

The Good Shepherd

Lesson At-A-Glance

Scripture Reference
John 10:11-18

Church Season
Easter 4

Lesson Focus
Jesus cares for us like a good shepherd.



Tear here for easy use!

Gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
<p>Arrival Time Kids make the background for a mural, and do an Activity Page.</p>	<p>Activity Pages </p>	<p>Pencils, markers, mural paper, masking tape</p>
<p>Circle Time Kids gather in a circle to greet each other, hear about the lectionary season, and talk about a shepherd's job description.</p>	<p>Leaflet, Spark Story Bible</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Prayer Time Kids pray quietly, then louder.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
<p>The Good Shepherd Storytelling Leader or kid reads aloud from the Spark Story Bible and kids are called by name to add their sheep to the mural.</p>	<p>Spark Story Bibles</p>	<p>Cotton balls, glue sticks</p>
<p>Signing Sheep Kids learn sign language motions to "tell" the story.</p>	<p>Leaflets, Lesson Stickers</p>	<p>Pencils</p>
<p>Who Am I? Kids write about things they like and share their favorites.</p>	<p>Leaflets</p>	<p>Pencils</p>

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
"Christ Is Risen" Words Kids create words using the letters in the phrase "Christ is risen."	Leaflets	Pencils
Do You Know About Sheep? Kids see how much they know about sheep.	Leaflets	Pencils
Don't Look Who's Talking Kids play a voice recognition game.	None	Bandana (optional)

Send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Good-Bye Time Kids select what they will do at home this week, say the lesson focus statement, and gather to say good-bye.	Leaflets, Family Pages 	Pencils, scissors
Prayer Time Kids pray in two groups.	None	None



Visit www.sparksundayschool.org for more Spark content! Watch a short Lesson Prep Video that will prepare you and give you confidence to explore this Bible story with the kids you are leading. You will also find four downloadable resources for this lesson: an Activity Page, a Family Page, and two additional in-class activities.

Gather (10 minutes)

Arrival Time

Set out copies of the Activity Page for this lesson and pencils. Cover a table with mural paper and tape the corners of the paper to the table so the paper doesn't shift as the kids are working on the mural.

Welcome the kids by name. **What's your favorite animal?** Pause for responses. **If you owned this animal, how would you care for it?** Affirm responses. Tell the kids about your favorite animal and how you would care for it too. **Today we're going to learn about sheep and how to care for them. What are some ways that sheep are important to us?** (*We shear off their woolly coats, turn the wool into yarn, and weave warm clothes from it.*) **How would you care for a sheep?** (*Lead it to places where it could eat lots of green grass or hay, give it clean water to drink, keep it safe from wolves or other predators.*)

Let's work together to draw a mural of a beautiful countryside where lots of sheep could graze. We'll need lots of green grass, different kinds of wildflowers for sheep snacks, a couple of little streams for fresh water, a blue sky with a big sun, and a few puffy clouds. You might add butterflies, birds, and other animals too. Have kids gather around the table to draw the mural. Encourage them to briefly plan the parts they will draw before they begin. After a few minutes, remove the mural from the table and tape it to a wall in your classroom, at the kids' eye level.

Invite kids to do the Activity Page.

Circle Time

Invite the kids to stand in a circle facing out. Hold each other's hands up high. One at a time, turn 180 degrees to the left, crossing your arms so that you are facing into the circle, your right arm over your left. Each person says, **"My name is [name] and I'm in God's family!"** Invite the next kid to your left to turn in to the circle in the same manner. Go around the circle until everyone is facing in. If you do this each week, make sure the kids stand in a different order so that no one is last every week.

Gather kids to sit in a circle, in a small group on the floor, or at tables.

If the kids in your class tried the Faith on the Go! activities from last week's leaflet, be sure to invite kids to share what they did. Ask everyone how they showed love to someone or helped another person during the last week.

Hold up the leaflet and point to the egg and cross symbol under the lesson title. **Let's look at the front of our leaflet. What church season is it?** (*Easter*) **Yes, today is the fourth Sunday in Easter. It's good to know that we can celebrate Easter and Jesus' new life for lots of Sundays. During the church season of Easter, we keep on celebrating Jesus' new life.**

Spark Resources

Activity Pages



Supplies

Pencils
Markers
Mural paper
Masking tape

Tear here for easy use!

Spark Resources

Leaflet

Supplies

Spark Story Bible

Today's story is about a sheep and a shepherd. It's a story Jesus told to the people. He told them that they were like the sheep and that he was the Good Shepherd. A shepherd uses a special tool to take care of sheep; it's called a staff.

