

WEEK 42 | SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2026

# Main Lesson, Activity & Discussion

Ages 6 to 10 | Read Aloud Lesson | Scripture Centered | Christ Centered

## LESSON OVERVIEW

Lesson Title: Jesus the Good Shepherd

Primary Scripture: John 10:1 through 18

Supporting Scripture: John 9:1 through 41; John 10:27 through 30; Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34:11 through 16

Big Idea: Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows us, leads us, and gave His life to save us.

## MEMORY VERSE

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11*

## MAIN LESSON NARRATIVE

Beloved friends, our lesson begins before Jesus ever says the words, "I am the good shepherd," because John wants us to see something happen before Jesus explains what it means. There is a man standing near Jesus who has just experienced something so wonderful that his entire life has changed, yet some of the people who should have helped him understand what happened have instead pushed him away.

This man had been blind from birth. He had never opened his eyes in the morning and watched sunlight fill a room, looked into another person's face, or seen the road beneath his own feet. He knew the world through sounds, voices, touch, and everything else his body could tell him, but he had never seen it with his eyes.

Then Jesus came into his life, and the man could see.

John chapter 9 tells us that Jesus healed him, and something that had never happened before in this man's life suddenly became real. Imagine what that must have meant as he began looking at things other people had seen so many times that they hardly noticed them anymore. For the first time he could see people, buildings, trees, colors, and the faces belonging to voices he had known for years.

You might expect everyone around him to celebrate, because a man who had been blind could now see. Instead, several religious leaders became more interested in arguing about Jesus than rejoicing with the man standing in front of them.

The healing had happened on the Sabbath, which was the special day God had given His people for rest and worship. Some of these leaders had become so focused on their own arguments about Sabbath rules that they were missing what was happening right before their eyes. A man who had spent his entire life blind could see, yet they kept questioning him because they did not want to believe what the miracle might tell them about Jesus.

The man did not know everything about Jesus yet, and he never pretended that he did. He simply knew what had happened to him, and he refused to deny it. When they continued questioning him, he finally said something wonderfully simple in John 9:25:

*"One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"*

The leaders did not like his answer, and eventually they threw him out.

That is where I would like us to stay for a moment, because something important has happened to this man besides receiving his sight. He has been given something wonderful, but at almost the same time, people with power and authority have rejected him.

Then John tells us what Jesus did.

John 9:35 says:

*"Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'"*

Jesus heard what had happened, and He went looking for the man until He found him. Other people had decided they were finished with him, but Jesus was not finished with him at all.

The man still had questions, so he asked Jesus who the Son of Man was. Jesus helped him understand, and the man responded by believing in Him and worshiping Him.

That scene matters because John does not suddenly change subjects when chapter 10 begins. Jesus is still speaking in the middle of a situation where people who should have cared for someone had treated him harshly, while Jesus had gone searching for the same man and brought him closer.

Then Jesus begins talking about shepherds.

The people listening would have understood the picture quickly because sheep and shepherds were part of ordinary life around them. A shepherd had to know where the flock could find food and water, where dangerous ground might be, and how to keep the animals together when something threatened them. Sheep could not study a map or decide for themselves where the safest path might be, so their lives depended greatly upon the shepherd who led them.

The picture was also familiar because God had used the language of shepherds throughout the Old Testament. Long before this day, David had written:

*"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing." Psalm 23:1*

David knew something about sheep because he had cared for them before he became king. When he called the Lord his Shepherd, he was saying that God could be trusted to lead, provide, and care for him even when the road ahead was difficult.

God had also spoken through the prophet Ezekiel about leaders who had failed His people. They were supposed to care for those God had placed under their responsibility, but instead they had cared mostly about themselves. In response, God made a beautiful promise in Ezekiel 34:11:

*"I myself will search for my sheep and look after them."*

Now think again about the man from John 9. Other leaders had pushed him away, but Jesus had searched for him and found him. Then Jesus began speaking about the Shepherd who knows His sheep and leads them.

John wants us to connect those things.

Jesus first described sheep gathered inside a sheep pen, which was a place used to keep a flock together and offer some protection. He explained that a shepherd enters properly and that the sheep recognize the voice of the one who has been caring for them.

Jesus said:

*"The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." John 10:3*

Then Jesus continued:

*"When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice." John 10:4*

Picture what Jesus is describing. The shepherd does not stand far away shouting at animals he barely knows. He comes near, calls, and then walks ahead while the sheep follow the voice they have learned to recognize.

The people listening did not yet understand everything Jesus meant, so He continued explaining the picture. He talked about thieves who come because they want to take something for themselves, and then He explained that His reason for coming was completely different.

