  
I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,  
I was homeless and you gave me no bed,  
I was shivering and you gave me no clothes,  
Sick and in prison, and you never visited.’

**44** “Then those ‘goats’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or homeless or shivering or sick or in prison and didn’t help?’

**45** “He will answer them, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was me—you failed to do it to me.’

## **WONDER QUESTIONS**

1. I wonder why Jesus told this story to his disciples?
2. I wonder why caring for others matters to God?
3. I wonder if there are any people God thinks are not worth caring for? What part of the story Jesus told supports your answer?
4. Do you have a story about a time you helped someone or witnessed someone else helping someone?

**Key Question:** Every Bible story tells us something about who God is or what God's like. What did you notice this time?

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **"Acts of Kindness Sheep"**

Give each child a sheep template or cotton-ball sheep craft.

On each sheep, write one action they can do this week:

- help someone lonely
- share food
- welcome a new person
- care for someone sick

Display them as a "flock of kindness."

## **PRAY**

At a different time, Jesus taught people to pray and included the sentence "Give us today our daily bread," meaning, ask God for what you need for the day.

Let's start by making a quick two lists: needs and wants. Think about needs we can see, taste, touch and invisible needs we cannot see, feel or touch. Now, we're going to pray a simple prayer.

First, we'll open our hands into a bowl or basket shape.

Next, we'll pray:

"God, help us name what we need to you, because you love us. Please give us what we need, both seen and invisible."

*"I'm going to give you 15 quiet seconds to tell God what you need."*

*"When we have more than we need, make us generous to others."*

*Now, I'm going to give you 15 quiet seconds to pray for people who don't have enough of what they need.*

Amen.