

JESUS THE SERVANT: JESUS THE TEACHER

(The Gospel Project Volume 8 Unit 23: Customized from the Preschool, Younger, and Older Leader Guides)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION FOR THIS UNIT:

What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

KEY PASSAGE FOR THIS UNIT:

John 14:25-26

“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

TODAY'S LESSON: The Good Shepherd

PARENT/LEADER OVERVIEW:

Jesus' teaching caused division among the Jews. They argued about who He was and where He had come from. Had He really come from God? Was He crazy or demon-possessed? In John 10, Jesus taught about Himself by using a comparison that is found throughout the Old Testament: the Lord as the Shepherd of His people.

In Bible times, shepherding was a common occupation. Leaders of nations—even non-Israelite nations—would refer to themselves as shepherds of the people. A good shepherd would guide, provide for, and protect his people. Yet Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel criticized Israel's leaders for failing to shepherd God's people well. The Israelites were like sheep—helpless and wandering—and they longed for a truly good shepherd.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who provides abundant life for His sheep. A shepherd would gather his sheep at night and form a pen to keep the sheep in and to keep wild animals and thieves out. The shepherd would lay across the opening. Like a shepherd provides safety for his sheep, Jesus provides salvation and eternal life.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. A shepherd protects his sheep from wolves and other wild animals, even at risk to his own life. Jesus gave up His life on the cross to rescue sinners from sin and death.

Finally, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep. Even when two or more flocks gathered in a pen, a shepherd could call for his sheep and they would respond to the sound of his voice. Jesus knows His sheep personally.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came to do His Father's plan: to die on the cross and rise again so that we might be saved. We can live sacrificially as we point others to the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

PREPARING YOUR CHILDREN FOR GOD'S WORD:

Make sure that your children have a Bible with them even if they are too young to read.
Have your kids sing along with the worship songs that are posted for this week.

THE BIBLE STORY: (Video teaching online)

John 10

Jesus told a story to the Jewish leaders: **"If a person climbs into a sheep pen, he is not the shepherd; he is a thief. A shepherd enters the pen through the gate. When the sheep hear the shepherd's voice, they recognize him and follow him. A shepherd calls his sheep by name, and he leads them.** If the sheep hear the voice of a stranger, they will run away."

The people did not understand Jesus' story. Jesus was talking about God's people as sheep. The Jewish leaders were the stranger, and **Jesus is the Shepherd.**

Jesus said, "I am the gate for the sheep. They come in through Me and are saved." Jesus was saying that He is the gate that leads to true life. People who come to Him are like sheep who come to green pastures. **Jesus warned, "A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy."** Jesus was talking about the devil, who does not want people to follow God. **Jesus said, "I have come so that they may have life."**

"I am the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep," Jesus said. **"I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me."** Like a shepherd risks his own life to protect his sheep from wolves, Jesus was willing to die for His people. Jesus came to do His Father's plan, and He was going to die and rise again.

The Jews argued with one another. Many said, "Don't listen to Him; He has a demon. He's crazy." Others said, "That's not true. How can a demon give sight to the blind?"

The Jewish leaders asked Jesus, "Are You really the Messiah? Just tell us."

Jesus answered, "I did tell you but you do not believe because you are not My sheep. My miracles prove who I am." Jesus reminded them that He is the good shepherd. **"My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of My hand. The Father and I are one."**

APPLICATION:

In those days, many people would have been familiar with the job of shepherd. In lots of places in the Old Testament, God's Word uses sheep and shepherds as examples. Jacob was a shepherd, and so was Moses. David was a shepherd before he became king and even wrote a psalm saying God was his shepherd. So when Jesus spoke of sheep, the religious leaders knew he was really talking about God's people.

Jesus' teaching is important because it helps us understand that some people want to hurt God's children, like the thief. Others may not want to hurt God's children, but they won't stay around to protect them either, like the hired hand. **Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for His people.** He laid down His life for us.

The religious leaders were very upset when Jesus said these things because they knew that Jesus was saying He is God. They did not want to believe that, but it is true. Jesus is God the Son. He came to earth to save people from sin by dying on the cross and rising again on the third day. Everyone who believes becomes a sheep in Jesus' flock. And Jesus never loses any sheep. We can trust that Jesus will care for us perfectly until the day He returns to fully start His perfect kingdom.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. God sent Him to rescue sinners. Jesus laid down His life for His sheep so they could have forgiveness and eternal life. When we trust in Jesus, we are His sheep who listen to, follow, and obey Him.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

2-5 Year Olds:

Who is the Good Shepherd? (*Jesus*)

Who are Jesus' sheep? (*those who trust in Him*)

What do sheep do when they hear the shepherd's voice? (*follow him*)

What did Jesus come to give His people? (*life with God forever*)

How does Jesus give His people life with God forever? (*Jesus gave up His life so His people could be forgiven from sin.*)

What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.

Kindergarten-2nd Grade:

How will sheep know their shepherd? (*by his voice, John 10:3-4*)

Why does a thief come? (*only to steal, kill, and destroy; John 10:10*)

What does the good shepherd do? (*lays down his life for the sheep, John 10:15*)

Why do you think Jesus compares people to sheep? *Guide your kids to understand that sheep are animals that need guidance. On their own, they cannot thrive. Help them understand that using the imagery of sheep also calls back to Psalm 23 and Old Testament figures like David, Moses, and Jacob.*

How can we become part of Jesus' flock? *Guide your kids to see that Jesus' flock includes all people who have faith in Jesus. We cannot earn salvation, but God gives it freely to all who believe the truth of the gospel. Remind your kids that salvation comes by grace through faith.*

How do you feel knowing that no one can snatch us from Jesus? *Lead your kids to find and read John 10:28. Guide your kids to discuss their feelings. Help them see that everyone who has faith in Jesus has eternal life. Explain to them that Jesus' promise is not based on our behavior but on His power and goodness. Share your thoughts about these promises.*

Say • **Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for His people.** Jesus said He would lay down His life for His sheep, and He died on the cross for our sins. He said He would take His life up again, and He rose from the dead on the third day. We can trust Jesus' promises to protect and care for us.

3rd-5th Grade:

How do you feel knowing that Jesus knows each of His sheep personally—by name? *Invite your kids to share their thoughts. Emphasize that each person is created in the image of God. He knows us each by name. Jesus said that no one can take His sheep from Him. He knows us and cares about us.*

(Option: read Luke 12:7.)

What can you do when you feel lost and God feels far away? *Encourage your kids to consider how lost sheep react. They cannot find their way back on their own, but when they cry out, the shepherd hears and rescues them. We can cry out to God, seeking Him through prayer and His Word. He will bring us back to Himself.*

(Option: read Ps. 77:1.)

How can the way you live point others to Jesus as the Good Shepherd? *Lead your kids to discuss how living sacrificially can give kids the opportunity to tell others about the sacrifice Jesus made for us. Remind your kids that as Jesus' sheep, believers should seek to listen to, follow, and obey Him.*

(Option: read 1 Tim. 4:12.)

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask your kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with your kids.

God rules. Explain to your kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell your kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with your kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell your kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

LIFEWAY KIDS APP:

You can download the LifeWay Kids app to find more activities that will go along with the lessons each week. Look for The Gospel Project and click on Volume 8 (the lite version is free). Then click on Unit 23 and you will see all of the lessons in that unit. Click on this week's Bible story for more activities.