Show the kids the picture of the shepherd holding a staff on page 437 of the Spark Story Bible. **The curve in the stick helps the shepherd guide the sheep. Where else have you seen a shape like this?** (*Christmas time—pictures of shepherds, candy canes.*) **When we see a shepherd's staff, it can remind us of our special relationship with Jesus. Jesus cares for us like a good shepherd.**

Prayer Time

Speak this prayer together (whispering at first, and then louder as you repeat it):

Jesus cares for us like a good shepherd.

Repeat the prayer several times. Close the prayer by saying,

Thanks to the Good Shepherd!

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

The Good Shepherd Storytelling

Have you ever seen a real shepherd? Have you seen one in a cartoon or movie or on TV? Did they carry a staff? In the Bible, Jesus talks about himself as the good shepherd. Let's read the story of The Good Shepherd to learn more about how shepherds take care of their sheep.

Pass out the Spark Story Bibles and invite everyone to find The Good Shepherd, on pages 436-439. Wait until all kids have found the story, assisting those who may need help. Encourage kids to follow along as you read or ask for a volunteer to read out loud.

In Jesus' time, shepherds named their sheep. Each night they would round up their sheep and lead them into a sheepfold. They called each sheep by name as it entered the fold. And sheep recognized their shepherds' voices. Shepherds would sleep in the doorway of their sheepfolds to guard their sheep against wild animals and thieves. Let's pretend that you are sheep and our classroom is a big grassy field. I want you to scatter all around the room. I'm your shepherd. When I call out your name, you come to me. I will give you a cotton ball to stick on the mural. This is your little sheep. Call each kid by name. Give each one a cotton ball and use a glue stick to attach the ball to the mural. Kids may continue to add cotton balls to make your flock bigger.

Have a brief conversation about the story. Ask the kids these questions:

1. **What are some things a good shepherd does for the sheep?** (*cares, knows, loves, protects, never forgets, finds, doesn't hide from danger*)

Spark Resources

Spark Story Bibles

Supplies

Cotton balls

Glue sticks

- 2 **Who are the sheep, according to Jesus?** (*We are!*)
3. **How do you know that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is watching over you?**
Affirm responses.

Signing Sheep

If kids are not already seated at a table, move to one for this activity. Give each kid a leaflet.

Jesus says that he cares for us like a good shepherd. The flock of sheep on this page needs someone to care for them. Who's missing? (*shepherd*) Use your large sticker to give the sheep what they need. Give the kids their large stickers and time to place them.

We can tell others about Jesus too. First let's use our voices and spoken words. Echo me, "Jesus cares for us like a good shepherd." Kids echo phrase. We can tell others about Jesus with our hands too. We can learn some sign language motions to tell others about Jesus without our voices.

Let's start with the word *Jesus*. Copy my actions. Touch middle finger of right hand to left palm, then middle finger of left hand to right palm (think of the nails in Jesus' hands on the cross). Say **Jesus** while signing the word.

The motions for the word *care* look like eyes watching out! Demonstrate motion: hold up two fingers in each hand, then lay right hand, pinkie side down, on top of left hand thumb side, and then circle both hands around. Say **care** while signing the word.

Let's put them both together and say, "Jesus cares for us." Show kids, let them copy you.

To sign the word *good*, touch your chin with the fingers of one hand, holding the other hand palm side up in front of your chest. Then drop the "chin hand" into your waiting palm, "Good!" Think about tasting food that is good, but don't put your fingers in your mouth!

***Shepherd* is the trickiest word to sign because we need to put three separate words together. We'll start with the sign for "sheep." Pretend one hand is a pair of scissors, use your pointer and middle fingers for the blades. Hold your other arm out, palm side up. Pretend it is the sheep whose wool you are going to shear. Move your "scissors" hand above your arm like you are cutting the wool off the sheep. The next motion is the same as signing the word *care* because shepherds care for their sheep! Sign the word *care*. Last, we add the sign for *person* because a shepherd is a person who takes care of sheep.** Demonstrate the word *person*: Face palms toward each other, waist height and lower hands together as if sliding down someone's torso. Show the kids, and let them copy. Sign "sheep" and "care" and "person" as you say, **Shep-herd. You've got it!**

Let's put the whole phrase together! Say the phrase signing the italicized words: **"*Jesus cares for us like a good shepherd.*"**

Spark Resources

Leaflets
Lesson Stickers

Supplies

Pencils

Tear here for easy use!

Now you can tell people about Jesus, the Good Shepherd, with your voice and your hands!

Let's look at the bottom of this page and read about where we can find this story in the Bible.

