Preschool–Grade 6

The Good Shepherd

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus is the good shepherd who laid down His life for us. Learn His voice and follow Him, even when other voices are louder.
Bible passage: John 10:1–18 (and John 9:40–41 for the setting). Students read it out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." *John 10:11 (KJV)* and "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." *John 10:14 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read John 9 and John 10:1–18. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: So Many Voices (5–10 minutes)

Ask students to call out every "voice" that tells them what to do, think or want in a normal week. Write them on the board: friends, parents, teachers, videos, ads, games, music, their own feelings, the Bible, the pastor. Then ask: *Which of these voices are loudest? Which ones do you trust most? How do you decide which voice to follow?* Say: "Jesus said His sheep know His voice and will not follow a stranger. Today we find out why."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the setting: Jesus had just healed a man who was blind from his birth (John 9:1, 9:7). Some of the Pharisees heard Jesus speak about blindness and asked, "Are we blind also?" (9:40). Jesus answered them (9:41), and kept speaking in John 10.
Read out loud: John 10:1–18. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **verily, verily** (10:1): truly, truly; it means "listen, this is important"
- **sheepfold** (10:1): a place with a wall around it where sheep are kept; **fold** (10:16): the same
- **porter** (10:3): the man who keeps the door
- **putteth forth** (10:4): brings out
- **parable** (10:6): a story that teaches a lesson
- **pasture** (10:9): a field of grass to feed the sheep
- **more abundantly** (10:10): full and overflowing
- **hireling** (10:12): a hired worker; **whose own the sheep are not**: the sheep don't belong to him
- **fleeth** (10:12–13): runs away; **scattereth**: makes them run in every direction; **careth not**: doesn't care

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3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. The shepherd "calleth his own sheep by name" (John 10:3). Jesus doesn't love people as a crowd only; He knows each one. How does that change how you see yourself?
2. The sheep follow "for they know his voice" (10:4). How do you get to know a voice well? How does that work with Jesus? *(Time in God's Word, prayer, church.)*
3. A stranger's voice can sound friendly. What helps you tell when a voice is leading you away from Jesus? *(Does it agree with God's Word?)*
4. Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (10:9). Why does it matter that there is one door, and it is Jesus?
5. Compare the thief (10:10), the hireling (10:12–13) and the good shepherd (10:11). What does each one want? Who in your life acts like a good shepherd to you?
6. Jesus said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (10:18). Why does it matter that Jesus *chose* to give His life?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **giveth** means gives; **know my sheep** means Jesus knows each one personally; **am known of mine** means His sheep know Him too.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say John 10:11 this week; keep working on John 10:14 next week too.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. Long before, Isaiah wrote, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way' (Isaiah 53:6, KJV). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

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6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Which voice in my life is loudest right now? Does it lead me toward Jesus or away from Him?
2. What is one way I can get to know Jesus' voice better this week?
3. Write a short prayer thanking Jesus, the good shepherd, for knowing you by name and giving His life for you.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: spend time in God's Word every day, even five minutes. When another voice tells you something, ask: "Does this agree with what Jesus says?"

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You for being our good shepherd. Thank You for knowing each of us by name and for laying down Your life for us. Teach us to know Your voice, to turn away from the voices of strangers, and to follow You all our lives. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks about the "other sheep" (John 10:16): answer simply. Jesus said He had other sheep, not of this fold, and He would bring them, so there would be one fold and one shepherd. Jesus came for people from everywhere, and He wants everyone to come to Him.

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