Jesus said:

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 10:10*

Jesus did not come because He wanted to use people. He came to give life, and that life is much deeper than having an easy day or getting everything we hope for.

The man from John 9 had already received a small picture of that. Jesus had given him physical sight, which was a wonderful gift, but Jesus had also come back and helped him understand who He was. The man had received more than working eyes. He was beginning to know the One who had given him sight.

Then Jesus spoke the words at the center of everything He was teaching:

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11*

Those are our memory verse words, and they are worth saying slowly together.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Jesus was doing more than choosing a pleasant picture from country life. The people who knew the Scriptures had heard the Lord described as the Shepherd of His people, and they knew God had promised that He Himself would search for His sheep and care for them.

Now Jesus stood among them and said, "I am the good shepherd."

He was telling them something about who He truly is.

Jesus then explained that not everyone who stands near the sheep loves them. A hired worker might care for a flock while the work is easy, but if danger became too great, that worker might decide the sheep were not worth risking his own life.

The Good Shepherd is different, and Jesus makes that difference personal when He says:

*"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." John 10:14*

Those words become especially meaningful when we remember the man who had just been rejected. Some people had treated him as though he were a problem they wanted to remove, while Jesus had treated him like someone worth finding.

That tells us something about the heart of the Good Shepherd.

There are times when children can feel almost invisible, even when they are surrounded by people. You can sit in a classroom filled with voices and still wonder whether anyone notices that something inside you hurts. You can laugh with friends while worrying about something happening at home, or you can remember something wrong you have done and wonder whether people would still want you around if they knew.

Jesus does not care for His people as names lost inside a giant crowd. When Jesus says that He knows His sheep, He is telling us that His care is personal. He knows where we are frightened, where we are confused, where we have sinned, and where we need help, and we never have to pretend with Him because there is nothing about us He has failed to see.

This does not mean that every person automatically belongs to Jesus simply because He knows they exist. Scripture calls us to turn from our sin and trust Him, and those who belong to Christ become part of His flock.

But once we understand the Shepherd's heart, we begin to see why following Jesus is not about trying to impress Him. Sheep do not earn the shepherd's attention by becoming impressive animals, and sinners do not earn the love of Jesus by becoming impressive people.

We need Him because we cannot save ourselves.

That is where the picture Jesus gives us becomes much deeper.

A good shepherd protects the sheep from danger, but Jesus says that His care for His sheep will eventually cost Him His own life. He says again:

*"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11*

Jesus is beginning to explain the cross before the cross happens.

He knows that a day is coming when He will be arrested, mocked, beaten, and crucified. None of those things will surprise Him, because He already knows where His path is leading.

Later in the same teaching Jesus says:

*"No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord." John 10:18*

The people who arrest and kill Jesus will still be responsible for the evil they choose to do, but Jesus wants His followers to understand that He is not a helpless man who suddenly loses control of His life. He gives Himself willingly because saving His people is the very reason He came.

That leaves us with an important question: why would the Good Shepherd need to give His life for the sheep?

The answer begins with who God is and what has happened to us.

God is holy and good, and everything about Him is right. He made us to know Him, love Him, and live according to His good ways, but every one of us has turned away from Him.

The Bible calls that sin.

Sin shows itself when we lie, disobey, become cruel, put ourselves first, hold hatred inside, or choose our own way instead of God's. Sometimes sin is easy for other people to see, while other times it can hide quietly in our thoughts and desires, but none of us can honestly say that we have always loved God and others as we should.

Once we have sinned, we cannot travel backward and make it disappear. Doing something kind tomorrow does not erase the wrong we did yesterday, and attending church cannot purchase forgiveness from God.

We need someone who can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

That is why the Good Shepherd came.

Jesus is God the Son, and Scripture teaches that God is one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, yet there is only one God.

Jesus the Son became truly human without ceasing to be God. He entered the world He had made, lived among people like us, experienced hunger, tiredness, sorrow, rejection, and pain, yet He never sinned.

Then Jesus willingly gave His life for sinners.

When He said that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep, He was telling His followers what He would soon do on the cross. Jesus would take the judgment our sin deserves so that people who are guilty could be forgiven and brought back to God.

The Shepherd would give Himself for the sheep because the sheep could not rescue themselves.

That is the gospel.

But even there, Jesus was not finished explaining what would happen.

After saying that He had authority to lay down His life, Jesus added:

*"I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again." John 10:18*

Jesus knew that He would die, but He also knew death would not be the end of Him.

