Preschool–Grade 6

The Good Shepherd

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus is the good shepherd. He knows His sheep by name and gave His life for them, so we listen to His voice and follow Him, not the voices of strangers.
Bible passage: John 10:1–18. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." *John 10:11 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Clear a safe, open path across the room for the opening game.

1. Opening game: Follow the Voice (5–10 minutes)

One child is the "sheep" and stands at one end of the room with eyes closed. Another child is the "shepherd" and stands at the other end. The shepherd calls simple directions: "Three steps forward. Turn a little left." At the same time, two or three "strangers" call wrong directions in a whisper. The sheep follows only the shepherd's voice. Walk beside the sheep to keep them safe. Switch players. Ask: *How did you know which voice to follow? Was it hard with the other voices talking?* Say: "Jesus said His sheep know His voice, and they will not follow a stranger."

2. Bible story: I Am the Good Shepherd (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to John 10. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Who was listening. Jesus had just healed a man who was blind from his birth, and the man came seeing (John 9:1, 9:7). Some of the Pharisees, religious leaders, were with Jesus and heard Him (9:40). Then Jesus told them a **parable**, a story that teaches a lesson (10:6).

The door of the sheepfold. Look up John 10:1. ("**Verily**" means truly. A **sheepfold** is a place with a wall around it where sheep are kept.) A thief climbs up some other way, but the shepherd enters by the door (10:2). **Look up John 10:3.** The **porter**, the man who keeps the door, opens it. The shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **Look up John 10:4.** He goes before them, and they follow him, for they know his voice. They will not follow a **stranger**, someone they don't know, but will flee from him (10:5). The people did not understand what Jesus meant (10:6).

I am the door. So Jesus said it again: "I am the door of the sheep" (10:7). **Look up John 10:9.** Whoever enters by Jesus will be saved, and will go in and out and find **pasture**, a field of grass to eat. The thief comes to steal, to kill and to destroy. **Look up John 10:10.** Jesus came so that we might have life, and have it **more abundantly**, which means full and overflowing.

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I am the good shepherd. Look up John 10:11. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. A **hireling** is a worker who is paid to watch sheep that are not his own. When he sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and **fleeth** (runs away), and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them (10:12). He runs because he is a hireling and does not care for the sheep (10:13). **Look up John 10:14.** Jesus knows His sheep, and they know Him. He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep" (10:15).

Other sheep. Jesus said He had other sheep, which are not of this fold. He must bring them too, and they shall hear His voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd (10:16). Jesus came for people everywhere.

He laid it down. Look up John 10:18. No one took Jesus' life from Him. He laid it down Himself, and He had power to take it again. That is what happened: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. The shepherd calls his own sheep by name (John 10:3). How does it feel to know Jesus knows *your* name?
2. The sheep follow because they know the shepherd's voice (10:4). How can we get to know Jesus' voice better? *(Reading and hearing God's Word, praying, listening in church.)*
3. What "stranger voices" try to lead kids away from Jesus today? How can you tell the difference?
4. The hireling ran away, but the good shepherd gave His life (10:11–13). What does that show you about how much Jesus loves you?
5. Jesus came so we can have life "more abundantly" (10:10). What do you think a full life with Jesus looks like?

Recall questions

1. Who opens the door for the shepherd? *(The porter, John 10:3)*
2. What will the sheep do if a stranger calls? *(Flee from him, 10:5)*
3. What did Jesus say He would lay down for the sheep? *(His life, 10:15)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **giveth** means gives, and **his life for the sheep** means he dies so the sheep can live. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The good shepherd gave His life for the sheep. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: read or hear one Bible story every day to get to know Jesus' voice. When a "stranger voice" tells you to do wrong, don't follow it.

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6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. John 10:1: What two names does Jesus give the one who climbs up some other way? *(A thief and a robber)*
2. John 10:3: Who opens the door to the shepherd? *(The porter)*
3. John 10:5: Why do the sheep flee from a stranger? *(They know not the voice of strangers)*
4. John 10:7: What did Jesus say He is? *(The door of the sheep)*
5. John 10:9: What will the sheep find? *(Pasture)*
6. John 10:12: What animal comes to the sheep? *(The wolf)*
7. John 10:13: Why does the hireling flee? *(He is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep)*
8. John 10:16: How many folds and how many shepherds will there be? *(One fold, and one shepherd)*

Or choose the **Good Shepherd word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/good-shepherd-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/good-shepherd-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/good-shepherd-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/good-shepherd-worksheet).

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You for being our good shepherd. Thank You that You know each of us by name and gave Your life for us. Help us know Your voice and follow You, and not follow the voices of strangers. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks about the wolf or the thief: answer simply and gently. Jesus used them to show the difference between someone who hurts the sheep or runs away, and the good shepherd who stays and gives his life (John 10:10–13). Jesus loves and cares for His sheep.

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