

Use Week of: _____

Unit 23 • Session 5

The Good Shepherd

BIBLE PASSAGE:

John 10

STORY POINT:

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for His people.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 14:25-26

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

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Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/thegospelproject.

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. A shepherd enters the pen through the gate.

When the sheep hear the shepherd’s voice, they recognize him and follow him. A shepherd calls his sheep by name, and he leads them. If the sheep hear the voice of a stranger, they will run away.”

The people did not understand Jesus’ story. Jesus was talking about God’s people as sheep. The Jewish leaders were the stranger, 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 gate that leads to true life. People who come to Him are like sheep who come to green pastures. 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.”

“I am the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep,”



Jesus 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 and rise again.

The Jews argued with one another. Many said, “Don’t listen to Him; He has a demon. He’s crazy.” Others said, “That’s not true. How can a demon 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 because you are not My sheep. My miracles prove who I am.” Jesus reminded them that He is the good shepherd. “My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of My hand. The Father and I are one.”

Christ Connection: Jesus is the Good Shepherd. God sent Him to rescue sinners. Jesus laid down His life for His sheep so they could have forgiveness and eternal life. When we trust in Jesus, we are His sheep who listen to, follow, and obey Him.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Display props:** Show props related to the Bible story such as a stuffed animal sheep or shepherd’s staff.
- **Make eye contact:** Draw kids into the story by making eye contact as you speak.

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. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think about who protects them. Offer suggestions, such as police officers, firefighters, crossing guards, parents, and so forth.

SAY • A lot of people work to protect us in different ways.

Today, we will learn about a time Jesus explained how He protects His people. What do you think Jesus might have compared Himself to? What do you think He said we were like?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Guard the Flock” activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Guard the Flock” activity page. Instruct kids to draw lines connecting the dots in numerical order to complete the picture.

SAY • If you want to keep a flock of sheep safe, it is important to have a fence to keep them in and keep predators out. Today we will learn about some things Jesus said about Himself and how He protects His sheep. Who do you think are Jesus’ sheep?

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Sheep wranglers

Use tape to mark a square on the floor, approximately five feet on each side. Select a child to be the Shepherd. The rest of the kids will be sheep and scatter around the room. The shepherd must lead the kids back to the square on the floor by holding hands with them and guiding them to that area. When the shepherd leaves to rescue another sheep, those in the pen may wander off again. The shepherd can only rescue one sheep at a time.

SAY • That game probably felt impossible for the shepherd. A sheep pen without a fence and gate would be pretty useless wouldn't it? Today we will learn about a time Jesus said that He is the gate to the sheep pen. He also said He is the Good Shepherd. We will learn what that means soon.

OPTION 2: Sheep skin

Provide each kid with a paper plate. Invite the kids to draw a sheep's face on the plate. Provide cotton balls and glue for the kids to attach "wool" to their sheep face. Help the kids cut eye holes in the plate. Use tape to attach string to the masks so the kids can wear them. You may encourage the kids to wear their masks during the Bible story.

SAY • Jesus taught that His people are like sheep, and He is like a shepherd. Today, we will learn more about what that means. What do you think makes a shepherd good?

**LOW
PREP**

· masking tape

· paper plates
· markers
· scissors
· glue
· cotton balls
· tape
· string

Transition to teach the story

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. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader enters wearing business casual attire.]

LEADER • Hey, friends. I'm glad you could make it back again this week. I have a question for all of you: how many of you can tell your teacher is upset with you just by the sound of his or her voice? One of the best skills you can develop as a teacher is a good stern voice to use when kids misbehave. Often, just saying a kid's name in the "teacher voice" is enough to make him behave!

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Believe it or not, that actually reminds me a little bit of our Bible story this week. We'll learn that Jesus said those who are His followers will recognize His voice in the same way sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd. And my guess is it's also similar to how you know your teachers' voices. I'll get into it more soon, but first, let's review the big picture question and answer.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • *What did Jesus teach when He was on earth?*

Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him. Because of Jesus' teachings recorded in God's Word, we know a lot about God. Jesus' role on earth was to live a perfect life, die as the perfect sacrifice for sin, and come back to life to defeat death. A part of His perfect life was telling people about God and His kingdom. Jesus wanted people to know God personally. His work on the cross made it possible for us to understand and obey God's Word.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

· Giant Timeline

LEADER • We have learned a lot about Jesus' teachings.

Jesus taught people how to live in God's kingdom. We know that **following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it. Jesus taught people how to pray, and Jesus taught people not to worry because God provides for our needs.** Today, we will learn that Jesus taught that He is a shepherd. But not just any shepherd, Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to John 10. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "The Good Shepherd."

LEADER • In those days, many people would have been familiar with the job of shepherd. In lots of places in the Old Testament, God's Word uses sheep and

· Bibles
· "The Good Shepherd" video
· Big Picture Question Poster
· Bible Story Picture Poster
· Story Point Poster

shepherds as examples. Jacob was a shepherd, and so was Moses. David was a shepherd before he became king and even wrote a psalm saying God was his shepherd. So when Jesus spoke of sheep, the religious leaders knew he was really talking about God's people.

Jesus' teaching is important because it helps us understand that some people want to hurt God's children, like the thief. Others may not want to hurt God's children, but they won't stay around to protect them either, like the hired hand. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for His people.** He laid down His life for us.

