



Use Week of:

Unit 23 • Session 5

The Good Shepherd

BIBLE PASSAGE:

John 10

STORY POINT:

Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 14:26

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.

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LEADER Bible Study

Jesus' teaching caused division among the Jews. They argued about who He was and where He had come from. Had He really come from God? Was He crazy or demon-possessed? In John 10, Jesus taught about Himself by using a comparison that is found throughout the Old Testament: the Lord as the Shepherd of His people.

In Bible times, shepherding was a common occupation. Leaders of nations—even non-Israelite nations—would refer to themselves as shepherds of the people. A good shepherd would guide, provide for, and protect his people. Yet Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel criticized Israel's leaders for failing to shepherd God's people well. The Israelites were like sheep—helpless and wandering—and they longed for a truly good shepherd.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who provides abundant life for His sheep. A shepherd would gather his sheep at night and form a pen to keep the sheep in and to keep wild animals and thieves out. The shepherd would lay across the opening. Like a shepherd provides safety for his sheep, Jesus provides salvation and eternal life.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. A shepherd protects his sheep from wolves and other wild animals, even at risk to his own life. Jesus gave up His life on the cross to rescue sinners from sin and death.

Finally, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep. Even when two or more flocks gathered in a pen, a shepherd could call for his sheep and they would respond to the sound of his voice. Jesus knows His sheep personally.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came to do His Father's plan: to die on the cross and rise again so that we might be saved. We can live sacrificially as we point others to the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

The BIBLE Story

The Good Shepherd

John 10

Jesus told a story to the Jewish leaders: “If a person climbs into a sheep pen, he is not the shepherd; he is a thief,” Jesus said. “A shepherd comes in through the gate and calls his sheep by name.

When the sheep hear the shepherd’s voice, they follow him. If the sheep hear a stranger’s voice, they run away.”

The people did not understand Jesus’ story. God’s people are like sheep, and Jesus is the Shepherd.

Jesus said, “I am the gate for the sheep. They come in through Me and are saved.”

Jesus was saying that He is the way to true life. Jesus warned, “A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” Jesus was talking about the devil, who does not want people to follow God. Jesus said, “I have come so that they may have life—extraordinary life.”

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gives up His life for the sheep. He said, “I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me.” Like a shepherd risks his own life to protect his sheep from wolves, Jesus was willing to die for His people. Jesus came to do His Father’s plan, and He was going to die on the cross and rise again.

The Jews started to argue. Many said, “Do not listen to Him; He’s



crazy.” Others said, “He does not sound crazy. Can a crazy man give sight to the blind?”

The Jewish leaders asked Jesus, “Are You really the Messiah? Just tell us.”

Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. My miracles prove who I am. You are not My sheep.” **Jesus** reminded them that **He is the Good Shepherd. “My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them life forever. No one will take them out of My hand. The Father and I are one.”**

Christ Connection: Jesus is the Good Shepherd. God sent Him to save sinners. Jesus gave up His life so His people could be forgiven and have life with God forever. Those who trust in Jesus are His sheep. They listen to Him, follow Him, and obey Him.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Enter the sheep gate:** Set up the Bible story area with a “sheep pen” with a gate. Use baby gates as an option. Lead children to enter the sheep pen to hear the Bible story.
- **Dress like a shepherd:** Wear Bible-times clothing and hold a shepherd’s staff as you tell the Bible story.

INTRODUCE the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.

Welcome time

- “Just As I Am” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play a theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- “Follow the Shepherd” activity page, 1 per child
- crayons or markers

Help preschoolers complete the maze to get the sheep safely to the pen.

SAY • Good job helping the sheep get to the pen! Sheep have to follow the shepherd on the right path to stay safe. Jesus taught that our lives are like that too. He saves us when we follow Him! Listen to our Bible story to learn how **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.**

LOW PREP

Chant actions

Guide children to sit and pat their knees in rhythm while chanting with you:

“We’re going to the sheep pen,
We’re gonna be safe there.
Uh oh! A thief! Run away!”

On the last line, point and act scared, then guide preschoolers to pat their knees frantically as if running away.

