Lesson 7: Jesus Is the Good Shepherd

Overview:

Key Focus: Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

Bible Story: Parables about Sheep

Scriptures: Luke 15:1–7, John 10:1–15, 27–28

Memory Verse: John 10:11 (NKJV) I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

Prep:

Materials Needed:

- A toy sheep or small white blanket or towel

Classroom Prep:

- Hide an important item in the room
- Make an outline of a sheep

Engage:

Welcome the children and then "discover" that you have lost an important item and can't continue until it is found. Invite the kids to help you find it. When found, rejoice and have the kids create and do their own "Yahoo, I found it" dance while you count to ten. **Today's Bible lesson is going to help us understand that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who won't lose any of His sheep.**

Memory Verse Activity:
Display and explain the verse. Have the boys stand, say the first word of the verse, and quickly sit down. Then, have the girls stand, say the next word, and quickly sit down. Continue until the verse is finished. Repeat this process, but have the girls say the first word of the verse.

Memory Verse: John 10:11 (NKJV) I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

Bible Story:

Many people came to hear Jesus whenever He spoke. People who believed that He was from God came to hear Him and learn from Him. People who didn't believe yet also came to see the miracles. People who were the religious leaders listened to try to catch Jesus saying something wrong. Read Luke 15:1–3. **Jesus spent time with people who were sinners. The sinners needed to spend time with Jesus to learn about Him. The religious leaders were upset because they thought Jesus should spend His time with them. Nod your head if you have felt jealous when your parent or friend spends time with someone else and not you.** Acknowledge the head responses. **Jesus told a parable, which is a story that teaches a point. He wanted everyone to understand the meaning easily, so His story was about something all of the people knew about—sheep and a shepherd.**

Read Luke 15:4–7. **When a shepherd has sheep, each sheep is important because the sheep are the source of food and also money when they are sold. In this parable, how many sheep did the shepherd have?** (100) **What problem did the shepherd have?** (The problem was one sheep was lost.) **The shepherd was probably hungry and tired from watching the sheep all day. Would a good shepherd just relax and be glad that he still had 99?** (No.) **What did the good shepherd do?** (He went to find the lost sheep.) **When they found the lost sheep, the shepherd wanted everyone to rejoice with him. Then Jesus gave the main point of the story. Just like a shepherd wants people to rejoice with him about finding a lost sheep; in heaven, there is rejoicing when one sinner repents and believes in Jesus. Jesus wanted the religious leaders to be happy about the sinners listening to Him and believing in Him. In the parable, who do you think the good shepherd was?** (Jesus) **Who do you think the lost sheep was?** (The lost sheep is a sinner.) **Who do you think the 99 sheep were?** (The 99 sheep were the followers and believers in Jesus.) **Jesus showed that He loves people who believe in Him, but His job is to help the lost sheep believe in Him. He wants people who believe in Him to be excited along with the angels in heaven when a sinner believes in Jesus.** Lead a cheer for sinners believing in Jesus.

Later, Jesus was teaching and used sheep again to make another point. Select four or more volunteers to bring their chairs. Have the children stand in a corner of the room and be

the sheep. Place the chairs as a "fence" and stand at the opening like the doorkeeper. Read John 10:1–6. Select a shepherd to come, open the gate, and have the sheep follow the shepherd. Have someone else call and try unsuccessfully to get the sheep to follow. **What do you think Jesus was trying to help people understand?** (Possible answers: That we should follow Jesus: Jesus' followers should only listen for His voice.)

Jesus wasn't really giving a lesson on how to be a shepherd, but He was trying to show a spiritual truth. The people didn't understand. If you don't understand something at school, what do you do? (If I don't understand something, I ask the teacher.) **A teacher will say something again but in a different way to help you understand. That's exactly what Jesus did!**

Read John 10:7–10. **Jesus shows that He is protecting His sheep. As the protector, Jesus stands at the doorway to keep away the robbers who want to steal His sheep. Who are Jesus' sheep?** (Jesus' sheep are the people who believe in Him.) **What did Jesus mean by "If we enter by Him, we will be saved?"** (If we believe that Jesus died and rose again to pay for our sins, we will be saved and set apart as His followers.) **Who do you suppose wants to steal Jesus' sheep?** (Satan, the enemy of God, wants to steal sheep.) Review last quarter's memory verse, John 10:10. Have the volunteers return to their seats as everyone says John 10:11 together.

Illustrate by choosing a volunteer to be the hireling and select new sheep to be together in the pasture to act out exactly what you say. Have a helper be the wolf who comes and tries to scatter the sheep when the hireling runs away. Read John 10:11–13. Have your volunteers return to their seats. **Why didn't the person who was hired care about the sheep**? (Possible answers: He was only doing his job to get paid; they weren't his sheep, so he didn't want to get hurt protecting them.) **Would you want to be a sheep with that person watching you?** (No.)

