

A SHEPHERD LOVES

The Good
Shepherd
John 10:1–18;
Psalm 23
AD 32

OVERVIEW

BIBLE TRUTH

Jesus cares for us.

BIBLE VERSE

[Jesus says,] “I am the good shepherd.” John 10:11

LEARNER GOAL

I understand that Jesus laid down His life for me and promises to lead, guide, and protect me.

LAW & GOSPEL

Because of sin, we face both physical and spiritual danger in this world.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for us; He promises to lead, guide, and protect us.

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd as He promises to lead and guide His sheep. Jesus willingly laid down His life for His sheep, even those who often ignore the voice of the Shepherd. His flock includes “other sheep,” Gentiles not descended from Abraham. David’s familiar Twenty-Third Psalm describes the work of our Good Shepherd.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read John 10:1–18; Psalm 23 and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

MORE TIME Read the leader devotion, found in the digital resource center.

IN DEPTH Read the article “The Witness of ‘I Am’ ” in *TLBS*, pages 1784–85, for more information on Jesus’ language in the lesson.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- ☐ Cotton balls
- ☐ Puppet
- ☐ Leash
- ☐ Egg cartons
- ☐ Plastic spoons
- ☐ Popcorn, mini marshmallows, green napkins
- ☐ Paper or toy sheep
- ☐ *LSB* hymnals

FOR EVERY LESSON

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Device with prepped music
- ☐ Copies of downloadable activity page
- ☐ Copies of Enduring Faith Page
- ☐ Supply Box

LAUNCH

Plan your lesson by reading through the options in each section. Choose the activities that will best fit your learners, and mark those boxes to guide you as you teach the lesson.

BEGIN

- ☐ Follow the Order of Opening Worship, use the Lesson Opening, or do both (part of the planning resources in the digital resource center).
- ☐ Sing songs using music found in the digital resource center, or sing your own favorite songs.

SAY

- ☐ **Hi, friends! I'm glad you are here to learn more about our friend and Savior, Jesus!**
- ☐ **How many of you had a stuffed animal sheep when you were little? How many of you had a real sheep? Have you ever seen a real sheep? What are they like? During Bible times, being a shepherd was a common profession.**

PRAY

Gracious heavenly Father, thank You for bringing us together today to study Your Word. Guide our discussion so that we may learn more about You. In Your name we pray. Amen.

LEARN

Show your Bible, and remind the children that all the stories in God's Word are true.

TELL THE BIBLE NARRATIVE

Choose one of the options on the next page to tell the Bible narrative.

DO THIS!

Use one or both of the following activities to talk about the Bible narrative after you've read it.

- ☐ **FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE YOUNGER** After you read the Bible narrative, make a mind map in a place that all students can see (on a white board or a large sheet of paper). Start by putting a circle with the words "Jesus, our Good Shepherd" in the middle. Then ask students to tell you words that describe Jesus as our Good Shepherd. Put those words in circles around the middle circle with lines connecting to it. If you're not sure what a mind map looks like, search online for examples. The complexity of your mind map will vary depending on the ages and experiences of your students.
- ☐ **FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE OLDER** Have students work in pairs or trios to make their own mind maps on large paper similar to the one described for younger students. When students are finished, have them present their mind maps to the whole group.

TALK ABOUT IT

Choose the questions that best fit the learning level of your group.

- ☐ What does a shepherd do for his sheep?
- ☐ How does Jesus care for you?
- ☐ From whom or what do we need protection today?

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Guide discussion using these key points.

- The context of this story in the Book of John is that Jesus was talking to the Pharisees. He was telling the Pharisees that they were the robbers and thieves from whom He had to protect His people, the sheep.
- The relationship between sheep and shepherd is very important. The trust the sheep have for their shepherd is essential.
- In Bible times, a sheep pen didn't have a door or a gate that would close, so the shepherd would lay across the opening at night. The shepherd provided the only way to get into the safety of the pen, and the shepherd protected the sheep from the dangers outside the pen. The shepherd also protected the sheep from wandering out of the pen and becoming lost. Jesus protects us and leads us. He is the door in and out of heaven.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ is the Good Shepherd, who loved us so much that He laid down His life for us so that we might have eternal life.