He would be buried, and on the third day He would rise again.

This is where the picture of the Good Shepherd becomes even more beautiful, because Christians are not following only the memory of someone who loved people long ago. The Shepherd who gave His life is alive today, which means His care for His people did not end at the cross or disappear inside a tomb.

The Jesus who went looking for the rejected man is alive.

The Jesus who said that He knows His sheep is alive.

The Jesus who gave Himself for sinners is alive.

And because He lives, He is able to give His people something death itself cannot take away.

Later in John 10, Jesus says:

*"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27*

Then He continues:

*"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." John 10:28*

Notice that Jesus describes eternal life as something He gives. He does not say the sheep earn it because they follow well enough or behave perfectly enough.

That matters because it would be very easy to hear a lesson about sheep and finish by thinking, "I need to be a better sheep so Jesus will love me."

That is not the good news Jesus is teaching.

We do want to follow Him, obey Him, and learn His ways, but obedience grows out of knowing the Shepherd who has already loved us. We are not trying to become good enough to convince Jesus to care.

The Shepherd has already shown how far His love will go.

He gave His life.

There is another part of Jesus' picture that sometimes raises an important question. If the sheep know their shepherd's voice, how do we hear the voice of Jesus today?

That question deserves care because people sometimes say, "Jesus told me," when what they really mean is that they had a strong thought or feeling. Thoughts and feelings can matter, but they can also be wrong, which means we need something more dependable than whatever happens to be passing through our minds.

God has given us His Word.

The Bible lets us hear what Jesus actually taught, shows us what He loves, and helps us understand the kind of life He leads His people toward. The Holy Spirit helps believers understand and obey Scripture, but the Holy Spirit will never lead someone against what God has already said.

That means we do not have to become confused when someone claims that God told them to lie, hurt another person, hide wrongdoing, or do something Scripture calls sinful. The Shepherd does not lead His sheep away from His own truth.

This is especially important for children to understand because sometimes adults misuse religious words in ways that can be harmful. If an adult ever tells a child that following Jesus means keeping abuse, dangerous touching, threats, or frightening behavior secret, the child does not need to obey that command. Telling a trustworthy parent, teacher, pastor, caregiver, or another safe adult is not turning away from Jesus.

The Good Shepherd leads toward truth, goodness, and light.

There is another hard question we should not avoid, because thoughtful children may already be wondering about it.

If Jesus is the Good Shepherd who protects His sheep, why do people who love Him still get hurt?

The Bible never promises that following Jesus means nothing painful will happen. The man in John 9 was healed and then mistreated by other people. The disciples would later face persecution, sickness, loss, and death, and Christians today still walk through painful things they would never choose.

Even the Good Shepherd went to the cross.

So Jesus is not promising that His followers will live inside a protected little world where nothing sad, frightening, or difficult can reach them. His promise is deeper than that.

He promises that He will not abandon His people.

He gives eternal life.

He holds His sheep securely.

And because Jesus has risen from the dead, even death cannot steal the future He has promised to those who belong to Him.

There may be days when we do not understand the path Jesus is leading us along, and that can be hard. We may pray about something and wait much longer than we expected, or we may face something that makes us wonder why God allowed it.

Following the Good Shepherd does not mean pretending those questions are easy.

It means learning to trust the One who has already shown us His heart.

A sheep following a shepherd does not understand the entire countryside or know what lies beyond every hill. The sheep knows the shepherd who walks ahead.

In a much greater way, Christians do not always know what is coming next, but we know the One we are following.

Jesus did not stay far away from our pain and ask us to find our own way home. He entered our world, came near to hurting people, welcomed those others rejected, told the truth even when it was costly, and finally gave His life on the cross for sinners.

Then He rose again.

Now return with me to the man where our lesson began.

He had spent his entire life unable to see, and Jesus gave him sight. Then people who should have cared for him became angry and pushed him away.

Jesus heard what had happened and went looking for him.

The man did not understand everything about Jesus when Jesus found him, and he still had questions. Jesus did not shame him for what he did not know or walk away because his understanding was incomplete.

Instead, Jesus helped him see more clearly.

First the man's eyes had been opened, and then, little by little, he began to understand who Jesus was.

After that, Jesus spoke about the Shepherd who knows His sheep, calls them, leads them, and refuses to abandon them when loving them becomes costly.

The story has been showing us the Shepherd from the beginning.

When the man was forgotten by others, Jesus found him.

When the sheep needed someone trustworthy to follow, Jesus said He was the Good Shepherd.

When sinners needed someone to save them, Jesus said the Shepherd would lay down His life.

And when death seemed like it should be the end of everything, Jesus said He had authority to take His life up again.

That is why the sheep are not the heroes of this lesson.

Jesus is.

He is the Good Shepherd who came looking for people who could not save themselves, gave His life for sinners, rose from the dead, and continues leading His people today.

So when we feel forgotten, we can remember the man Jesus found. When we are confused about which way to go, we can stay close to God's Word and learn the voice of the Shepherd. When we sin, we can turn back to Jesus instead of hiding from Him, because the very reason He laid down His life was to save sinners.

And when life becomes difficult and we cannot see what lies beyond the next hill, we can remember that our hope does not rest in understanding every part of the road.

Our hope rests in knowing the Shepherd.

Let us say our memory verse together one more time:

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11*

Jesus knows His people, leads His people, gave His life for His people, and rose again.

The Good Shepherd is alive, and He can be trusted.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH SUGGESTED ANSWERS

### 1. What happened to the man before Jesus taught about the Good Shepherd?

Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth. Some religious leaders treated him badly and threw him out, but Jesus heard what had happened and went to find him.

### 2. Why does the man's experience help us understand what Jesus means by the Good Shepherd?

Some leaders failed to care for him, while Jesus searched for him, found him, and helped him understand the truth. That shows us the kind of Shepherd Jesus is.

### 3. What does our memory verse tell us about Jesus?

It tells us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd and that He willingly gave His life for His sheep.

### 4. Why did Jesus need to give His life for us?

We have sinned and cannot remove our own guilt. Jesus had no sin, yet He died in our place so everyone who turns from sin and trusts Him can be forgiven.

### 5. What happened after Jesus died?

Jesus was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead. The Good Shepherd who gave His life is alive today.

### 6. How can we learn to recognize the voice of Jesus?

We learn what Jesus teaches through God's Word. The Holy Spirit helps believers understand and obey Scripture, and He will never lead us against what God has already said.

### 7. Does Jesus being our Shepherd mean nothing painful will ever happen?

No. Christians still experience hard things, but Jesus does not abandon His people. He gives eternal life, and because He rose again, suffering and death will not have the final word.

### **8. What should we remember if we feel forgotten or left out?**

We can remember that Jesus knows His people personally. The same Jesus who went looking for the rejected man still cares for those who belong to Him.

### **9. Are the sheep the heroes because they follow so well?**

No. Jesus is the Hero because He came to find, save, and lead His sheep. We follow Him because He first loved us.

### **10. What is the big truth we should remember this week?**

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows us, leads us, gave His life to save us, and is alive today.

## **HANDS ON ACTIVITY**

### **Follow the Shepherd**

Purpose: Help children remember that sheep learn to follow a shepherd they know, while showing that Christians learn the truth about Jesus through His Word.

Supplies: A Bible and an open area in the classroom.

Choose one child to act as the shepherd while the other children stand several steps away. Have the shepherd give a few simple and safe directions, such as taking two steps forward, turning around, or walking toward a certain place in the room. After a short turn, allow another child to become the shepherd so several children can participate.

When the activity ends, gather the children together and explain that the game gives us only a small picture of what Jesus meant. Jesus normally does not stand across the room and speak where our ears can hear Him, which means we should not treat every thought or feeling as though it came directly from Him.

Open the Bible and read John 10:27:

*"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."*

Explain that God has given us Scripture so we can know what Jesus actually teaches. As we learn His Word, we become better able to recognize what agrees with His truth and what does not.

Then say the memory verse together once more:

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11*

## **TEACHER CLOSING**

Bring the children back to the man at the beginning of the lesson and remind them how the account unfolded. He had been blind, Jesus gave him sight, other people pushed him away, and then Jesus went looking for him and helped him understand who He was.

You may close by saying:

*"Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd because He wanted us to understand His heart. He knows His people, tells us the truth, leads us in what is good, and loved sinners enough to give His own life for us. Life will not always be easy, and sometimes we will have questions we cannot answer right away, but the Shepherd who died for us has risen from the dead. We can trust Him even when we cannot see the whole road ahead."*

Then pray together:

*"Father, thank You for sending Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Jesus, thank You for knowing Your people, searching for those who are lost, and giving Your life for our sins. Thank You that You rose from the dead and are alive today. Holy Spirit, help us understand God's Word and follow Jesus with trust. When we feel forgotten, frightened, or unsure about what comes next, help us remember that our Good Shepherd has not left us. Amen."*

### TAKEAWAY TRUTH

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows us, leads us, gave His life to save us, and is alive today.