

Jesus Loves Us Unit

Bible Truth: Jesus loves us and knows all about us.

Bible Verse: “The Lord is my shepherd...” Psalm 23:1a

Bible Basis: John 10:1-16, Psalm 23, Isaiah 43:1, Luke 15:1-7, Matthew 18:10-14, Matthew 22: 34-46, Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 28:19-20

Children’s Catechism Bible Truth: Question: How is Christ your prophet?
Answer: Christ teaches me the will of God.

Children will learn:

- Jesus loves us.
- Jesus teaches us how to love others.
- Jesus knows all about us, including our names.
- How a shepherd takes care of his sheep.
- Some differences between wants and needs.
- Ways we can follow Jesus daily.

Lessons:

Jan. 13 – Jesus Knows My Name

Jan. 20 – Safe with Jesus

Jan. 27– Jesus Provides for our Needs

Feb. 3 – I’ll Follow Jesus

Feb. 10 – All about Love: Jesus Teaches Us about the Greatest Commandment

Feb. 17 – Jesus Loves and Blesses the Children

Feb. 24 – Missions Lesson: I Can Tell People About Jesus

For the next several Sundays we will be studying how “Jesus Loves Us” in the Preschool Ministry. We will be learning from the story of the Good Shepherd from John 10:1-14, Psalm 23, and several other Bible passages listed above. These lessons will teach the children that Jesus loves us and knows all about us. Realizing that Jesus truly knows us and is always with us is such a comfort to all believers and for young children. We will continue to learn how we can tell others about Jesus and about thanking God for sending His Son Jesus.

In the story of the Good Shepherd, Jesus paints a wonderful word picture when He compares his love for us to that of a shepherd’s love for his sheep. The shepherd not only cares for the sheep, but provides for and protects his sheep and even calls the sheep by name. There are over 600 references in the Bible to sheep, lambs, and shepherds. The relationship between a shepherd and his sheep is a reference to God’s care and deep love for us. Learning more about sheep and shepherds is a great

place to start with this unit and to help set the stage for a growing faith in the Good Shepherd. We will also talk about Jesus' love for us and how He wants us to love others for Valentine's Day. We will finish our unit the weekend of the Missions Conference by talking about how Jesus wants us to tell others about Him and to share His love with them. Here are a few activities you might try for a fun way to extend the learning from this unit.

Sheep Visit: The Bible talks a lot about sheep because in Bible times sheep were as familiar to children and adults as household pets like dogs and cats are to us today. If you happen to visit the zoo, the Clayton Family Kids Cove area sometimes has sheep that the children can pet. The guides at the zoo are very happy to share information with you and your children about the sheep which would help the children understand more about this story.

Names Matter: In the story of the Good Shepherd, Jesus makes the point that the shepherd knows his sheep so well that he remembers them by name. Names are important to everyone. Tell your child about their name – for example is it a family name, are they named after a specific person or place, does their name have a special meaning in another language, how did you decide to name your child. Children love this sense of belonging to the family and specialness that will come along with sharing the story of their name.

Name Game: Knowing and recognizing your name is a developmental milestone for children. Cut out white ovals to symbolize sheep. Write the names of the child and family members on the sheep and spread them out on the floor or table. See if your child can pick out their own name. Then they can start learning to recognize other names in your family.

Self-Portrait Art: Across the top of a piece of paper write, "Jesus knows all about me." Then have your child look in a mirror and draw a picture of himself/herself. Encourage the child to look at the color of their eyes, hair, lips, etc. as they draw. This simple self-portrait craft helps them see how Jesus knows all about us in a very personal and concrete way.

Sheep Crafts: There are many preschool craft ideas for sheep on the internet that you can find on Pinterest and by searching Google. For preschoolers, any craft where they are using fine motor skills and different textures is great for their development. You can draw a simple sheep outline and have them glue cotton balls or fiberfill to the drawing to make a sheep craft.