After a moment, return to a normal rhythm and repeat, exchanging the word *thief* for *wolf* or other dangers. Finish by replacing the last line with: “Finally! The gate! Come on in.”

SAY • Whew, I’m glad we made it to safety! There were a lot of dangers along the way. Sheep need shepherds to protect them and guide them safely home. Jesus taught that He is the Good Shepherd. He protects God’s people and guides them safely home to God’s kingdom. *What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.*

Pretend to care for pets

Set out a variety of toy animals, blocks, washcloths, paper shreds, and play dishes for children to play out caring for pets. Preschoolers may build fences or barns for the animals with blocks, “bathe” them with washcloths, and “feed” them with paper shreds on dishes. Talk about how to care for animals well while children play.

- toy animals
- blocks
- clean washcloths
- shredded paper
- play dishes

SAY • Do any of you have pets at home? Do you help take care of them? A shepherd is someone who takes care of sheep. He makes sure they have food and water, and he keeps them safe and clean. In our Bible story today, Jesus said He is the Good Shepherd. Listen to the story to find out who is Jesus’ sheep.

Transition to teach the story

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, turn the lights off and on, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to bleat like sheep as they follow you to Bible study.

- countdown video (optional)

TEACH the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.

Introduce the Bible story

- Bible
- bookmark
- Giant Timeline

Place a bookmark at John 10 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • Whose words does Jesus speak? (*God's words*) Where do we read God's words? (*in the Bible*) Is the Bible true? (*Yes!*) Today's story comes from the Book of John.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline.

Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Watch or tell the Bible story

- Story Point Poster
- "The Good Shepherd" video (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

SAY • Understanding God's kingdom can be hard. Jesus taught people about God's kingdom using stories the people understood. People knew if someone was a good shepherd by how well he cared for his sheep. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.** People who trust in Jesus are His sheep. They listen to Him, follow Him, and obey Him. Like a shepherd protects his sheep, Jesus gave up His life so His people could be forgiven and have life with God forever.

Practice the key passage

Write each word of the key passage on a separate piece of paper, crumple them, and scatter the paper wads around the room. Place the key passage marker at John 14:26. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Ask children to gather the “sheep” and bring them back to you. Read each word aloud as you open the wads, and help children place the key passage in order.

SAY • The people did not understand Jesus’ story about sheep. But after Jesus died and rose again, God gave the Holy Spirit to believers. The Spirit teaches us and helps us understand Jesus’ words.

Sing the key passage song, “The Holy Spirit,” and the theme song, “Just As I Am.”

- copy paper
- marker
- Bible
- Key Passage Marker
- Key Passage Poster
- “The Holy Spirit (John 14:26)” song
- “Just As I Am” song

Learn the big picture question

SAY • We’ve learned a lot about what Jesus taught the last few weeks, and all of it shows us more about God and His kingdom. *What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.* When Jesus taught that He is the Good Shepherd, He was saying that God sent Him to save sinners and give them life in God’s kingdom!

- Big Picture Question Poster



Missions moment

SAY • Kesavan and Viji Balasingham teach people in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, about God’s kingdom. Show the “Toronto Photos” one at a time reading, the captions aloud. Pray for the people of Toronto, that they would choose to follow Jesus.

- “Toronto Photos” printable

Pray and transition to experience the story

EXPERIENCE the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.

LOW PREP

Tip: If you are unfamiliar with how to play “London Bridge Is Falling Down” look it up online before the session.

Sing “Through the Gate!”

Sing the following lyrics to the tune of “London Bridge Is Falling Down” :

“Jesus says He’s like a gate, like a gate, like a gate!
Jesus says He’s like a gate for His sheep.

“Come and enter through the gate, through the gate,
through the gate!
Come and enter through the gate to be saved.

“The thief comes in to steal and destroy, steal and
destroy, steal and destroy.
The thief comes in to steal and destroy God’s precious
sheep! [*Leaders drop arms around a child.*]

“Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, the
Good Shepherd.
Jesus is the Good Shepherd who saves His sheep!”
[*Leaders release the child.*]

SAY • Jesus is the Good Shepherd. God sent Him to save sinners. Jesus gave up His life so His people could be forgiven and have life with God forever. Those who trust in Jesus are His sheep. They listen to Him, follow Him, and obey Him.

