

The Good Shepherd

John 10:1-21

MEMORY VERSE

JOHN 10:14

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A chalkboard and chalk.

Some chairs to create a "sheepfold."

A sheet.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

The Animal Game

Have your class name some animals that are ferocious and have them describe what it is about these animals that makes them dangerous. Write each animal's name on the chalkboard under the heading "Ferocious."

Next, have your class name some animals that are helpless and have them describe what these animals do to protect themselves. For example, turtles have a shell, a cow is large and has horns, etc. Write each animal name on the chalkboard under the heading "Helpless."

Make sure that sheep are listed under the "Helpless" category. Explain to your class that sheep have no means of protection and that we are going to hear a story that Jesus told about sheep and a shepherd.

LESSON TIME!

In today's lesson we are going to learn about sheep and their shepherds. A shepherd is someone who takes care of sheep. We will learn that Jesus is our Good Shepherd. During Jesus' time many people were shepherds. Have you ever seen a shepherd? What did he look like? Can you name people from the Bible who were shepherds? (David, Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, etc.)

Shepherds take care of their sheep. A shepherd will often spend the night outside with his sheep. He will gather the sheep together in a pen so they are not scattered. The shepherd would then sleep across the opening of the pen. He did this so the sheep would not wander out and get lost; it was also to keep the wild animals out. A good shepherd will protect his sheep with his life!

Sheep, on the other hand, stand in fields and eat grass. Have you ever seen a sheep? What did it look like? They have skinny legs, lots of fluffy wool and they say, "Baa, baa." If an animal wanted to eat them, how would they defend themselves? They have no claws, no sharp teeth, no armor, cannot run fast, and are not very smart. They are helpless.

So it was up to the shepherd to protect the defenseless sheep, especially at night when wild animals tried to attack the sheep. Sometimes the shepherd would have someone else sleep at the entrance of the pen. He was called a door keeper. He opened and shut the door for only the shepherd. He was not supposed to open the door for anyone except the shepherd of the sheep. He was supposed to keep the opening guarded so wolves, lions, or bears could not get in. Sometimes a false shepherd would try to get in. He would come up to the door keeper and say, "Let my sheep out," or "Let me come in." The doorkeeper's job was to make sure it was the real shepherd.

Now let's listen to the story Jesus told about the sheep and the shepherd.

JOHN 10:1-5

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

"But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

"To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

"And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

"Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Sometimes thieves or wild animals would try to get into the sheepfold by climbing over the wall. The shepherd never entered the sheepfold by climbing over the wall. If someone were trying to enter some other way besides the door, he must be a thief or a robber.

If any thieves or robbers tried to get in by the doorkeeper, he would not let them in. Even if the false shepherd got in to the sheepfold, the sheep would not listen to him because they only listen to the good shepherd. They would not follow the false shepherd out of the pen, because they do not recognize his voice.

In this story we are like the sheep and **Jesus is the Good Shepherd**. We need to understand that our good shepherd loves us and will protect us. We are given some warning here in this verse about those we need to watch out for. We need to be careful of people who would try to enter into the Lord's sheepfold some other way than how He says we should. There are many in this world who would say they are Christians but refuse to truly accept Jesus. They may say that there are many different ways to be a Christian. But the Bible says that there is only one way to enter heaven, and that is through Jesus (John 14:6).

There are also those who would try to lead us away from following our shepherd Jesus. We are told not to listen to those who have a strange voice. Jesus' voice is familiar. As His sheep, we know Him and walk with Him. If anyone tries to tell you anything different or tries to get you to follow them you need to stay away from them. We should only listen to our Shepherd's voice, Jesus.

The Good Shepherd

Set up some chairs in the corner of your classroom to make a "pen" or sheepfold for some of the children in your class who will pretend to be sheep. Have them get down on all fours and "baa." Select some children to be wild animals and one to be the doorkeeper. Have a couple of children pretend to be a false shepherd.

Instruct the "wild animals" to try to climb over the wall (chairs), but make sure the doorkeeper chases him away. Have the "false shepherds" try to get in by asking the doorkeeper. Have the doorkeeper turn away the first one, but "accidentally" let in the second.

