

Listen to the Good Shepherd!

John 10:1-18 *NIV*

Bible Lesson & Activities for Children



THE **SUNDAY SCHOOL** STORE

Listen to the Shepherd



Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who knows His sheep and takes care of them.

He calls Himself the gatekeeper, calling His sheep by name and protecting them from harm. This lesson focuses on how we can listen for the voice of Jesus, rejoicing in Him and recognizing when He calls. We can take comfort in knowing He knows us, and that we can serve Him.

Sometimes there are many “voices” that seem to call out to us. How do we know what to listen to? Jesus is the one we should follow. When we know our shepherd, we can recognize His voice, because He knows us as His “sheep.” Jesus calls us by name, loving us and taking care of us. He guides and guards us and gives us all we need. We know His voice when we study His word and go to Him in prayer.

Passage: John 10:1-18

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade

Materials Needed: Construction paper; paper plates; popsicle sticks; glue; markers or crayons; tape; scissors; decorative supplies; cotton balls; blindfolds; paper towel tubes; aluminum foil; Bibles.

More Resources Online

- Watch the [video demonstration of the object lesson](#).
- Watch the [video example for the craft projects](#).
- Watch the [video Bible story “God is With Us”](#) from Saddleback Kids Club
- Watch the [video Bible Bible story “God is my Shepherd”](#) from Crossroads Kids
- For more free illustrations, visit [Christian Clip Arts](#) and [Ministry-To-Children](#)

Object Lesson (5 minutes)

Greet children and invite them to identify some sounds...

Hello, children of God!

How would you say your hearing is? Are you pretty good at recognizing things just from listening to them? I am going to have some sounds, and I want you to see if you can figure out what they are, without seeing any clues. Are you ready?

Have simple sounds for the children to listen to. Examples include a bell, food package, animal noise, or musical instrument. You might play them on a recording, or have items hidden in a bag or "off-stage" somehow. Alternatively, you could have various congregation members in on this, and invite them to take turns speaking at intervals, to see if students can identify whose voice is calling out from the group. If using this method, it would help emphasize the point to have one of the voices be a parent or pastor.

Now, how did you know what those sounds were? You could probably tell what they were if you have heard them before, right? You were already familiar with the noises, so it was easier to guess what they were. Or if someone you know is talking to you, you can identify the voice because you're used to hearing it and you know who it belongs to. Well, how about God's voice? Can you recognize when He is calling to you? Does God speak to us? It might be harder to identify His voice, because we don't hear it out loud all the time, like our moms calling us to dinner. But He does speak to us.

In the Bible, Jesus talks about how He speaks to us. He actually calls Himself our shepherd. He says that He is the good shepherd, and He calls to His sheep. Now, a shepherd's job is to protect and provide for the sheep in his care. The shepherd watches over them and

gets to know them, and the sheep recognize who their leader is and respond to the voice of the shepherd. Jesus said the same thing applies to Him. He is the caretaker of the sheep. He knows them and they know Him. He says His people know Him and respond to His voice. Jesus also explains that He cares for us as His “sheep.”

Now, sheep are not the brightest animals out there. They need a leader who will guide them and guard them. And we need Jesus as our leader. We might think that we can do things on our own, but we will easily lose our way. We need to lean on Christ and listen for His voice. What does that sound like, though? How do we listen for it? Well, we can read the Bible to know who Jesus is and what He says. We can pray and ask God to speak to us. We won't necessarily hear it in the way we might hope. Sometimes God uses other people to communicate to us. Sometimes He works on our hearts without words. But He knows us and loves us, and wants us to love Him. When we know who He is, we can recognize His voice. So keep learning and keep listening! Read His word and pray every day. And know that He is always taking care of us and calling to us. God knows us by name and loves us. If we let Him, He will be our good shepherd and guide, too!

Prayer: (Invite the children to repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for taking care of us

Thank you for protecting us and providing for us

And being our Good Shepherd

Help us to listen to your voice

So we can follow you

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

Game & Activities Suggestions (10 minutes)



This passage is a great “shepherd” themed pericope in Scripture, and reminds us of important truths about how Jesus loves and protects us, and knows us as we can know Him. We can listen for His voice and be blessed by His presence. Open with some games or discussions to spark thought and introduce themes. Here are some ideas:

- **Who’s that sheep?** Have one child blindfolded as the “shepherd.” The shepherd will go around to the other students (“sheep”), and invite them to “baa.” Upon doing so, the blindfolded shepherd will guess who is making noise, to determine how well the sheep are known.
- **Find the scattered sheep:** Hide cotton balls throughout the room for children to find and gather in a “sheep pen” area.
- **Guard the gate:** in this game, have several students be “sheep”, with two or three to act as “shepherds”, and a few more to be “wolves.” The shepherds are to keep the sheep from getting tagged by the wolves, and can block their flock from the predators who seek to tag the sheep. The goal is for the shepherds to guide the flock across a playing area without them getting tagged. If they are tagged, they must sit on the side as “sleeping sheep.”
- **Wolves and sheep:** This game is played like sharks and minnows, with the replacement of “wolves” and “sheep” for the players. Sheep run across the playing area and try not to get tagged by wolves. If tagged, the sheep become wolves, too.
- **Follow the shepherd:** This game can either be played like “simon says” (using the phrase “Shepherd says”) or can be a follow-the-leader game in a line, marching around an area and doing different actions according to the line leader.

Today’s passage is a comforting look at how Jesus knows us, cares for us, and guides us. He is our Good Shepherd!

Main Bible Teaching (15 minutes)



This passage uses Jesus’s own description of Himself as our shepherd, protector, and guide. These verses contain comforting words that Jesus spoke to His disciples, although they didn’t always understand the metaphors that He used. To share with students, have older children take turns reading verses, or read out loud to younger kids, pausing to explain as you go. Younger students might also appreciate some sort of sheep puppet or toy to help “tell” the story.

John 10:1-3 NIV *“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. (2) The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. (3) The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

Ask: Do you have a pet? How do you care for your pet? Does it recognize your voice?

It helps to begin with some explanation of a shepherd’s job. While we still have shepherds today, they are not quite as prevalent, especially in more industrialized countries. In the ancient Middle East (time of Christ), being a shepherd was a typical occupation. It involved guiding sheep to find grazing pasture and protecting them along the way. Many times, the shepherd himself would serve as the “gate”, lying down in front of an opening to prevent sheep from wandering out or predators from wandering in. Here, Jesus explains that a sheep will recognize the shepherd’s voice, and the shepherd will call to his sheep by name.

Ask: Whose voice do you recognize the most?

How does it feel when someone uses your name?

John 10:4-6 NIV *When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. (5) But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." (6) Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.*

The listeners didn't realize at first that Jesus was describing Himself and His followers. Jesus was warning the people not to listen to those who might try to deceive them or lead them astray, but to pay attention for His voice. He wanted to explain that He was the way to salvation, and not through anyone or anything else.

Ask: What are some things that might distract us from following Jesus? Why do you think sometimes it's hard to "hear" Him? (Of course, we don't always hear Him out loud, but can still listen for God's leading, which can be a tricky concept for kids.)

John 10:7-11 NIV *Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. (8) All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. (9) I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. (10) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (11) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

Jesus contrasts Himself here with others who might try to act like leaders, but were not truly doing the right thing. Political and spiritual leaders might be called "shepherds," but those were often the people who opposed Jesus and refused to believe His teachings.

They didn't recognize the Messiah they claimed to be waiting for. Jesus makes it clear in no uncertain terms that HE is the good shepherd He's describing. Not just any shepherd, but the shepherd. Most shepherds would go to great lengths to take care of their animals, but not quite to the point of sacrificing their own lives. Jesus promises here that He will lay down His life for the sheep, predicting His crucifixion.

Ask: Who makes you feel safe? Who watches out for you and guides you?

(Explain that Jesus does this for us, even more than any human could!)

John 10:12-15 NIV *The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. (13) The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. (14) "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— (15) just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

Jesus is emphasizing again that He knows His sheep and cares for them deeply. A hired hand does not care about the flock, but the shepherd knows and loves them. These are words of comfort, that tell us that Jesus knows us, cares for us, and gives His life for us.

John 10:16-18 NIV *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (17) For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. (18) No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."*

This part might be a little more confusing and may need to be simplified for younger groups. Jesus is explaining that He came for everyone, not just certain people like the

Jews, but the Gentiles also, who at that time were not held in great esteem. Jesus explains that in the future, there would be one flock, all focused on Jesus, with Him as the shepherd of all. He promises that He willingly gives His life so that He can live again, and give us new life, too!

Ask: What does it mean to you that we are God's "sheep"?

Close with prayer, thanking God for our Good Shepherd and for knowing us.

Craft Activities (15 minutes)

Jesus is our shepherd. He knows us and calls us by name, keeping us safe and protected. We are His sheep, who trust and follow Him and His words. These principles are always great to remind students, and make for fun and wonderful craft, too. These two crafts reflect on the sheep and shepherd theme. A sheep mask serves as a fun note on our “sheepish” status. A “shepherd’s staff microphone” uses the shepherd theme along with the idea of calling by name and being heard.

Craft one: "Sheepish Mask"

You will need:

- Paper plates
- Scissors
- Glue and/or tape
- Construction paper
- Markers and crayons
- Cotton balls
- Popsicle sticks



Procedure:

1. Create the face portion of the mask. On a paper plate, draw eyes, mouth, nose, etc. *Alternate option: cut out the center of the plate so that the child's face is the sheep.
2. Add ears, cut out of paper, as well as Bible verse captions.
3. Glue cotton balls around the perimeter of the plate for sheep "fluff."
4. Attach a popsicle stick to the back of the mask to hold it up. Say "Baa"!



Craft Two: “Shepherd’s Staff Microphone”

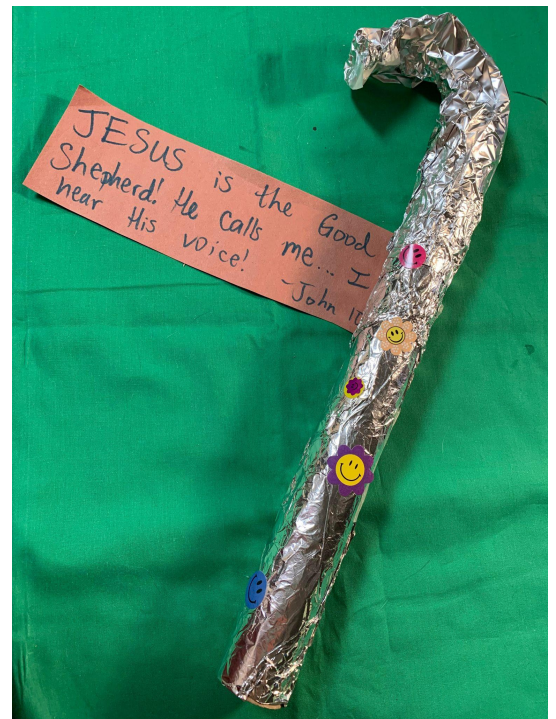
You will need:

- Paper towel tubes
- Aluminum foil
- Decorations (stickers, gems, etc.)
- Glue and/or tape
- Scissors
- Construction paper/cardstock



Procedure:

1. Cover the paper towel tube with aluminum foil (or construction paper, if preferred; foil shapes a bit easier).
2. Carefully shape foil around the top of the tube, curving to make a “crook” shape like a shepherd staff.
3. Add extra decorations (stickers, jewels, etc.) on the outside.
4. Add a verse caption to remember our Good Shepherd. Use as a microphone to announce our good shepherd!
5. Option: fill with noisemaking items (uncooked rice, beans, pasta, etc.) to make a shaker.



John 10:11 NIV

*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays
down his life for the sheep.*





Word Search Puzzle

Shepherd - Father - Jesus - Sheep - Door - Gatekeeper

Wolf - Voice - Name - Flock - Robber - Thief

H	F	A	I	Q	Z	W	F	D	P	F
V	U	Q	S	W	M	I	J	S	O	T
F	F	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S
R	L	W	O	L	F	R	S	R	O	N
J	O	N	O	X	A	H	U	R	O	N
S	C	B	A	C	T	M	S	A	R	Q
T	K	F	B	M	H	J	F	S	B	M
V	O	I	C	E	E	V	A	H	S	W
T	H	I	E	F	R	E	B	E	H	X
D	A	S	H	C	M	J	R	E	C	P
I	G	A	T	E	K	E	E	P	E	R

Word Search Answers

H	F	A	I	Q	Z	W	F	D	P	F
V	U	Q	S	W	M	I	J	S	O	T
F	F	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S
R	L	W	O	L	F	R	S	R	O	N
J	O	N	O	X	A	H	U	R	O	N
S	C	B	A	C	T	M	S	A	R	Q
T	K	F	B	M	H	J	F	S	B	M
V	O	I	C	E	E	V	A	H	S	W
T	H	I	E	F	R	E	B	E	H	X
D	A	S	H	C	M	J	R	E	C	P
I	G	A	T	E	K	E	E	P	E	R