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

STORYTELLING DIRECTIONS: As you read the story, invite children to baa like sheep.

Do you remember King David? Before he became a king, he was a shepherd. That means he took care of sheep. David wrote many psalms in the Bible. One of them is about a shepherd taking care of sheep! It is Psalm 23.

Many years later, Jesus lived in the same country as King David. There were still many shepherds and sheep there. So the people knew the important work shepherds do in caring for their sheep. Jesus wanted the people to know about the important work He came to do and how He loves and cares for us. So one day, when Jesus was teaching the people, He told them a story about shepherds and sheep.

Let's pretend you are the sheep in Jesus' story. What does a sheep say? Yes, **baa-aa**. When you hear "**baa-aa**" in the story, can you say that?

In the morning, the good shepherd leads his sheep out of their pen. "Walk, walk, walk, little sheep," he says. The sheep and lambs know his voice, and they follow him. **Baa-aa, baa-aa**, they say.

The shepherd leads the sheep to green grass. "Eat, eat, eat, little sheep," he tells them. "You are safe here. I will take care of you." **Baa-aa, baa-aa**, say the sheep.

"No, no, no, little sheep. Don't go there! That water is too noisy and deep," says the shepherd. "You might fall in and get hurt!" He leads his sheep away from the rushing river. **Baa-aa, baa-aa**, say the sheep.

Finally, the shepherd finds a calm stream of water. "Drink, drink, drink, little sheep," says the shepherd. "Here

is quiet, fresh water for you. You won't get hurt here." **Baa-aa, baa-aa**, say the sheep.

"Watch, watch, watch, little sheep," warns the good shepherd. "Your woolly coat will get caught in that prickly bush. Stay close to me. I will keep you safe." **Baa-aa, baa-aa**, say the sheep.

"Shh, shh, shh, little sheep," says the shepherd. "Don't be afraid. I will protect you. I won't let anything hurt you." **Baa-aa, baa-aa**, say the sheep.

"Follow, follow, follow, little sheep," the shepherd says as he leads them back home for the night. **Baa-aa, baa-aa**, say the sheep. They follow the shepherd's voice all the way back to their sheep pen.

"Have no fear, have no fear, little sheep," says the shepherd. "I will always take care of you because I love you." **Baa-aa, baa-aa**, say the sheep. Then they lie down and go fast to sleep.

Jesus told the people listening to Him that He cares for us the way a shepherd cares for His sheep. Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He knows who we are and calls us by name. He gives us food to eat and clothes to wear. He gives us a warm bed to sleep in. He protects us from things that might hurt us. He gives us moms and dads and others to love us and keep us safe too. Best of all, Jesus died on the cross and rose again to save us. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, loves us so much!

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Long ago, David wrote beautiful Psalm 23, where he compared himself to a sheep. For many years, he had been a shepherd keeping watch over the sheep of his father, Jesse. He realized God watches over us like a shepherd. So he started writing, "The LORD is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1). In the tenth chapter of John, Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd."

To understand what Jesus was saying, we need to know a little bit about sheep. Sheep are not strong animals. They are not extra fast, and they don't have a lot of ways to defend themselves. If a wolf attacks a herd of unprotected sheep, it has an easy time grabbing one. Also, sheep easily wander off from one another in search of food to eat. It is easy for them to get lost and hurt.

So a shepherd has a very important job. He has to watch his sheep carefully and always be ready to keep them safe, remembering that many wild animals are hunting after them.

When Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd," He was reminding us of how much we need Him. Like sheep and lambs, we can't see the wolves that are hiding in the tall

grass, sneaking up to grab us. The devil, the sinful people around us, and our own sinful desires put us in great danger. But Jesus knows they are there. He is keeping watch over them—and using His Word and His gifts to protect us from them.