Following Jesus Footprints: Trace your child's footprint on colored paper or use plain paper and have your child decorate it. Cut out the footprint and write "I will follow Jesus" on it. Hang it on the refrigerator or your child's door so they will be reminded that they can follow Jesus each day.

Placemats: Help your child decorate sheets of construction paper, butcher paper, or something they can use to decorate and use for a placemat. Make one for each member of the family. While your child is making them and at mealtime, remind your family that Jesus loves us and gives us what we need, such as food and the money to buy it.

Sheep Snacks: Using a large marshmallow for the body, you can attach mini marshmallows with pretzel sticks to look like sheep. Children can add mini chocolate chips or M&Ms for eyes. You can also make green Jell-o and stand the sheep up in the green Jell-o pasture.

Songs/Activities:

I'll Follow Jesus (To the tune of Jesus Loves Me)

Jesus loves me-this I know
Where he leads me, I will go.
I know he'll take care of me.
He's my shepherd; I'm his sheep.
I'll follow Jesus.
I'll follow Jesus.
I'll follow Jesus.
I'll follow him each day.

The Shepherd Takes His Sheep (To the tune of The Farmer in the Dell)

The shepherd takes his sheep.
The shepherd takes his sheep.
Jesus loves us, this we know.
The shepherd takes his sheep.
The sheep will follow him.
The sheep will follow him.
Jesus loves us this we know.
The sheep will follow him.
I will follow him.
I will follow him.
Jesus loves me this I know.
I will follow him.

Books to explore: Here are just a few books you might look for at the library or a bookstore to learn more about sheep and to reinforce the story of the Good Shepherd:

Sheep: A Children Pictures Book About Sheep With Fun Sheep Facts and Photos For Kids by Alma Ray

Wilbur the Woolly: A book about trusting the shepherd by Nikki Rogers

Sheep! Learn About Sheep and Enjoy Colorful Pictures - Look and Learn! (50+ Photos of Sheep)
by Becky Wolff

The Little Lamb (Picturebook) by Judy Dunn

The Good Shepherd: A Picture Book for Children, Leaders and Parents by Jerome W. Berryman and Lois Mitchell

The Good Shepherd Storybook by Georgie Adams and Peter Utton

Jesus, the Good Shepherd by Marilyn Perry and Margaret Kyle

God Loves His Precious Children: Safe in the Arms of the Good Shepherd by Jim George and Elizabeth George

The Good Shepherd Smiles by Debbie Henderson and Charlotte Schmidt

Little Lamb and the Good Shepherd by Zondervan

The Good Shepherd and the Little Lost Lamb by Allia Zobel Nolan

Really Woolly Bible Stories by DaySpring

Family Valentine's Day Ideas: Because Valentine's Day is all about love, it gives you the perfect opportunity to create more love in your family, not only between parent and child, but between siblings. We all need to be cherished. But despite our good intentions, too often we forget to tell the people we love just how precious they are to us.

Here are a few simple ideas to celebrate Valentine's Day ideas to show the people you live with how much you adore them.

1. Rethink Gifts. Valentines Gifts are NEVER about the item or product. That teaches all the wrong lessons about love. Make this about the heart to heart expressions that build connection. That could mean handmade cards, extra time together, and things like that instead of purchased gifts.

2. Alternate gift ideas:

- ❖ A Letter of Appreciation. The best gift of all is always a simple letter to your loved ones detailing how grateful you are to have them in your life. Be as specific as possible; "The way you let me sleep in the morning while you make the kids breakfast" and "The way you sing off key" are even more satisfying than "You're lovable," because the recipient feels seen and appreciated. Don't worry if it isn't eloquent. Any heartfelt love letter will be cherished by the recipient much more than a store-bought gift. This isn't only for your partner; kids feel loved when we notice who they are and what they contribute to us, our family, and the world. Your kids will reread your letters during tough times. They'll save them for the rest of their lives.
- ❖ Homemade Valentines. Kids feel loved when we spend time making something for them, rather than buying it. Why not make Valentines? This can be as simple as 15 minutes with red construction paper, scissors, and magic markers, or as elaborate as a joyful, creative family project for three hours. Need inspiration? There are web sites galore. But I usually stick to the

simplest: construction paper hearts with a heartfelt message detailing something you appreciate about the recipient.

- ❖ A gift certificate for a backrub or foot massage every night for a month. Kids feel loved when we listen to them and give them an opportunity to talk through their daily challenges. Every single day, spend 15 minutes snuggling with each child before bed. Not reading, that's separate. Snuggle time is just chatting, or snuggling companionably. Most kids love a backrub and hand or foot rub. Darkness and impending lights out help you connect soul to soul. After the month, you'll realize the gift was really to you, and you won't be willing to give up your new habit.

3. Get up a few minutes early so you can enjoy opening each other's valentines at breakfast. Be sure to include something heart-shaped or sweet to eat like pancakes or toast cut with a heart shaped cookie cutter.

4. Let your kids know your love is with them all day by tucking little construction paper hearts with love notes into their backpack, lunch, jacket pocket, etc. for them to find throughout the day.

5. Make the dinner mood festive and special with a short family dance party before dinner. Don't forget the romantic slow dance for the grown-ups! Finish with a family hug. After the dancing, eat with candles on the table.

6. At dinner, go around the table and give each person a chance to give an appreciation to every other family member. They don't have to be earth-shaking to strengthen relationships.

7. Spread the love. Before Valentine's Day, invite your kids' friends over to make Valentines. Good music (theirs), delicious snacks (your job) and take pics with your phone or instant camera ("Here's a picture of me making your valentine") seem to provide enough cool context for tweens and even younger teens to let themselves enjoy this project. In fact, inviting friends always seems to double the fun, whatever their age.

8. Keep Valentines from past years and decorate the house with them for the week before and the week after. Each year you'll ooh and ah over beautiful ones from the past, and the messy, misspelled hearts from the little ones will become priceless evidence of their past adorableness, which even they will treasure as they get older. For the month of February, your house will be papered with love.

9. Make some extra valentines to pass out as you go through your day. You'll be amazed whose day you'll be moved to brighten: the grocery store clerks, coworkers, neighbors, a homeless person you pass on the street. And you'll go home with your own heart glowing and a few sizes larger. You might even just want to leave anonymous valentines at each neighbor's door.

10. Need candy to make the day complete? We all enjoy treats, just try to keep that from being the center of the celebration and the focus of the day. Kids love baking cookies or cupcakes for special celebrations like Valentine's Day. Be aware that many teachers say the red dye is worse than the sugar in setting kids off some children's behavior issues, and scientists think it is pretty bad for you. Chocolate, on the other hand, is the perfect food, according to the strictly unscientific research I've conducted. Ha ha ha.

11. How about a telephone Valentine chain? Call someone dear to your family and pass the phone around to take turns telling this person you love them. Then ask that person to "Pass it forward" by calling someone they love, asking that person to call another, etc.

12. Sound surround yourself with love. This is the day for your Love Song playlist. Or let your kids create a new one. Skip the heartbroken ones and go straight for celebration, all day long!

13. Love in Practice. If you'd like your kids to take pride in making the world a better place, Valentine's Day is a great opportunity to make love visible in the world for by taking valentines goodies or homemade valentines to a nursing home, hospital, or soup kitchen.

However you decide to celebrate, I hope this February 14 brings more love into your life. Happy Valentine's Day!

(Adapted from the article Fun Valentine's Day Family Traditions on ahaparenting.com)

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for being our Good Shepherd. You know us and call us by name. You care for us and keep us from danger. Please let us know you are with us this week. Please guide and protect us. May we follow your voice this week and always. Thank you for your loving care. Amen.