Today's Bible story, The Good Shepherd, is from the Gospel of John. John is one of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Gospel means good news!

Give kids the three word stickers. **Now look at the bottom of the third page in your leaflet. It has the same words that we just read, but it's missing some important words. Use the word stickers to fill in the blanks. Which word do you think goes where?** (*Shepherd, good, news*) After attaching the stickers, read the statements together.

If you are interested in teaching your kids a Bible Memory Verse from this story, use this one. Teach it to them by inviting them to echo what you say.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. John 10:14

Who Am I?

Invite kids to open to the second page of their leaflets.

Jesus knows a lot about who you are. In fact, Jesus knows all the things you like before you even say them out loud (or think them). Write down some of your favorites. Then we can share your MOST favorite thing. Give the kids time to write as you share, **"My MOST favorite thing is _____ . Jesus knows it, now you do too!"** Ask kids to share their MOST favorite thing and to repeat, "Jesus knows it, now you do too!"

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

Pencils

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

"Christ Is Risen" Words

Let's look at the third page of the leaflet.

We're still in the Easter season! What happened at the first Easter? (*Christ was raised from the dead, Jesus was alive again, the resurrection.*) **Find the words "Christ is risen" on your Try It page. Many other words can be made out of the same letters; for example, "nice." How many more words can we make? Find a partner and write as many as you can until I say, "Christ is risen." Then we'll share them together.** Give kids a few minutes to write and share.

If kids have trouble, suggest that they try words that start with S first. Don't worry about misspelled words. (At this age, getting the sound of the word is more important than getting the spelling of the word.)

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

Pencils

Do You Know About Sheep?

Turn to the back page of your leaflets.

How much do you really know about sheep? Let's learn what's real together. Ask for a volunteer to read #1, "Sheep have four parts to their stomach." **How many of you think that sentence is true? How many think it is false? How many parts do our stomachs have?** (*One main stomach.*) For #2, if kids aren't sure whether sheep are amphibians, see if they can tell you what else they might be (*reptiles, mammals, birds, fish, and so forth*).

Have the kids continue, guessing whether each answer is true or false. Afterwards, talk them through the correct answers.

1. **T They're called ruminants.**
2. **F They're actually mammals.**
3. **F They won't drink it even if it just has algae in it.**
4. **T That's something else unique about ruminants.**
5. **T Human and sheep faces—they can even tell emotions through facial expressions, isn't that weird?**
6. **T It may be itchy, but it's warm.**
7. **F Ewes are female sheep; lambs are baby sheep.**

Don't Look Who's Talking

Jesus knows everything about us, even our voices. Can we recognize each other's voices? Ask for one volunteer, who will close their eyes (or be blindfolded). Explain that you will point to someone who will say, "**Jesus cares for us like a good shepherd.**" The blindfolded person then guesses who was speaking. Kids can disguise their voices. Give each volunteer a few turns before asking for a new volunteer.

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
Pencils

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
Bandana (optional)

Tear here for easy use!

Send (5 minutes)

Good-Bye Time

We heard today that Jesus is like a good shepherd to us, because he watches over us and protects us like a good shepherd would. Jesus doesn't just want us to trust him, he also wants us to watch out for other sheep. We can share our love and share what we have learned today with other sheep. Who do you want to share with?

Direct attention to the back of the Faith on the Go! slip on the bottom of the back page of the leaflet, and have the kids fill in the blanks with the name of someone they want to give this slip to, their own name, and today's date. Encourage them to mark one or more of the ideas or add their own. Have kids cut the slip off on the line, ready to give to someone else.

After class, give this slip to someone you want to do the activity with. It's like a coupon for time with you. Next week, we can tell each other what we did to share God's love and remember our Bible story!

It's time for our closing circle. Give kids time to stand with you in a circle facing in. Ask everyone to cross their arms, right over left, and hold hands with the person beside them. Squeeze your right hand, and then invite the kids to squeeze their right hands one at a time. (You will be going clockwise.) Say, **"God gives** (name each kid as their hands are squeezed) **a squeeze and a hug today!"** Then shout together, **"Jesus cares for us like a good shepherd!"** Lift your arms up together, turn 180 degrees to the right, and now you will all be holding hands in a circle facing out.

Prayer Time

Split the class into two groups. Group 1 says, **"Jesus cares for us like a good shepherd,"** then Group 2 says, **"Thanks to the Good Shepherd!"** Repeat, starting quietly and gradually increasing your volume, then gradually decrease the volume until you are all praying silently.

Be sure to send leaflets and Family Pages home with kids.

Spark Resources

Leaflets
Family Pages



Supplies

Pencils
Scissors

Tear here for easy use!