



I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

JOHN 10:1-18

GOAL

- ▶ **To teach children the difference between a good and loving shepherd and a mere hireling.** Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd;" He then uses beautiful imagery to describe how a devoted shepherd relates to his sheep—a picture of love, care, kindness, truth, and sacrifice. By contrast, He describes the hireling as an opportunist who sees the sheep only as a way to get something for himself—a picture of pride, selfishness, deception, and cowardice. This lesson aims to help children recognize the Good Shepherd's voice and to be wary of any other.
-

WORDS TO KNOW

- ▶ **Shepherd:** Someone who leads and cares for his own flock of sheep. In the context of the story, Jesus is the beloved shepherd who leads, protects, restores, and ultimately sacrifices for the sheep of His pasture—all those who hear the Good Shepherd's voice and follow Him.
-

MEMORY VERSES

- ▶ **John 10:11:** I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
- John 10:27:** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
- Psalms 95:7:** For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, oh that ye would hear His voice!
-



OVERVIEW



Read John 10:1-18: Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” With every action and every bold statement, Jesus continues to reveal His true identity. And now He makes His fourth “I am” statement, dropping even more clues that reveal His eternal plan to restore fellowship with God. He said, “I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” The religious leaders, who were charged as under-shepherds to represent, teach, and lead Israel according to God’s Word, had lost all righteous conviction. They used their position and authority to promote themselves. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, presented a clear contrast. He came to serve, not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

SUGGESTIONS



Discuss the differences between the Good Shepherd and the hireling:

- 1. The voice of the Good Shepherd:** His message is distinct, and His words are life to anyone willing listen and obey. Other voices, such as religions or philosophies, might offer solutions and reward, but they can never deliver salvation. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”
- 2. The voice of the hireling:** The hireling, the false shepherd, will teach and advise things that contradict God’s Word.
- 3. Leadership of the Good Shepherd:** The Good Shepherd leads in paths of righteousness—the right way to do things, the right way to think about things, and the right way to salvation.
- 4. Leadership of the hireling:** The false shepherd’s teachings lead down a deceitful path, leading to destruction.
- 5. Relationship of the Good Shepherd to the sheep:** The Good Shepherd knows each sheep by name and counts each life more precious than His own. He is theirs, and they are His forever. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, loves His sheep.
- 6. Relationship of the hireling to the sheep:** To the hireling, the flock of sheep are just a blur of faces without names. His only concern is how he can benefit from them.



PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY



Who am I?

Have the kids form a circle, and ask for a volunteer to come to the middle and put on a blindfold. Have an adult spin the blindfolded volunteer in one direction, and instruct the kids in the circle to rotate the circle in the opposite direction. After a moment, have them stop. Now, instruct the blindfolded child to point in the direction of one of the kids in the circle and call out the name of any animal. The child the blindfolded volunteer is pointing to will make the sound of that animal. The blindfolded child will try to guess who is making the animal noise based on their voice.

Sheep know the voice of their shepherd, and they follow.

.....

MEMORY VERSE MEANING



John 10:11: Jesus compares Himself to a shepherd who loves His sheep and would risk His own life to save them.

John 10:27: Just as sheep hear and obey their shepherd, we can learn to recognize the voice of Jesus.

Psalms 95:7: As in the other Scriptures, God is our shepherd, and we are his very own sheep. Listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd.



POST-LESSON ACTIVITY

▶ **Verse Toss | Supplies:** A soft play ball, beanbag, tightly rolled up paper, Styrofoam ball, or rolled up sock.

Repeat one of the memory verses several times with the group before beginning this activity. Now, have the children form a circle, and give one of the children the ball. To begin the activity, the child with the ball will quote the verse, then toss it to another child. That child will quote the verse and then toss it to someone else, and so on. Make sure every child gets a chance to quote the verse and toss the ball.

TAKE HOME

▶ Using Scripture, help children identify the voice of the Good Shepherd so they will not fall for the destructive lies of the false shepherd. Here are a few examples:

1. The Good Shepherd or the False Shepherd? There are many ways to God and to His eternal Kingdom.

Answer: The False Shepherd. Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)]

2. The Good Shepherd or the False Shepherd? Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Answer: The Good Shepherd. "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." (1 John 4:15)]

3. The Good Shepherd or the False Shepherd? Do whatever seems right to you.

Answer: The False Shepherd. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (Proverbs 14:12)]

4. The Good Shepherd or the False Shepherd? Knowing the Word of God will help you keep from being deceived.

Answer: The Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd says about those who are deceived, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." (Matthew 22:29)]



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 1



Q1a: How does the Good Shepherd know each of His sheep?

A1: The Good Shepherd knows each of His sheep by name.

Q1b: Do you know the names of everyone who lives in your city or town?

TN: Unless we live in really small towns, it's unlikely that we would know the name of every single person living there. Not only does Jesus know the names of every single person ever born, He knows everything about every single person. Even further than that, He has loved every single one of those people. But it doesn't stop there either. Jesus knows the names of every person who will ever be born. He knows everything about these people, and He loves them. This knowledge isn't just a bunch of information that He has memorized like a robot; He knows it because He cares about us and finds joy in knowing the details of our lives.

SLIDE 2



Q2a: The hireling cares about what more than the sheep?

A2: The hireling cares more about money than the sheep.

Q2b: Your friend, who is swimming in a lake, calls to you on the shore for help. Do you stop to take off your new shoes before rescuing your friend?

TN: No way! We'd jump right in and help our friend. It would be a bummer to ruin a brand new pair of shoes, but it would be much worse for our friend to get hurt. Jesus gave up His power and authority in Heaven to come live on earth as a human. While on earth, He was made fun of and treated horribly. In the ultimate show of self-sacrifice, Jesus laid down His life for the very people who were cruel to Him. Jesus did all of that because He values our lives—not because He gets something out of it—but because He loves us.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 3



A3: The hireling is counting his money while the sheep are wandering helplessly through the fields.

