

Sheep LOVED by a Shepherd

This is the lesson called Jesus is my Good Shepherd. There are over 600 references to sheep, lamb, shepherds, and ewe in the Bible. Sheep are a consistent animal used in scripture to teach Biblical truths. Yet if we do not live in an agricultural society, it can be difficult to understand the principles God is teaching us. This lesson plan sets a foundation for understanding and teaches students that they are like sheep, loved by a Shepherd.

Objectives: To recognize Jesus as the Good Shepherd, who is both provider and protector. To identify the importance of listening to Jesus' voice through God's Word.

Materials: large sheep cutout, cotton balls, glue, Bible

Welcome Activity/Art Project: Have a large cutout of a sheep (or maybe two, depending on the size of your class) on the table when your students arrive. The cutout can be fashioned out of white poster board or butcher paper, whatever you have available. Provide cotton balls at each student's seat. When the students arrive, demonstrate how to spread out the cotton balls. Have the students glue the cotton balls on the sheep to create a fleece. Fill in areas as needed. This group art project can later be utilized on a bulletin board that might read, "WE are LOVED by a SHEPHERD."

Bible Lesson:

1. "Can you guess by our art project what we're going to talk about today? Why in the world are we going to learn about sheep? How funny to come to church and learn about a farm animal! Well, sheep are very important in God's word. So are shepherds, the people who take care of the sheep. They are so important that God talks about them over 600 times in the Bible. Wow! That's a lot of sheep talk!"
2. "Today, we're going to learn about sheep and shepherds. You will each get a chance to do lots of pretending today! Are you ready to play and learn? If you are, let me hear a 'BAAAA!!!'"
3. "The first thing we'll do is listen for sheep and shepherds in God's word. So take your fingers, wiggle your ears to make sure they're listening, and let's get started! When you hear the word 'Sheep,' I need you to,

'Baaa.' When you hear the word 'Shepherd', I need you to cross your arms in front of your chest to make the sign of love. Shepherds really love their sheep and we need to remember that!" Repeat the directions again.

4. Read John 10:7-16, with energy and enthusiasm, pausing after each mention of sheep and shepherds.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

⁷Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who *ever* came before Me^[a] are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.¹⁰The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

¹¹"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹²But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

5. Applaud the sheep and shepherds for good listening. Then say, "God calls us His sheep, so when you hear the word sheep, it's actually talking about you! How funny! The Bible also tells us that Jesus is our Good Shepherd, who takes care of us. We're going to read God's Word one more time. Except this time, when you hear the word sheep, point to yourself. When you hear the word shepherd, make the sign for Jesus (or have students point upwards to God.) It's so important to hear our Shepherd's voice." (Repeat directions again.)

6. Repeat John 10:7-16, pausing again after the words 'shepherd' and 'sheep'.

7. Applaud the sheep and shepherds again.

8. Ask the following review questions:

- What kind of animal does God say we are like sometimes? (Sheep)
- What does a Shepherd do? (He takes care of his sheep.)
- Who is our Good Shepherd? Who takes care of us? (Jesus)
- Whose voice should we learn to listen to? (The Good Shepherd or Jesus)
- How do we hear His voice? (God's word.)

Game: The Sheep, The Shepherd, and The Wolf

1. Tell the children that a shepherd knows his sheep by name. Every sheep has a name, just like each child does. When the shepherd calls the sheep, "Martha, Gracie, Fleece," the sheep come running. Sheep know and love their shepherd's voice. They will not run to a stranger. In fact, they will run away from a stranger.
2. Draw a parallel by saying that Jesus knows each of us by name also. We are so special to Him, that He died on the cross for each one of us. He loves us. It's important that we learn to hear our Jesus' voice. He is the Good Shepherd. We learn to hear his voice by praying, reading the Bible, and coming to church. It's also important to run away from strangers, sin, and danger.
3. Appoint one child to be the wolf and one to be the shepherd. (The teacher can also opt to be the shepherd, especially if the children are not familiar with one another's names.) The rest of the children will be sheep. Have the sheep stand at one end of the playing area (a larger space is best), the shepherd at the opposite end, and the wolf in the middle. Tell the students that the shepherd will call each of them by name. Once they hear their name, they are to try to reach the shepherd, without getting tagged by the wolf. If they get tagged, they need to take a sheep nap and sit down. If they don't get tagged, they are safe with the shepherd.
4. Continue play until all students' names have been called.

5. **Accompanying Song: "One Little Two Little Three Little Sheep"**

One little, two little, three little sheep
Four little, five little, six little sheep
Seven little, eight little, nine little sheep
Ten sheep loved by the Shepherd