

# The Good Shepherd

Grades  
**3-4**

**SHEPHERD • EASTER 4 • YEAR B**

**JOHN 10:11-18**



## 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

Today's text focuses on who Jesus was and what he did. At this age, kids are beginning to form their own identities, figuring out *who* they are and what that means for what they do. You influence their identity formation when you are intentionally attentive to what they say and do.



## GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers

## LESSON SUPPLIES

- Glass bowl
- Water

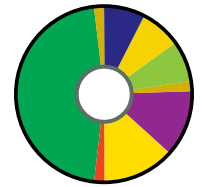
**WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL NRSV BIBLES • DVD • WALL CHART • LEAFLETS**

## Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Play “Follow the Shepherd.” Find a volunteer to be the first “shepherd.” The rest of the kids are the “sheep,” copying the shepherd’s actions. Take turns in the shepherd’s role.

## Invite kids to look at the Wall Chart.

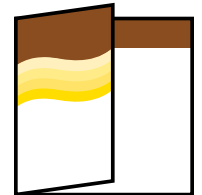
Point out today’s date, church season, color, and icon. **What do shepherds do? They protect sheep from danger. Shepherds carry a tool called a crook, a long stick with a hook on the end. The crook can catch sheep that fall, pull back sheep who wander off, or help guide the whole flock. That’s why the crook is a symbol for Jesus. Like a shepherd, Jesus guides and cares for us.** Invite a kid to draw a shepherd’s crook.



Gather around a bowl of water. **In Easter’s water, we follow the shepherd. Follow me.** Lead kids in a circle around the water.

## Pass out leaflets.

Do you know how voices work? Look at the red vocal cords and blue trachea. Use your finger to follow the red arrows (air) from the bottom of the orange trachea (windpipe) and over the small, brown almond shape (vocal cords). The air makes the



vocal cords vibrate, creating the sounds (the blue, jagged lines) that come out of your mouth. Invite kids to partner up. One kid gently places two fingers on the throat of the other kid, who makes the sound of a fire engine siren. **What did you feel? Reverse roles and try making different high and low sounds.**

How does my voice sound different from yours? How is your voice different from your parents’ voices? God’s voice comes to us through the voices of others.

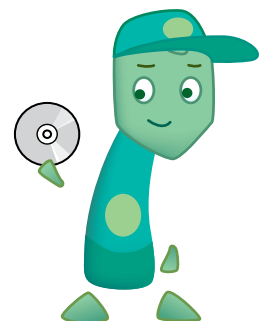
## Gather kids around the screen where you’ll watch the video.

I wonder if it’s hard work to be a shepherd. Would you be a good shepherd? Why or why not?

View Episode 10, “Sheeple,” on the Whirl Year B Spring Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- Why do sheep need a shepherd?
- What made it harder to care for the sheep than Mimi and Gabe thought it would be?
- Whose example did Mimi and Gabe try to follow?
- What skills or qualities does a person need to care for others?
- Jesus is the good shepherd; how can we be “good sheep”?



## Pass out Whirl NRSV Bibles and help kids find John 10:11-18.

Do the Easter 4 Preview Activity together on page 1253 and compare responses.

In the verses we will read today, Jesus is describing himself as a “shepherd.” He says he loves people so much that he will do anything to protect them—even die for them.

Read John 10:11-18 in this creative way together: Tell kids you’ll read today’s text two times, taking turns reading aloud verse by verse. **The first time, raise your hand every time Jesus, the shepherd, says he does something for the sheep (an action). The second time, bleat loudly every time you hear the word *sheep*.**



## Ask these questions after you read the story:

- Who does Jesus say he is?
- Jesus says that as the good shepherd, he loves his sheep so much he will give up his life. What does the Easter story tell us happened next for Jesus?
- When have you been around a pet that knew the voice of the person who took care of it?
- Why does Jesus want to bring other sheep into his fold or flock?
- The word *pastor* comes from taking care of sheep in a pasture. Pastors in Christian churches care for people in their congregation. What pastors do you know?

### BIBLE BIT

- There are many Old Testament stories about God as a shepherd and foolish leaders as “wolves”: Jeremiah 23:1-8; Ezekiel 34; Jeremiah 31:10; and Isaiah 40:11.

### WATCH IT AGAIN

- Encourage kids to warn the sheep when danger comes.

### OUR CHURCH

- Ask a pastor to talk about how what they do is like a shepherd tending a flock.

# RESPOND 10

## Open leaflets and pass out markers.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. Invite kids to press the Start button (open circle with line) and make computer start-up sounds. **Look at the painting *The Shepherdess of Rolleboise* by Daniel Ridgway Knight.** Ask kids to describe what they see in the painting.
2. **Think about grown-ups who, like shepherds, keep you safe, teach you, and care for you. Write the names of people who shepherd you at home, at school, and at church.**
3. Ask kids to choose one of the names and think of what that person likes to do for fun. **When you have an answer, press the shepherd's crook button and tell a neighbor.**
4. **Now can you think of anything that person might be giving up when they are "shepherding" you?** Talk about kids' responses. **Why do you think they are willing to give up something they like to do?** Repeat with the other "shepherds" on their squares.
5. **All of the people we've talked about are good shepherds, but we know Jesus is the biblical Good Shepherd. Press the cross button and say with me, "Jesus is our Good Shepherd." Ready? Press.**

# LAUNCH 10

## Circle up with kids for a quick review.

God protects and guides us like a shepherd protects and guides a flock of sheep. Because Jesus loves us, we share the Good News in our lives, showing and telling others that God cares for them too. **What are some ways we can share this news?** Take time to hear kids' responses.

## Return to the leaflet panels and pass out Whirl Bibles and markers.

Write the word *knows* in a variety of colors between the two sets of arrows. Write your name inside the lamb. When kids have finished, say: **God knows the Good Shepherd, just as the Good Shepherd knows all of you.**

## Send kids out.

Gather around a bowl of water. **In Easter's water, we follow the shepherd. Follow me.** Lead kids in a circle around the water.

Pray together: **God, you are our shepherd. We are your flock. Guide us in right paths so that we may not wander away from your protecting shepherd's crook. Amen.**

Thank kids for being good sheep! Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.