

Day 1 Bible Story:

The Good Shepherd

For the Leader:

Bible Story: The Good Shepherd, taken from John 10:11-16

In this story, we will discover that Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we are His sheep. We will also learn that we can depend on Jesus to watch over us, guide us, care for us, and keep us safe. We can rely on Jesus!

Activity: Before the story, there is an activity that the kids will love as they get to become shepherds themselves. It only takes a few simple supplies:

Supplies:

- White balloons
- Black permanent marker
- Pole, stick, pool noodle, or something that resembles a shepherd's staff.

Bible Verse: Psalm 143:10 "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground."

Before the Story:

Blow up the white balloons and draw sheep faces on each one. You will want several "sheep" for the kids to herd. Place them on the far side of the room. Also set out the shepherds' "staves".

Say:

What did you think of today's video? Pretty cool, right? I am amazed at the difference those pulleys made. She could not have lifted that bell without help. Sometimes, having just the right equipment to rely on can really pull us through an otherwise impossible situation! Hey! This sounds familiar.... Isn't there someone *we* know who can help pull us through? That's right! Jesus! We can *always* rely on Him. In fact, I have a Bible story that explains just how reliable Jesus really is.

Today's Bible story is about a good shepherd. Actually, it's about *THE* Good Shepherd. Who knows what a shepherd is? (*encourage answers about what the kids think a shepherd is and does.*) We don't see too many shepherds around here, but in Jesus' time, shepherds were everywhere and everyone knew what it meant to take care of sheep. Now before we get into our story, I want to see what kind of shepherds *you* would be! I have a great idea.

Take one of these shepherd staffs. This is what you are going to use to “herd” these “sheep” from over there, all the way over here. Seems easy, right? Well, we’ll see!



(Have kids race to get their sheep balloons from one “pasture” to the other. They can split the herd and take a few each at the same time, or you can time them to see who can do it the fastest. Watch to see just how each child “herds”. Are they in such a hurry they hit the “sheep” hard and fast or do they carefully nudge each balloon to get it to the other side? After everyone has had a turn, return to your Bible story.)

Whew! Sheep sure have a mind of their own! Did you find it easy or hard? What made it that way? Did they move where you wanted them to when you pushed them? Sometimes when you tried to go too fast or hit them too hard, they went their own way, but when you slowly and gently guide them, they went right where you wanted them to go. That’s how Jesus guides us too – with a gently nudge! Let’s find out about Jesus, our Good Shepherd!

When we open our Bible to the book of John, and find the 10th chapter, we can read what Jesus had to say about sheep and shepherds. Jesus said:

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired man is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when the hired man sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired man. He does not care about the sheep.

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me. ¹⁵ They know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I give my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not belong to this sheep pen. I must bring them in too. They also will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock and one shepherd.”

Hmmm... Let’s see if we can understand what Jesus is saying here. First, He says that He is the Good Shepherd, and we just found out how difficult a shepherd’s job can be! Well, if He is the Shepherd, who are the sheep? *(allow some time for answers.)* That’s right, *we* are like the sheep in this story. Let’s think about how the relationship between sheep and their shepherd can be like our relationship with Jesus.

First, sheep need guidance. They don’t always know where to go, or which path is safe. They tend to follow each other blindly, even if it’s into danger! If they don’t know who their leader is, they will follow another sheep that seems to be in charge. That’s kind of like people, isn’t it? Sometimes we want to fit in, or be like someone else, so we follow others that seem to know what they are doing. But what happens if we follow the wrong thing? *(chat about this for a minute.)* Sheep definitely need a shepherd that can guide them in the right direction, and so do people. Thank goodness we have Jesus as our Good Shepherd! He gently guides us and shows us the right way to go. Maybe we can’t hear His actual voice, but He gave us all the directions we need right in the Bible! We can follow *His ways* by following *His words!*

Sheep also tend to wander off and get lost. Sometimes the whole herd of sheep can be following the shepherd, but one little sheep decides to go a different way and can’t find its way back to the rest of the sheep. What happens then? Does the caring shepherd say,

“Oh well! I have plenty of other sheep,” or does the shepherd drop everything to go and find the lost sheep? Yep- that’s right! A good shepherd always finds the sheep and carries it back to the others. He would never let that sheep stay lost or in danger. That’s just like Jesus too! He doesn’t let us stay lost. He searches until He finds us and then rejoices when we are back with Him.

Finally, sheep can be dirty. They can’t keep themselves clean! Their fluffy wool gets all kinds of dirt, pokey burs, and even bugs in it. These can be very bad for the sheep! Thankfully, a good shepherd will take the time to lovingly remove the burs and clean the sheep. Without the shepherd, the sheep would stay dirty and could get very sick. Let’s think about how Jesus is like this for us. Do you know what sin is? *(take a minute to talk about what sin is and how it is in our lives.)* For people, sin is just like those bad burs, dirt, and bugs that cover the sheep. There is only one way for us to get clean from our sins. I bet you can guess it! That’s right, the Good Shepherd, Jesus, cleanses us from our sins! He is the only one who can make us right again.

So now you know a little more about sheep and shepherds, but more importantly I hope you learned more about how much we should rely upon Jesus as our Good Shepherd. When we hit life’s hard times, or follow the wrong path, we can’t save ourselves. We have to rely on Jesus to guide us, cleanse us, and save us. No matter what happens in our lives, we will always know that **Jesus’ Power Pulls Us Through!**

Pray:

Dear God, thank you for giving us the Bible where we can learn what You want for us. Thank you for sending Jesus to us to guide us through life and pull us through the hard times. Please help us to remember that we can always rely on You as our Good Shepherd! In Jesus’ name, Amen.