

A SHEPHERD LOVES

The Good Shepherd
John 10:1-18;
Psalm 23

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.

Supply List:

- Cotton balls & Glue optional
- Coloring Sheet of Jesus and Sheep
- Crayons or Markers
- Bible

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.

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?

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

Hide and Sheep

Hide a paper or toy sheep somewhere in the room. Ask children to be a good shepherd and look for the sheep. When they find it, hide it again. (Option: Hide a number of sheep to find get creative and use other stuffed animals but pretend they're sheep. Or let your children hide and each take turns being the Good Shepherd when you find them hug each sheep and say *Jesus, our Good Shepherd loves you and so do I.*)

At the end of the activity, talk about how Jesus, our Good Shepherd, cares for me & you.

Coloring Sheet

Print off the provided coloring sheet. Have each child color the sheet and if you have cotton balls and glue on hand they can even make the sheep fluffy.

At the end of the activity, talk about how Jesus, our Good Shepherd, cares for me & you.

Follow the Shepherd

Choose a someone to be the shepherd. Everyone 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. Then say, *Wherever we go, whatever we do, Jesus, our Good Shepherd, loves and cares for me and you.*

ENDING

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.

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