Listen carefully

Choose a child to be the *thief* and close his eyes. The rest of the children are *sheep* and will crawl on their hands and knees. Explain that you are the *shepherd*. When the *thief* says “sheep,” all the children should bleat and move away from the *thief*. The *thief* will try to tag the *sheep* by following the sounds they make. If a child is tagged, you will call that child by name and lead him into the “pen” (a corner) until the next round.

SAY • Jesus told a story: “If a person climbs into a sheep pen, he is not the shepherd; he is a thief,” Jesus said. “When the sheep hear the shepherd’s voice, they follow him. If the sheep hear a stranger’s voice, they run away.” **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.** Those who trust in Jesus are His sheep. They listen to Him, follow Him, and obey Him.

Make a sheep handprint

Invite children to color a grassy scene on blue construction paper. Paint a child’s palm white and fingers and thumb black. Help her press her handprint onto the paper, fingers down. Wipe her hand and give her one or two googly eyes to adhere to the thumbprint. Suggest she glue cotton balls to the palm. Write the story point on each child’s artwork.

SAY • Your handprint is not like anyone else’s. God made each person different, and He knows everything about you! **Jesus is the Good Shepherd** who calls His sheep by name. Those who trust in Jesus are His sheep. He said, “I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me. My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me. I give them life forever.” I pray that each of you will trust and follow Jesus!

LOW PREP

Tip: Clear the area obstacles and watch the *thief* carefully to avoid injury.

- blue construction paper
- crayons or markers
- foam paintbrushes
- white washable paint
- black washable paint
- wipes for cleanup
- glue
- googly eyes
- cotton balls

- Allergy Alert
- guest with a gentle animal
- hand sanitizer

Option: Consider contacting a petting zoo and arranging for an actual sheep to visit your church to make the Bible story come alive for children.

Pet an animal

If possible, invite a guest to bring in a small, gentle animal to visit your group. Make sure the pet is comfortable with groups of young children. Post an allergy alert. Invite children to pet the animal and ask questions about taking care of it. Be sure to wash hands thoroughly afterwards.

SAY • Taking care of animals is a big job! **Jesus is the Good Shepherd** who takes care of God's people. Those who trust in Jesus are His sheep. Like a shepherd risks his own life to protect his sheep from wolves, Jesus was willing to die for His people. Jesus gave up His life so His people could be forgiven and have life with God forever.



Try a new snack

- Allergy Alert
- international foods
- napkins

Before the session, visit the international section of your grocery store and choose a few foods for preschoolers to try, such as naan bread from South Asia, nori (toasted seaweed used for sushi wraps), chips or crackers in different flavors, and imported candy. Be sure to include maple syrup or a maple-flavored cookie to represent Canada.

Post an allergy alert. Wash hands. Encourage children to sample the snacks as they wish, but do not force children to eat something they do not want to eat.

SAY • These are snacks from other countries. People from many different countries live in the one city of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. People in God's kingdom love all people, no matter where they come from or where they live. We can love people from all over the world. ***What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.***

Snack and review

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Wash hands and gather preschoolers for snack time. Pray, thanking God for the snack.

If you did not already serve snack, offer pretzel sticks for snack. Talk about how they resemble hay stalks like sheep might eat. Good shepherds take care of their sheep and give them good food to eat. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.** Jesus gave up His life so His people could have life with God.

Show the Bible story picture as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

1. Who is the Good Shepherd? (*Jesus*)
2. Who are Jesus' sheep? (*those who trust in Him*)
3. What do sheep do when they hear the shepherd's voice? (*follow him*)
4. What did Jesus come to give His people? (*life with God forever*)
5. How does Jesus give His people life with God forever? (*Jesus gave up His life so His people could be forgiven from sin.*)
6. ***What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.***

Transition

When preschoolers finish their snack, they may color the Bible story coloring page, play a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question, or sing along to the key passage or theme song.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert
- paper cups and napkins
- snack food
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- pretzel sticks (optional)

- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Key Passage Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- "The Holy Spirit (John 14:26)" song
- "Just As I Am" song
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers