

# The Good Shepherd

**SHEPHERD • EASTER 4 • YEAR B**

**JOHN 10:11–18**

Grades  
**5–6**



## 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

Kids this age may often feel more "instructed" or "told" than "guided" or "shepherded." Relate those differences to spiritual things! Nobody can *tell* them their spiritual identity. They should be looking for leaders who guide them.



### GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers
- Pens

### LESSON SUPPLIES

- Cotton balls (10 per pair of kids)
- Rubber bands

**WHIRL SUPPLIES**

**• WHIRL NRSV BIBLES**

**• DVD**

**• WALL CHART**

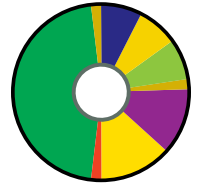
**• LEAFLETS**

## Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Let kids sort cotton balls into groups of ten in rubber band corrals (rubber bands lying on their sides).

## Invite kids to look at the Wall Chart.

Point out today's date, church season, color, and icon. **We're halfway through the season of Easter! What new things have you learned this Easter season?** Let the kids glue cotton balls to the chart, symbolizing the shepherd theme.

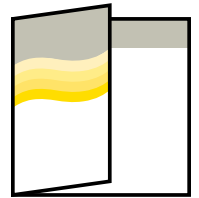


Kids can circle up and link fingers with their neighbor, using rubber bands, saying, **"In the season of Easter, we remember that we are part of Jesus' flock."**

## Pass out leaflets and markers.

**Lots of people collect seashells, marbles, or postage stamps. What are some things that you collect?**

Have kids draw those things on the front flap. Share, then ask: **Why do you collect those things? How do you take care of the collection?**



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

**Have you ever been responsible for something that you weren't ready for? Today we'll watch Mimi and Gabe handle exactly that kind of situation.**

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

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **If you were suddenly in charge of a bunch of animals, what would you do first?**
- **What did Mimi and Gabe think that their responsibilities were when they started? What did they realize later?**
- **When have you been surprised by an extra responsibility?**
- **What surprises did Mimi and Gabe encounter?**
- **What is the main role of any shepherd?**



## 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.

Read John 10:11-18 in this creative way together: Have the kids sit tightly bunched together. Choose a “shepherd.” Let the shepherd choose who reads the first verse. At the end of each verse, kids say, “Baa . . . baa,” until the shepherd chooses the next reader.



## Ask these questions after you read the story:

- What do you know about sheep? In what ways are followers of Jesus like sheep?
- Who is the good shepherd in this text?
- When have you been left responsible for something? What were the circumstances? How did it go?
- How do the sheep in today’s reading know which voice to follow?
- Jesus wasn’t actually a shepherd. Why do you think he compared himself to one?

### BIBLE BIT

“Good Shepherd” is a designation for Jesus, shepherd of God’s people.

### WATCH IT AGAIN

How do Mimi and Gabe respond to suddenly being in charge?

### OUR CHURCH

Organize a trip to a petting zoo, or a church member’s farm, to provide an opportunity to interact with real sheep and learn more about them.

# RESPOND 10

## Open leaflets and pass out cotton balls.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. Divide your group into pairs. If the groups are uneven today, you get to play too. Pass out a set of ten cotton balls to each pair.
2. Player A gets to place their cotton balls wherever they choose on the square. When they are ready, player B gets to agitate the paper for ten seconds. They may *not* lift the paper or touch the cotton.
3. After ten seconds of jiggling the paper, assign points as follows: 2 points to player A for each piece on the picture of the shepherd; 1 point to player A for any piece of cotton in the pasture; 2 points to player B for any piece of cotton on the picture of the wolf; 1 point *subtracted* from player B for any piece of cotton that comes off the square entirely.
4. Players switch roles and repeat; play additional rounds as time allows.
5. **How did you do? What was your strategy for placing the cotton balls? Did it work? When you were the “shaker,” how did you figure out how much to shake the paper?**
6. **What, if anything, could an actual shepherd learn from your techniques?**
7. **How does the shepherd in today’s reading protect his sheep? What would happen to those sheep without the shepherd?**
8. **How do you get to decide what voices you will follow in life? What things about “shepherds of life” do you think are most important?**

# LAUNCH 10

## Circle up with kids for a quick review.

**What did you learn about sheep or shepherds today that was new to you? How is Jesus like a shepherd to us?** Take time to hear kids’ responses. **We all need a shepherd! We can do many things on our own, but we should always remember that God watches over us, loving us.**

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

Invite kids to draw or write the names of people they recognize as human spiritual shepherds—family members, teachers, or church leaders in the shepherd outline. **How do those people guide you?**

## Send kids out.

Kids circle up again and link fingers with their neighbor, using rubber bands, saying, **“In the season of Easter, we remember that we are part of Jesus’ flock.”**

Pray together: **God, thanks for watching over us. Help us to watch over others. Amen.**

Thank kids for learning a new game! Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.