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# The Storyteller

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## The Table of the Good Shepherd

This is the second of a series of three issues of *The Storyteller* about doing Godly Play when the storyteller cannot get on the floor. Jerome W. Berryman is learning a lot about this these days with five surgeries in the last four years. The children are adjusting more quickly than he is.

In the last *Storyteller* you saw a storyteller sitting on a small chair working with two children during the work period. In this picture you see children gathered around the Parable of the Good Shepherd (Lesson 7, Volume 3, *The Complete Guide To Godly Play*, pp. 77-86).

The "table" is made from four low, square tables. You saw a single such table in the last *Storyteller*. The single tables are placed around the room for children to work on for their expressive art during the work period. The "table" you see here is taken apart and removed just before going around the circle to ask the children what work they would like to get out for their work after the lesson and wondering are over.

When working on the floor you do not want children to perch on their knees. This puts them in a power position over the other children and tempts them to begin to shift the attention from the lesson to themselves. Each child needs to sit cross-legged on the floor, as equals in the community of children with the storyteller.

When the lesson is on a table and the children are early childhood it is hard for them to see the lesson, especially a parable, which is flat, so sometimes it is good for them to get on their knees. This small group was invited to come up to the table and kneel so they could see better. These children, as you can see, have also put their arms on the table. There is plenty of room to do this without touching the

parable when the group is this small.

With a larger group, however, the children need to be encouraged to remain back in a larger circle away from the table so all the children can see. They cannot see as well even if they go up on their knees, so they keep creeping forward. The lesson needs to be woven together with encouragement for the community of children to work together so all can see. You don't reason with them, but you keep reminding them of what is expected. All this is woven into the lesson without losing the deep focus on its depths.

"Move back. That's the way. No. Don't put your hands on the table. Scoot back. That's the way. No. You may not touch the table. Good. Move back. It's hard, isn't it? Stay back. No. Everyone can't see if you do that. That's the way. Move back. It's not fair if you move there. Look, the people behind you can't see. Good. That's the way. You can really do this. Good."

It is truly hard for the children to stay back so everyone can see. The lesson is designed to draw the children's attention towards it. Their frustration needs to be acknowledged but not given into. The storyteller is truly on their side, helping them to do this difficult thing and at the same time keep their focus on this Parable of the Good Shepherd.

