

# The Good Shepherd

PreK-K

**SHEPHERD • EASTER 4 • YEAR B**

**JOHN 10:11-18**



4

## What is happening in this story?

Jesus uses the analogy of a shepherd to explain who he is: someone who cares for his sheep. While analogous to describing God in the Old Testament, unique to this text is Jesus' phrase "The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." It's a foreshadowing of Jesus' death. Unlike the "hired hand" (John 10:12-13), which might be an allusion to Israel's former unfaithful rulers, Jesus truly knows his sheep, and this intimate knowledge brings a deep, abiding love for the sheep.

## Why does this story matter for kids?

This story can be of comfort to kids. It tells them who Jesus is and what he does for them. He is a good shepherd who knows them and cares for them in ways no one else could. Jesus defines his identity by both his title of "shepherd" and his actions. Kids are learning who they are in the context of family relationships, peer groups, and so on. They define themselves as daughter, brother, student, and friend. While these labels help us understand ourselves, they are also responsibilities. We are supposed to be good sisters, brothers, and friends, and our actions help decide that.

## What is the lectionary connection?

During Easter we bask in the glow of the resurrection. "Alleluias" surround us, and we proclaim the Christ who rose again so that our lives could also be transformed. The Good Shepherd snatches sheep from the jaws of death and gifts them with new life. That's a powerful image of what God does for us, in small and profound ways.

## AGE LEVEL TIP

Make sure kids know that you are not talking about Jesus changing people into sheep! Talk about people being *like* sheep and Jesus watching over us *like* a shepherd.



### GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Crayons
- Clear tape
- Scissors

### LESSON SUPPLIES

- Toy animal figures
- Craft sticks
- Cotton balls
- Plastic Easter egg

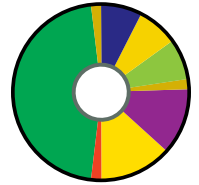
**WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL STORY BIBLES • DVD • FLOOR MAT • LEAFLETS**

## Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Invite kids to play with the toy animal figures. Use craft sticks to make pens for the animals. **A shepherd is someone who takes care of sheep. Jesus tells us that we are like the sheep and he is like our shepherd. Jesus watches over us.**

## Invite kids to sit around the Floor Mat.

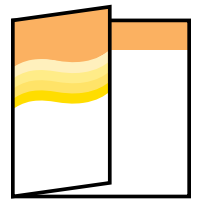
Point out the season (Easter), color (yellow), and icon (butterfly). **In the story we'll hear today, Jesus says he is like a good shepherd and we are like his sheep. Jesus watches over us every day, like a shepherd.** Hold up the cotton ball. **What does this cotton ball remind you of? Is it like a sheep?** Invite kids to take turns putting the cotton ball on the Easter section of the Floor Mat.



Pass an empty plastic Easter egg around the circle. **The empty egg reminds us of the empty tomb. Jesus is alive. When it's your turn to open the egg, say, "Jesus is the shepherd, and we are the sheep."**

## Pass out leaflets and crayons.

Jesus tells us that a good shepherd looks for his sheep when they are lost. He knows which sheep are his sheep. There are three shepherds on our leaflet. Let's help them find their sheep. How will they know



which sheep is theirs? The shepherds and the sheep have matching shapes. Use your crayons to draw a line between each shepherd and his or her sheep. Collect their leaflets until Respond.

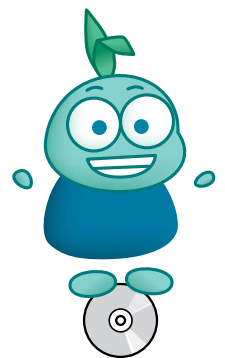
## Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

In our video today, the kids are not sure what a shepherd is. They can't figure out how Jesus can be our shepherd. Let's watch to see how they work together to figure things out.

View Episode 10, "Shepherd Camp," on the Whirl Year B Spring PreK–Grade 2 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- Where do the kids go to find out about shepherds?
- Where do you go to learn new things?
- What are some things shepherds do?
- What would be hard about being a shepherd?
- What would be fun about being a shepherd?



## Pass out Whirl Story Bibles to kids.

**Let's find our story today!** Help kids find "Leading Like a Good Shepherd" on page 362. Start by pointing out the graphic that shows the butterfly in the yellow circle for the Easter season. Before you read, invite kids to look for Jesus talking to the disciples.



Read the story and Ada and Otto's questions and comments on each page.

## Ask these questions after you read the story:

- What did Jesus call himself in this story?
- Who did the disciples think Jesus was?
- What does Jesus do for us that reminds us of how a shepherd cares for sheep?
- How are people like sheep?
- How do you feel about Jesus being your shepherd?

## Play together!

Have kids sit on the floor in a circle. Invite one kid to be the shepherd in the middle of the circle. Give another kid a "sheep" (cotton ball). **Put your hands behind your backs and pass the cotton ball sheep. The shepherd will try to figure out who has the lost sheep. Everyone should try to fool the shepherd by pretending that they have the sheep.** Let the shepherd have three guesses. Switch shepherds and play several times. **It's hard to be a shepherd. Shepherds must keep looking and looking until they find their sheep. Jesus is like that. Jesus will always watch over us.**

### BIBLE BIT

- In this passage, we get a glimpse of the depth of Jesus' love for us when he talks about knowing his sheep the way God knows and loves Jesus.

### WATCH IT AGAIN

- Let's watch the video again. Why do the kids start thinking about sheep and shepherds in the first place?

### OUR CHURCH

- Our class is like a small flock of sheep. Our church is like a big one. Let's pray for the people in our church.

# RESPOND 10

## Pass out leaflets, scissors, crayons, and tape.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square.

1. Invite kids to cut off the bottom of the back of the leaflet panel and draw themselves in the white space. Roll and tape the strip closed to form a standing figure.
2. **Jesus watches over us like a shepherd watches over sheep. When you hear me talk about a place on your leaflet, move your figure to that spot.**
3. **When you wake up in the morning, you might eat breakfast, make your bed, and straighten your room. What do you do in the morning? Is there a place on the leaflet that looks like a home? Is Jesus watching over you at home?**
4. **Let's imagine it's time to go to school. Will you walk or take the bus? Move your piece to school.**
5. **After school, do you go to the park or playground? Move again. I wonder if Jesus has trouble keeping track of us as we move all around.**
6. **Time for dinner. Let's move back home. What's your favorite dinner?**
7. **It's time for choir practice. Let's go to church. What should we sing?**
8. **What should we do after choir practice? Go to the grocery store? Or get some ice cream? What's your favorite place to go? Move there.**
9. **Now it's time for home, a snack, and bed. Whew! It was a busy day. Do you think Jesus is tired too?**

# LAUNCH 10

## Circle up with kids for a quick review.

**Jesus takes care of us like a shepherd takes care of sheep. I wonder how Jesus watches over so many people.** Take time to hear kids' responses.

## Pass out leaflet panels, scissors, crayons, and tape.

**The leaflet says, "Jesus knows my name!"** Have kids choose a green or blue bracelet, cut along the solid line, write their name in the space, and fold in half on the dotted line so that their name ends up on the outside of the "bracelet." Help them tape the bracelets around their wrists.

## Send kids out.

Pass the empty egg around the circle, saying, **"Jesus is the shepherd, and we are the sheep."**

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to be the good shepherd, to know us and love us, and to watch over us every day. Amen.**

Thank kids for following directions like good sheep. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.