



# preschool

## CARE

Have you ever lost your child, even for a moment? If so, you know that feeling of instant panic, when you can't lay your eyes on the one thing that means the most to you in the world. We go to great lengths to safeguard ourselves against that experience—we strap our kids in to car seats or strollers or Bjorn carriers; if they're walking with us, we make them hold our hands or caution them to stay with us at all times; some parents even go to the length of attaching a cord to their backpack in order to keep them from wandering off! Of course, getting lost is equally frightening for a child—no one ever intends to get lost. Rather, something momentarily grabs a child's attention, and without thinking your hand is dropped and off a

child wanders in pursuit of whatever has caught his or her eye. At some point, though, the distraction will lose its attraction—whatever the child was chasing will fly out of sight or will no longer hold their interest. Then comes the awareness that the parent is no longer in sight. And without that reference point, the environment changes. What was normal and safe just a few moments ago suddenly feels unfamiliar and scary, and the child sends forth a cry for help.

Jesus himself got lost while he was a boy—while Jesus

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felt comfortable the whole time “in his Father's house” (the temple), his parents spent three whole days searching through Jerusalem to find him. It is interesting that this is the only story of Jesus' childhood that made it into Scripture, it makes you wonder why? Perhaps the story speaks to Jesus' identity—that even from an early age he could amaze scholars and rabbis who had spent their life studying the Torah. But the story also speaks to the mission Jesus would live out as an adult—to seek and rescue those who were lost.

In Luke 15, Jesus tells a story about a shepherd who leaves his flock to find a lost sheep. As parents, this story carries new significance. When we think about our own children, we certainly understand how the shepherd was not satisfied with 99% retention, but could not rest until he'd found the one sheep who had wandered away. We can

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also imagine the experience of that single sheep, and the relief and joy it might have felt when back in the shepherd's arms.

This is how God loves us—as a shepherd who will stop at nothing to find and rescue anyone who is lost or in danger. It is common for children in their preschool years to develop various fears (of the dark; of monsters under the bed or in the closet; and so on)—that's part of their developing imagination. But that also makes it a perfect time to arm them with the encouragement of knowing that God watches over them and protects them at all times!