Preschool–Grade 6

The Good Shepherd

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Jesus is the good shepherd. He knows us by name, He gave His life for us, and we listen to His voice and follow Him.
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, 5 index cards, a marker, a few chairs, a green blanket or green paper, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 5 cards (see part 4). Set the chairs in a circle with one gap for a door (part 6). Put a bookmark in your Bible at John 10:11.

1. Opening game: Whose Voice? (5 minutes)

One child sits on a chair with their back to the class and eyes closed. Point to another child, who says, "Good morning!" in their normal voice. The child in the chair guesses who it was. Take turns. Then ask: *How did you know who was talking?* Say: "We know the voices of people we know well. Today Jesus tells us about sheep who know their shepherd's voice."

2. Bible story: The Good Shepherd (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to John 10, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Jesus told the people a story about sheep. A **shepherd** is a person who takes care of sheep. The sheep stayed in a **sheepfold**, a place with a wall around it and one door.

Jesus said a thief does not go in by the door. He climbs up some other way (John 10:1). But the shepherd goes in by the door (10:2). The **porter**, the man who keeps the door, opens it for him. The sheep hear the shepherd's voice. **He calls his own sheep by name**, and he leads them out (10:3). The shepherd goes in front of them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice (10:4). Would the sheep follow a **stranger**, someone they don't know? No! They run away from him, because they don't know a stranger's voice (10:5).

Then Jesus said, "I am the door." Anyone who comes in by Jesus will be saved, and will go in and out, and find **pasture**, a green field of grass to eat (10:9). A thief comes only to steal and to hurt. But Jesus came so that we can have life, more and more of it (10:10).

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The story continues: **Read John 10:11 from your Bible:** "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Say: "**Giveth** means gives. Jesus gives His life for His sheep."

Then Jesus told about a **hireling**, a worker who is paid to watch sheep that are not his own. When the hireling sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away. The wolf catches the sheep and scatters them, so they run every which way (10:12). The hireling runs because he doesn't really care for the sheep (10:13).

But Jesus is not like the hireling! Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (10:14). Jesus knows each one of His sheep, and His sheep know Him. Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep" (10:15). Nobody could take His life from Him. He would lay it down Himself, and He had power to take it again (10:18). That is just what happened: Jesus died on the cross for us, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)!

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Who goes in by the door of the sheepfold? *(The shepherd, John 10:2)*
2. How does the shepherd call his sheep? *(By name, 10:3)*
3. Why do the sheep follow the shepherd? *(They know his voice, 10:4)*
4. What does the hireling do when he sees the wolf coming? *(He leaves the sheep and runs away, 10:12)*
5. What does the good shepherd give for the sheep? *(His life, 10:11)*

4. Memory verse: Sheep in a Row (5 minutes)

Write one part on each card: *I am the good shepherd: / the good shepherd / giveth his life / for the sheep. / John 10:11.* Explain the old word: **giveth** means gives. Read the verse together. Then give the 5 cards to 5 kids, mixed up. They are the "sheep." The class calls each "sheep" by name, one at a time, to come and stand in the right order. Read the verse again. Mix the cards and play again with 5 new kids, until everyone has had a turn.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus is the good shepherd, and He loves His sheep so much that He gave His life for them. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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 we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
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: listen to Jesus' voice by hearing God's Word, the Bible, every day. When you hear it, follow it.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: 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), the coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/good-shepherd), or **Called by Name:** all the kids are sheep inside the chair "sheepfold." You are the shepherd. Stand at the door and call one child by name. That child comes out through the door and follows you. Call the next child, and the next, until every sheep is following you in a line. Lead them to the green "pasture" and sit down together. Say: "he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John 10:3).

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You for being our good shepherd. Thank You that You know each of us by name, and that You gave Your life for us. Help us listen to Your voice and follow You every day. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks about the wolf: answer simply and gently. A wolf is a wild animal that can hurt sheep. Jesus told about the wolf to show that the hireling runs away, but the good shepherd stays and cares for his sheep (John 10:12–13). Jesus takes care of us.

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