

Grades 5-6

The Good Shepherd

Lesson At-A-Glance

Scripture Reference
John 10:11-18

Lectionary Sunday/
Church Season
Easter 4



Lesson Focus
God cares for all people, no matter what.

Bible Memory Verse
I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. John 10:11

gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Arrival Activity Kids look through newspaper headlines for signs of trouble.	Activity Pages 	Newspapers, scissors, tape, pencils
Opening Conversation Kids explore the theme of stress.	Leaflets	Pencils, container of water, smaller container that can float, rocks
Opening Prayer Kids pray responsively together.	None	None

open the bible (20 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Who Needs a Shepherd? Kids read the Bible story and learn what shepherds do.	Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers, Leaflets	Pencils, paper, markers, sticky notes
Can You Hear the Shepherd's Voice? Kids look up different passages in their Bibles of God calling people to do things.	Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers, Leaflets	Pen or pencil

activate faith (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Are You Listening? Kids will engage in an activity to learn the importance of listening to the “right voice.”	None	Clean blindfold
Walking with Jesus Kids will experience an ancient prayer practice.	Leaflets	None

send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Closing Conversation Kids review the story and are encouraged to pray the Jesus Prayer at home.	Leaflets	None
Closing Prayer Kids will pray together.	Family Pages 	None

gather (10 minutes)

arrival activity

Set out pencils and copies of the downloadable Activity Page if you want another option for kids as they arrive.

Welcome kids as they arrive. Invite kids to look through the newspapers to find a few headlines of bad news, and cut them out. Have kids tape their headlines to the wall and read them to the whole class. Ask kids to name some problems in the world. **Why do you think there is so much bad news? How do you feel when you read headlines about problems?** When the conversations wind down, gather in a circle for the Opening Conversation.

Spark Resources:

Activity Page



Supplies

Newspapers
Scissors
Tape
Pencils

opening conversation

Distribute pencils and the leaflets. Ask a volunteer to read the Life Question (*Am I going to be okay?*) and the Lesson Focus (*God cares for all people, no matter what.*) from the first page of the leaflet. **Let's look at the words on the first page of the leaflet. As I read them, show your reaction using gestures, poses, and facial expressions.** Read each word, allowing time for kids to show their reactions. When you've read through all the words, talk about these questions together. **How did it feel to act like the frightened character? Do you ever feel overwhelmed by these words? What do you do when you are afraid or stressed?**

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

Pencils
Container of water
Smaller container that will float on the water
Rocks

Find It's Hard to Stay Afloat on the second page of the leaflet, and make a list of some of the stresses, pressures, problems, and dangers you face. Gather around the container filled with water and invite volunteers to read their lists out loud. Give a rock to each kid who shares something. **If this rock represents the stresses, pressures, problems, and dangers you face, and if you are this small container, what will happen when you put your rock in the container? What difference does it make if you take on more stress?** Have kids add rocks to the small container until it sinks. **What can we do to help this stressed out kid?** Try the activity again, but have kids hold the container on the water. **How can friends help you when you are stressed?** (*They can hold you up by listening; giving advice; and standing by your side.*) **How can we work together to help each other?**

Read the information in the Did You Know section on the second leaflet page. What groups do you belong to? (*Sports teams, scouts, clubs, etc.*) **How do these groups help you deal with stress?** (*Friendships, projects, teamwork.*) **How can church and Sunday school class help you with stress?** (*Prayer, friendships, faith lessons.*)

How do you think God can help us with our stresses and problems? (*God cares for all of us, no matter what.*)

opening prayer

Let's gather in a circle to pray. Ask kids to repeat the phrase "God, help us out!" after each sentence below.

When the news is so bad: *God, help us out!*

When we feel like a boat tossed around in the storm: *God, help us out!*

When stress becomes too much to manage: *God, help us out!*

When we are totally afraid: *God, help us out!*

Jesus, you promised to be our Good Shepherd, and we sure need one! *God, help us out!*

We believe you can. Amen.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

None

open the bible (20 minutes)

who needs a shepherd?

Today is the fourth Sunday in the season of Easter. It is Good Shepherd Sunday.

Invite kids to find the color of Easter (white or gold) and the symbol (egg with a cross inside) on the leaflet. **Today we'll learn about Jesus, the Good Shepherd.**

Our story is from the gospel of John. Is John's gospel in the Old or New Testament? (New.) In this section of John's gospel, Jesus uses shepherds and sheep to teach people about his relationship with his followers.

Let's test your shepherd knowledge with a short true or false quiz! Give a thumbs up if you think the statement is true and a thumbs down if you think it is false.

- **A shepherd is a person who cares for sheep.** (True.)
- **Shepherds were most often men in their 20s and 30s.** (False. They were most often young boys and girls and sometimes wandering nomads.)
- **Shepherds got paid enough to live on.** (False. They usually received no money.)
- **Shepherds built fences around their flocks to keep predators out.** (False. There were no fences and only a good shepherd could keep sheep safe.)
- **Shepherds sometimes ate the meat and drank the milk from the sheep they cared for.** (True.)