Now let's see what Jesus the Good Shepherd would do in the same situation. Read John 14–15. **What will Jesus the Good Shepherd do for His sheep**? (Jesus will lay down His life for His sheep.) **Jesus hadn't died on the cross yet, but He was explaining that soon He would give up His life to pay the price for all sins. Just like a shepherd protects the sheep against a wolf, Jesus was going to protect His followers from the enemy of God.**

Read John 10:27–28. **Jesus says again that His sheep know His voice and follow Him. What does Jesus say that He gives His sheep?** (He gives His sheep eternal life.) **When we believe that Jesus paid for our sins, He gives us the gift of eternal life. Jesus promises that His sheep will always be with Him and the enemy of God can't take them away from Him. We know that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we can trust Him to keep His promises! How does it feel to know that when we say "yes" to Jesus forgiving our sins, we become His sheep forever?** Allow time for everyone to share. **As Jesus' sheep, we want to stay close and follow our shepherd where we will always be safe.** Lead a cheer for Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Bible Story Questions:

- **Why did Jesus talk about sheep?** (He used sheep because the people understood about sheep.)
- **In Jesus' parable, who was the shepherd? The sheep? The lost sheep?** (The shepherd was Jesus; the sheep were people who believed in Him; and the lost sheep was a sinner.)
- **Why did Jesus call Himself the Good Shepherd?** (Jesus is the Good Shepherd because He went searching until He found the lost sheep. Jesus loves His sheep and gave His life to save His sheep.)
- **What will you do this week to show that you are one of Jesus' sheep?** Allow time for responses.

Bible Story Activities:

Games:

- Play a version of Simon Says, "The Good Shepherd Says." Select 2 volunteers and designate one to be the Good Shepherd. Both children give commands at the same time, but the group is only to follow what they hear the Good Shepherd say. If children follow the distracting voice's command, they must sit down. Continue until only one child remains. Talk about how difficult it is when other voices are talking, much like how the enemy of God tries to distract us from following Jesus. Play again, but add another distracting voice.

- Ideas for Working with Younger Kids:
  Have the children sit in a circle on the floor and close their eyes. Hide the sheep or blanket. Signal the children to be good shepherds and find the sheep. When the sheep is found, have all the children celebrate and cheer. Pass the sheep around the group for each child to say "Jesus is the Good Shepherd." Repeat the process as time allows.

Discussion:

- Ideas for Working with Older Kids:
  Conduct a sword drill to find other shepherds mentioned in the Bible. Give the reference, have the children hold up their Bibles and repeat the reference, and give a signal to find the verse. When the verse is found, the child calls out the name of the shepherd. Shepherds of the Bible: Genesis 4:2 (Abel), Exodus 2:17 (Moses), Genesis 21:28 (Abraham), 1 Samuel 21:7 (Doeg, the Edomite), Genesis 13:5 (Lot), 2 Kings 3:4 (Mesha, king of Moab), Genesis 26:12–14 (Isaac), Amos 1:1 (Amos), Genesis 29:9 (Rachel), Luke 2:15 (Bethlehem shepherds), Genesis 47:3 (Joseph's brothers).

Worksheet:
Read the directions and the names listed. Allow the children to work together in pairs to find the names of the Bible shepherds that fit the blanks. On the back of their papers, have them illustrate Psalm 23:1–2.

Affirmation/Declaration:
Jesus loves me and is my Good Shepherd.
Jesus wants everyone to know Him.
Jesus wants to use me to help the lost people find Him.

Make Connections:

Biblical Worldview Connection:
Everyone has lost something and can relate to the tenacity needed to locate it. Encourage the children to look for ways Jesus is trying to reach someone and let Jesus use them to show His love. When kids know what the Bible says, then they can tell others about what the Bible says and how much Jesus loves them.

Missions Connections:
In some parts of the world, nomadic people groups live with their herds and know the value of each animal. Pray that these people will encounter Christ's followers who will tell them about the Good Shepherd. If you have church missionary newsletters, share their prayer requests and have volunteers pray for those needs.

Family Connection:
Spend time together looking online or in books to learn more about sheep and shepherds. Talk about ways Jesus has been your Good Shepherd leading and protecting you. Encourage each family member to listen for His voice this week guiding and helping show what you should do. Each night, give everyone an opportunity to share what they heard Jesus say to them, or a way that He was a Good Shepherd to them.

Prayer Points:

Display the sheep outline on a poster or the board. Have children think of someone they know at their school, neighborhood, or family who doesn't know that Jesus died to pay the price for their sins. Have each child write the name of the person inside the sheep outline. Then, lead the group to add the person's name in the following repeat each phrase prayer:

Dear God,
Thank You for loving ____.
Jesus, You died so ____'s
sins can be forgiven.
Help me tell ____
about You.
In Jesus' name, amen.

Name _____

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Who were shepherds in the Bible? Use names from the Word Box to match the puzzle lines. Names that do not fit in the puzzle are not shepherds.

Shepherds of the Bible Word Box:

Joseph, Paul, Abraham, David, Luke, Abel, Rachel, Amos, Mesha, Moses, Ezra

_ _ _S

_ _ _ H _

_ _ E _

_ _ _ _ P _'s brothers

_ _ _ _ H _ _

_ _ _ E _

R_ _ _ _ _

D _ _ _ _

BONUS: *On the back of this page, draw pictures for Psalm 23:1-2, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters."*

ANSWERS

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AMOS

MESHA

ABEL

JOSEPH's brothers

ABRAHAM

MOSES

RACHEL

DAVID

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