Have the false shepherd try to get the sheep to follow him out of the pen. Instruct the sheep to ignore the false shepherd. Then you pretend to be the Good Shepherd. Get rid of the false shepherd and lead your sheep out to the pasture.

Explain to the class that in order to be one of Jesus' sheep, we must accept Him as our Good Shepherd. When we are in the sheepfold, we can expect that the enemies will be chased off, but if one does slip in, we must recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd in order to avoid being lead astray. This is done by knowing the Word of God. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd**, and He will lead us in the right direction and keep us safe!

JOHN 10:6-9

Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

"All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

Jesus wants us to know there is only one way to be one of God's sheep. Only by asking Jesus to be our shepherd, can we be one of God's sheep. Have you asked Jesus to be your shepherd? Anyone who claims to know another way to become one of God's sheep is just a thief and a liar. There is no other good shepherd but Jesus. When we have Jesus as our shepherd, we are safe. He will lead us to Heaven. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.**

JOHN 10:10-16

"The 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.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

"But 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.

"The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

"As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

"And 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.

If Jesus is the ultimate Shepherd, then who is the ultimate thief? Satan, the Devil. He wants to kill us, rob us, and destroy us. He is the one who tries to deceive us into following a false shepherd. False shepherds are bad shepherds. They are being used by Satan to try to trick and deceive sheep into following someone besides Jesus. Only Jesus died for us. He died on the cross to save us from sin and protect us. He gave His life for ours. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.**

Other people follow false shepherds. False shepherds will not give their lives for the sheep. They will not protect the sheep. If a wolf comes to attack the sheep, the false shepherd will run away and let the wolf eat the sheep. This is why we need to let our friends know that they need to make Jesus the shepherd of their lives. A false shepherd does not really love or care for the sheep. He just wants to steal from them, kill them, and destroy them (John 10:10).

The good Shepherd, Jesus, loves all the sheep of the world. He wants all the people of the world to follow Him. There is not a single person who Jesus does not love and want to protect and rescue. He does not want anyone to die without accepting Him as their Shepherd (2 Peter 3:9). He wants one flock following one Shepherd. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.**

JOHN 10:17-18

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

Jesus came to earth as a man to die for the whole world. Jesus, our Shepherd, died on the cross. Is He still dead? No! He rose again on the third day. What does resurrection mean? Resurrection is coming back to life from death. Jesus told the crowd of people that He could and would lay His life down (die on the cross) and receive it again (resurrection). And He did this because God told Him to do it for us! **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.**

JOHN 10:19-21

Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings.

And many of them said, "He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?"

Others said, "These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Some of the people Jesus was speaking to thought He was crazy. After all, who could raise himself or herself from the dead? Who has the power to do this? Only God's Son, the Good Shepherd can do this. If Jesus is your shepherd, He can and will do the same for you. When we die with Jesus as our Good Shepherd, He will raise us in newness of life and take us to heaven. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd.**

The Good Shepherd's Voice

Pick a child to represent the Good Shepherd and another child to represent a false shepherd. (Note: you may want to play the part of the false shepherd yourself or have your helper play it; it is possible this could make a child feel bad.) Hold or tie a large sheet up that these two children can stand behind. Have them take turns giving various commands to your class like in the game "Mother, May I." If the children respond to the voice of the Good Shepherd they may stay in the game. If they respond to the voice of the false shepherd they must sit down.

Explain to the class the importance of recognizing the voice of the Good Shepherd and underscore that the only way we can do this is by knowing God's Word.

OPTIONS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Play animal charades. Have the children act out the characteristics of animals, or have them make animal sounds. Point out the defense or lack of defense each animal has. Be sure to point out the defenselessness of sheep.

Before class cut out a blue lake, green grass, and a sheepfold and place them on the floor. Choose a shepherd and let him lead the children around the classroom to find fresh grass, cool still water, a place to rest and the fold. Ask for a volunteer to show what a bad shepherd would or would not do.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for Jesus being our Good Shepherd. If there are any children who have not received Jesus as their Savior, give them an opportunity to do so.