Pass out the Spark Bibles, and help kids find John 10:11-18 on page 1185. Ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Have kids find an "I Read It" sticker in the back of the Bible and place it near the text. Encourage everyone to write today's date in the margin near the story.

Next, give each kid 10 sticky notes and invite them to write one characteristic of a good shepherd on each sticky note. (*Brave, kind, helpful, watchful, gentle.*) **See how many different words your group can come up with in one minute. Which of these words about good shepherds is your favorite? Why? Are there other words you would add to this list?**

Invite kids to find and underline John 10:11, today's Bible Memory Verse (BMV), in

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles

Spark Bible Stickers

Leaflets

Supplies

Pencils

Paper

Markers

Sticky notes

their Spark Bibles. Encourage them to place an “I Memorized It” sticker near John 10:11. Then help them find Psalm 23 on page 596 and highlight verse 1. Read Look It Up on the third leaflet page.

can you hear the shepherd's voice?

Read the instructions for “Can You Hear the Shepherd’s Voice” on the third leaflet page. Think about these questions as you do this matching game. **How do you think these people felt when they heard God’s voice? How do you suppose you would react if God spoke to you in this way?** Have kids do the matching game in pairs or groups of three. As they look up each passage, encourage them to underline it and mark it with a Spark Bible sticker if one of the passages reminds them of something, makes them wonder about something, or makes them want to do something. When everyone is finished, review the answers and pose this question: **How does God speak to people today?** (*Through regular people. Through miracles. Through prayer. Through friends, leaders, pastors, and SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS!*)

Answer Key

1 Samuel 3:1-18—Samuel—Announce the downfall of Eli’s family

Numbers 22:21-35—Balaam—Speak to the officials of Balak

1 Kings 19:9-15—Elijah—Anoint Hazael king

Acts 26:12-18—Saul/Paul—Go witness to the Gentiles

Revelation 1:9-11—John of Patmos—Write Revelation and send it to the seven churches.

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers
Leaflets

Supplies

Pencils or pens

activate faith (10 minutes)

are you listening?

It’s time to play a game! Ask for a volunteer to become a blindfolded sheep. Then put the blindfold on and stand the sheep in the center of the room. Tell them they will be trying to find the shepherd by hearing the shepherd’s voice. Ask for a volunteer to play the part of the shepherd. Have all the kids call out to blindfolded one at the same time over and over again. One at a time, touch students on the shoulder and have them be quiet until only the shepherd is speaking.

Repeat with other kids being the sheep. Then talk about the activity. **Why was it hard to hear the shepherd’s voice? What are some of the competing voices we hear other places, like school, home, or at the playground? How can we quiet these voices so we can hear what Jesus might be saying to us? God cares for all of us, no matter what. When it gets hard to hear God’s voice, there are different ways we can listen.**

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Clean Blindfold

walking with jesus

Invite kids to find a quiet place in the room where they can get comfortable. Make sure everyone has their leaflet. Ask a volunteer to read “Walking with Jesus” on the back page of the leaflet, and then look at the labyrinth on the page. **A labyrinth is not a maze, but a one-way path in and back out again. Some people use labyrinths when they pray.** Ask them to think about the stress in their lives, and how Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will be with them no matter what. Give kids time to relax quietly and trace the labyrinth with their fingers. After a few minutes, debrief the activity. **How might a labyrinth help you with stress?** (*Gives you a way to calm down and breathe quietly.*) **With prayer?** (*Focus, quiet.*) **How does it feel to do something so quietly?** (*Weird, calm, the same, cool.*) **How can the moving through a labyrinth be like praying?** (*Taking time to focus and listen.*) Encourage kids to try the labyrinth again during the week.

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

None

send (5 minutes)

closing conversation

Thanks very much for coming today. We’ve learned lots of things about shepherds, and about Jesus, the Good Shepherd on the fourth Sunday in the season of Easter. Share what you’ve learned with your family and friends. Remember to pray and to ask for help when you are stressed. Remember that Jesus is always with you and that God cares for you, no matter what. Encourage the kids to try the Faith on the Go activity at home. Let them know you’ll ask them about the Jesus Prayer next time you meet.

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

None

closing prayer

Gather in a circle. Make sure kids have their Spark Bibles and leaflets to take home. Invite kids stand up and shout “Amen!” after each time you say “good shepherd” and then sit back down.

Risen Jesus, you are our good shepherd. Amen!

Thank you for being such a great good shepherd. Amen!

Help us to trust in you totally, good shepherd. Amen!

We know you care for each of us, good shepherd. Amen!

We love you, good shepherd. Amen!

Amen! Amen!

As you say good-bye to kids, make sure they take home the leaflet and Family Page.

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

None