That is the greatest thing about Jesus, our Good Shepherd. Each of us was trapped, and the devil had us in great danger. But Jesus didn't leave us. He went to the cross to suffer and die to save us. But He didn't stay dead—a dead shepherd can't help the sheep anymore. No, Jesus rose again, so He will always be our Good Shepherd, protecting us and leading us to heaven.

There are many scary things in this world, but we don't have to be afraid, because Jesus is protecting us and guiding us through life. Jesus wants to protect everyone from every harm and danger and lead them home to heaven.

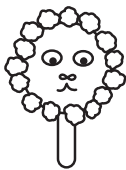
LIVE

Choose from the following activities and crafts to help connect Bible learning to life.

☐ Lamb Craft

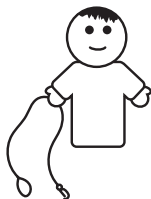
Tape a craft stick to the back of a small paper plate. Have children draw lamb eyes, nose, and mouth on the plate. Give them slightly pulled-apart cotton balls to glue around the face and to the back of the plate. Say, **Jesus is our Good Shepherd.**

We are His sheep! Jesus loves us. What are some ways He takes care of us?



☐ Puppet Talk

Have your puppet hold a leash. He says the leash is a clue about something special he got this week. Ask if they know what it is. It's a puppy! He asks the boys and girls if they have pets and what else he needs so he can take care of it (e.g., dishes and food, a bed, toys). Puppet says he loves his puppy so much and talks about caring for it. Tell him this reminds you of today's Bible story about Jesus caring for us.



☐ Follow the Shepherd

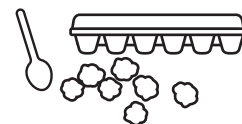
Choose a child to be the shepherd. Other children will follow the shepherd. Sing the following to the tune of "We're Following the Leader."

We're following the shepherd, The shepherd, the shepherd; We're following the shepherd, To see what [he/she] will do. Shepherd does an action (jump, clap, etc.) and others copy it. Give each child a chance to be the shepherd. Say, **Wherever we go, whatever we do, Jesus, our Good Shepherd, loves and cares for us.**



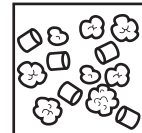
☐ Shepherd the Sheep

Set out cotton balls, egg cartons, and spoons. Have children pretend to bring the sheep (cotton balls) into their pens (egg cups) for the night. Have them count the sheep in each pen. Ask, **How does our Good Shepherd, Jesus, care for us?**



☐ Sheep Snack

Serve cups of water with popcorn and mini marshmallows on green napkins. Let children pretend the snacks are sheep, moving them around and saying baa-aa. Say, **Sheep need someone to take care of them. Who loves you and cares for you?** Accept answers (e.g., Mom and Dad; Jesus, our Good Shepherd).



☐ Hide and Sheep

Hide a paper or toy sheep somewhere in your classroom. Ask children to be good shepherds and look for the sheep. When they find it, hide it again. (Option: Hide a number of sheep to find.) At the end of the activity, talk about how Jesus, our Good Shepherd, cares for us.



☐ Good Shepherd Hymns

Using the *Lutheran Service Book* hymnal look at the hymns "I Am Jesus' Little Lamb" (LSB 740) and "Have No Fear, Little Flock" (LSB 735). Read the words as you would a poem. Talk about how these words connect to today's lesson. Find music online and sing them together.



LEAVE

SAY

Our Good Shepherd, Jesus, cares for us so much that He died on the cross for us and rose again. Wow! That's something to be excited about. I don't mind being a sheep if Jesus is my shepherd.

PRAY

Dear Jesus, thank You for being our Good Shepherd and for loving and caring for us so much. Help us to follow Your voice. Guide us today and always. In Your name we pray. Amen.