

Unit 23 • Session 5
The Good Shepherd

Bible Passage:

John 10

Story Point:

Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Key Passage:

John 14:26

Big Picture Question:

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

Parent Bible Study

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.

The BIBLE Story

The Good Shepherd

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,” Jesus said. “A shepherd comes in through the gate and calls his sheep by name. When the sheep hear the shepherd’s voice, they follow him. If the sheep hear a stranger’s voice, they run away.”

The people did not understand Jesus’ story. God’s people are like sheep, 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 way to true life. 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—extraordinary life.”

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gives up His life for the sheep. He 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 on the cross and rise again.

The Jews started to argue. Many said, “Do not listen to Him; He’s crazy.” Others said, “He does not sound crazy. Can a crazy man 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. My miracles prove who I am. You are not My sheep.” Jesus reminded them that He is the Good Shepherd. “My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them life forever. No one will take them out of My hand. The Father and I are one.”

Christ Connection: Jesus is the Good Shepherd. God sent Him to save sinners. Jesus gave up His life so His people could be forgiven and have life with God forever. Those who trust in Jesus are His sheep. They listen to Him, follow Him, and obey Him.