

SESSION

3

Good shepherd**MEETING AIM**

To give the children the opportunity to explore what a shepherd does, why Jesus is a good shepherd, and how to apply this to their lives.

**BIBLE PASSAGE**

John 10:1-21

**BACKGROUND**

The concept of a shepherd is unfamiliar to most of us, yet the imagery behind it is an important one for us to grasp. Shepherds in the Bible had dangerous jobs and were looked down on by society as outcasts. Their primary goal was the wellbeing of their sheep, and they would risk life and limb to ensure the sheep were safe, fed, well guided and healthy. This session will provide children with the chance to think about what this means for their own lives and the lives of those they love.

+ CIRCLE TIME

As the children arrive, ask them to join you and sit in a circle. Ask the children to rate their week, scoring one for terrible and ten for perfect. Share everyone's thoughts and ask them to explain their ratings.

+ SHEEP HERDING

You will need: blown-up balloons; marker pens; newspaper; sticky tape

Before the session, roll a few sheets of newspaper up to create a stick and secure them with sticky tape.

Divide the children into two teams. Give each child a balloon and invite them to draw a sheep on it. Provide a newspaper stick for each team.

Line both teams up at one end of your space and explain the rules. In turn, the children must 'herd' their sheep towards a finish point (you could use a large tub or just an area past a line) by wafting it with their newspaper stick. They then run back to their team and hand the stick to the next person, who then herds their sheep to the end and so on. The first team to finish is the winner!

+ BIBLE STORY

You will need: photo consent from parents or guardians; cotton wool; woolly hats;

scarves; shepherd's staff (you could use the rolled-up newspaper from the game); cameras

Explain to the children that in today's passage Jesus told the Pharisees and his followers that he is a good shepherd. We don't really have shepherds like this anymore, especially in our country, so explore what this looks like together. Ask:

- What is a shepherd?
- What does a shepherd do?
- What would make a bad shepherd?
- What would make a good shepherd?

Explain that a good shepherd looks after his sheep despite the dangerous circumstances. The sheep know the voice of the shepherd and trust him, so they follow him. He protects them against danger, for example wolves and other wild animals, helps them find food, guides them to safety and is committed to their well-being.

Divide the children into smaller groups. Give each group the props required. Ask them to think through the day of a sheep. What do they need, what's going to happen, what will the shepherd do? For each event, they can dress up, take a photo and write a one-sentence description of what's happened. For example: "Breakfast time! Si, our shepherd, found us some lush grass to munch on!"

Each group must include these scenarios:

- A wolf is prowling and waiting to attack. What happens?
- All the sheep are thirsty. What do they do?
- They are wandering close to a cliff edge and the shepherd shouts. What happens?
- A hyena comes over and begins to sniff around. The worker hired by the shepherd is terrified and runs off. What does the shepherd do?

Once all the groups have finished, print out the pictures or show them on a large screen so each group can present their days to everyone.

Finally, read John 10:1-21, using the children's photos as illustrations.

+ CHATTING TOGETHER

In smaller groups, discuss these questions:

- If we are the sheep and Jesus is our good shepherd, what does that mean for us?
- The sheep's needs are food, water and protection. What kinds of needs do we have?
- What makes Jesus a good shepherd rather than a bad one?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper and pens

On the paper, ask each child to draw a mind map of their needs or the needs of people they love. For each need, draw an arrow and write Jesus' response to those needs. For example, they might write fears about SATS or the illness of a loved one.

Once they've identified this, they can draw an arrow and write: "Jesus brings peace." You may need to create a sample to show them and help with ideas. As the children work, circulate around to give help and chat to any children for whom this might bring up difficult issues.

+ PRAYER

You will need: cotton wool; shepherd's staff; reflective music and the means to play it

Using the mind map, invite the children to bring their needs to Jesus. Play soft music to create a calming atmosphere and ask them to sit alone. Give everyone pieces of cotton wool, which will represent their own needs or those of their loved ones.

As they look over their mind maps and hold the cotton wool in their hands, invite them to give each individual need to Jesus, our good shepherd. As they bring their needs to him, they can pile the cotton wool up on the shepherd's staff in the middle of the room.

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