The religious leaders were very upset when Jesus said these things because they knew that Jesus was saying He is God. They did not want to believe that, but it is true. Jesus is God the Son. He came to earth to save people from sin by dying on the cross and rising again on the third day. Everyone who believes becomes a sheep in Jesus' flock. And Jesus never loses any sheep. We can trust that Jesus will care for us perfectly until the day He returns to fully start His perfect kingdom.

Christ connection

LEADER • Jesus is the Good Shepherd. God sent Him to rescue sinners. Jesus laid down His life for His sheep so they could have forgiveness and eternal life. When we trust in Jesus, we are His sheep who listen to, follow, and obey Him.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 23, Session 5” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why it’s good for us to follow Jesus. Guide them to discuss what happens when we follow our own desires.

· “Unit 23, Session 5”
Questions from Kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the “Toronto Photos” printable. Point to Toronto, Ontario, on a world map. Explain that Canada is in North America and borders the United States. More than 140 languages are spoken in Toronto, but English is the most common language. Invite volunteers to read the captions of the photos aloud to the group.

· “Toronto Photos”
printable
· world map

LEADER • Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for His people. He cares about the people in Canada, and He cares about you and me. Because He cares, He wants everyone to know about Jesus and trust in Him to have forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Close in prayer for missionaries around the world who are telling people about Jesus.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 14:25-26. Then sing the key passage song.

· Key Passage Poster
· “I Have Spoken
(John 14:25-26)” song

LEADER • Jesus wanted His sheep to know His teachings and obey Him. That’s why He sent the Holy Spirit to live with us and help us remember and obey God’s Word.

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • Jesus accepts us just as we are and helps us grow in Him. Let’s worship Him together.

· “Just As I Am” song

Sing together “Just As I Am.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for sending Jesus. Help us love
and trust Him each day. Give us courage to obey.
Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY 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. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- table tennis balls
- marker
- straws (optional)

Write each word or phrase of the key passage on a table tennis ball. Place the balls on one side of the room, and invite the kids to work together to blow the table tennis balls to the other side of the room. There, they will arrange the balls to form the key passage. You may provide straws to help the kids direct their blowing. Then allow volunteers to say the passage from memory. Thank each kid for her effort. Encourage all the kids to continue memorizing the key passage.

SAY • While Jesus was on earth, He taught many wonderful things. Thankfully, now that Jesus has risen from the dead and returned to be with God, the Holy Spirit lives with believers to help us remember the wonderful things Jesus taught. We never have to be alone. We can trust Jesus' promise and know that the Holy Spirit lives with believers.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970, optional)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find John 10. Remind kids that John was Jesus' disciple. John wrote down many of Jesus' teachings about who He is.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. How will sheep know their shepherd? (*by his voice, John 10:3-4*)
2. Why does a thief come? (*only to steal, kill, and destroy; John 10:10*)
3. What does the good shepherd do? (*lays down his life for the sheep, John 10:15*)
4. Why do you think Jesus compares people to sheep? *Guide kids to understand that sheep are animals that need guidance. On their own, they cannot thrive. Help them understand that using the imagery of sheep also calls back to Psalm 23 and Old Testament figures like David, Moses, and Jacob.*
5. How can we become part of Jesus' flock? *Guide kids to see that Jesus' flock includes all people who have faith in Jesus. We cannot earn salvation, but God gives it freely to all who believe the truth of the gospel. Remind kids that salvation comes by grace through faith.*
6. How do you feel knowing that no one can snatch us from Jesus? *Lead kids to find and read John 10:28. Guide kids to discuss their feelings. Help them see that everyone who has faith in Jesus has eternal life. Explain to them that Jesus' promise is not based on our behavior but on His power and goodness. Share your thoughts about these promises.*

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

SAY • Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for His people. Jesus said He would lay down His life for His sheep, and He died on the cross for our sins. He said He would take His life up again, and He rose from the dead on the third day. We can trust Jesus' promises to protect and care for us.

- index cards
- crayons and markers
- pictures of flags from other countries (optional)

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Flag designers

Provide each kid with an index card. Challenge the kids to design a flag they might want to use if they were to create a new country. You may show pictures of different flags from countries around the world.

SAY • Flags are a great way to show symbols that help people know what is important to your country. The Canadian flag has a maple leaf on it because maple trees are an important part of Canada’s culture and economy. But there many people from many different cultures and nations living in Canada. That’s why missionaries live in cities like Toronto to share the gospel with people from all over the world. The culture of Toronto is a blend of Canadian culture and the cultures from other countries. When we are willing to get to know people who are different from us, God can use us to share the gospel.

OPTION 2: I know that voice

Select a kid to stand in front of the class. He will close his eyes or wear a blindfold. Silently select another kid to say the story point aloud. The blindfolded kid will have to guess who spoke. Play multiple rounds, allowing each kid to have a turn at the different roles.

SAY • Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice and know Him. We can hear God’s words to us when we read the Bible. That is the key way that God “speaks” to us today. When we read God’s Word, we learn more about Him and how He wants us to live. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for His people.** If you have faith that Jesus died for your sin and rose again

**LOW
PREP**

- blindfolds

on the third day, you are part of His flock, and the Bible is God's voice speaking to you.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.