Q3b: Have you ever seen a sheep?

TN: We don't have to live on a farm to have been in a position to have seen a sheep; however, it's pretty unlikely that any of us have ever been or even known a shepherd. So why does the Bible, and even Jesus, use examples that don't make much sense to us? At the time the Bible was written and Jesus was teaching on the earth, these examples were very relevant. While not everything in the Bible may seem like it applies to our lives now, it does. Every word is significant. The challenge for us is to figure out how it relates and fits into our lives today. So here's another way to look at the Good Shepherd example: Scout leader vs. a shady, paid trail guide. The Scout leader cares for the boys or girls in his or her troop. The Scout leader pays attention to the scouts and makes sure that they are safe. If danger were to encounter the troop, the Scout leader would protect the scouts. A shady, paid trail guide is in it for the money, and more than likely would run at the first sign of danger. Like the Scout leader, Jesus is active in our lives and wants us to be safe.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 4



Q4a: Who is the sole defense for the sheep?

A4: The Good Shepherd is the sole defense for the sheep.

Q4b: Which would you rather have to protect you from wild animals: a screen door or a heavy, metal door?

TN: The metal door would do a much better job of keeping us protected from wild animals. The idea of the Good Shepherd being the sole defense for the sheep may seem a bit insufficient, but really, it's the best protection anyone could ever have. Jesus created everything we see. If He has the power to create everything from nothing, what doesn't He have the power to do?

SLIDE 5



Q5a: What does the Good Shepherd consider more precious than His own life?

A5: The Good Shepherd considers the lives of the sheep more precious than His own life.

Q5b: Who do you love most in the world?

TN: Let students answer. Ask them if they think anyone could love these people more than they do, and let them answer. Tell them that while they may love these people a lot, Jesus loves them more. It's hard to understand that no matter how much we love our family and friends, Jesus loves them so much more. The same is true for ourselves. No matter how much our friends and family love us, Jesus loves us more.

Slide 6



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 6



Q6a: What did Jesus call out to the people?

A6: Jesus called out “I am the Good Shepherd.”

Q6b: Would you give your most prized possession to a complete stranger who may or may not keep it?

TN: If the person isn't going to keep it, then why on earth would we give them something we love? That just doesn't make sense! Jesus gave His life to free every person from sin and death, knowing that not every person would accept His gift of salvation. He did it willingly and with a heart full of love, even though He knew many people would reject Him.

SLIDE 7



Q7a: Why did Jesus say He had come?

A7: Jesus said He had come so that we might have life, and life more abundantly.

Q7b: To have a good time hanging out with your friend, you only need an hour. Would you turn down an opportunity to hang out for two hours?

TN: No, that extra hour is just bonus fun. That's an abundance of fun spent with friends. An abundance is more of something than is needed or so much of something that it is beyond measure. When Jesus said He wants us to have life, and life more abundantly, He is referring to eternal life that is promised to those who follow Him. All we need to do to receive this abundant life, is to accept Jesus as our Savior. It's that simple.



MEMORY VERSES

▶ **John 10:11:** I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:27: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Psalms 95:7: For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, oh that ye would hear His voice!

.....

BIG IDEA

▶ Jesus watches over us and protects us from harm.

.....

CLOSING PRAYER

▶ Dear Jesus, You are the Great Shepherd. Thank You for coming—not to be served, but to serve—and for dying for the sins of the world. I pray that each of us would hear Your voice, and follow You. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 1



As Jesus stood in front of a large crowd, He felt love and kindness toward them. They were like sheep without a shepherd—lost and alone. Long ago, God had promised to rescue them from the curse of sin and free them from the abuse and neglect of false shepherds. “I am the Good Shepherd,” Jesus said. The Good Shepherd cares about His sheep and knows each one by name; the Good Shepherd loves His sheep and is willing to lay down His life for them.

SLIDE 2



The hireling is a false shepherd, who cares only about the money he earns by watching over someone else's sheep. It's just a job to him, so when danger comes, he runs away, leaving the flock behind. Why should he put himself at risk for a bunch of nameless animals that don't even belong to him? He views his life as much more important than theirs. Even a small sacrifice is too much for him to make for a flock of helpless sheep he views as worthless.

SLIDE 3



The hireling is often seen counting his money while the sheep wander helplessly through the fields. If any of the sheep were in danger, he would not notice until it is too late to help them. The hireling is a coward who runs from any threat; he would leave the helpless sheep unprotected from people or other animals that want to cause them harm.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 4



But the Good Shepherd never lets His sheep out of His sight. He is theirs, and they are His. There is no pain or sadness that they will ever bear alone. The enemy may hunt and take action to destroy them, but the Good Shepherd will always stand in front of the sheep as a protective shield against any enemy. He is their sole defense.

SLIDE 5



The Good Shepherd considers the lives of His sheep to be more precious than His own. He will not hesitate to give up His power and position—even His life—in order to save them so that they might gain everything. The Good Shepherd loves the sheep more than He loves His own life.

SLIDE 6



Jesus called out to the people in His audience, “I am the Good Shepherd.” His love for them was eternal, and His care for them was unending. Soon He would lay down His life for the sheep He loved: those who hear His voice and follow Him. Jesus died for all sinners; He was willing to give His life as payment for the sins of the world.

SLIDE 7



Jesus said, “I have come that they might have life, and life more abundantly!” Jesus loves us more than He loved His own life, and He has come to seek and save all who are lost. Call on the name of the Good Shepherd—the name of Jesus—and you will be saved!