

Series: Who is Who

Lesson 3—The Sheep and the Shepherd

OVERVIEW

Bible Passages: Psalm 23

Key Verse: John 10:11—“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- Consider what the idea of a God being a Shepherd means.
- Consider what the idea of you being a sheep means.
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed Sunday School.
- Pray for each student by name.

OPENING ACTIVITY

As student enter the room **ASK:**

- *How was your week?*
- *What did God do in your life this past week?*
- *If you had to choose an animal that is most like you what would it be and why?*
- *If you had to become an animal—any animal—what would you choose and why?*

SAY: Many people would choose to be a lion, the king of the jungle. Or an eagle, to soar high in the sky. Or a stallion, strong and bold, but God doesn't compare you to any of these. (In fact the closest God ever comes to comparing you with a horse is in the Psalms where He compares you to a donkey!) God says you're a sheep and He's the shepherd, but first

CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

The first time a student is absent, give them a call. Following the second absence, send them a postcard. The third week they are absent, pay them a visit.

Think about it: What does it say to a student when they miss multiple weeks in a row and are never contacted? It says, "It really doesn't matter if you're here or not."

Small things communicate great messages. Let the three "small" things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.

let's take a look back at a few previous lessons where we talked about who God is and who you are.

Review Questions

- *What relationships have we talked about so far?* (The Father and the Son; the Potter and the Clay.)
- *What have you learned about your relationship with God through these lessons?*
- *Who is a child of God?* (Not everyone. Everyone is a *creation* of God, but only those who have given their lives to Christ are *children* of God.)
- *What does clay have to do with the Christian life?* (It is in complete surrender to whatever and however the Potter wants to mold it.)
- *To what else does the Bible compare our relationship to God?* (As a shepherd and sheep; a vine and its branches; the keeper and his vineyard, etc.)

BIBLE LESSON

Choose a volunteer—To Read Psalm 23:1

SAY: If the Lord is my Shepherd that makes me a sheep. Let's stop here for a minute and find out how much you know about sheep. I am going to give you a statement after each of which I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree.

Understanding Sheep

Ask each of the following questions to your students and ask them to agree or disagree.

- *If sheep are cold enough, they will pile on top of each other in an attempt to stay warm and those on the bottom of the pile many times die —Do you agree or disagree?*
Correct Answer: **Agree**
- *If one sheep walks off a cliff, other sheep will follow—Do you agree or disagree?*
Correct Answer: **Agree**
- *Most animals can smell water including sheep—Do you agree or disagree?*
Correct Answer: **Disagree** (Most animals can smell water, but not sheep. That's why they need a shepherd to lead them to it.)
- *If sheep go too far into water, they'll drown—Do you agree or disagree?*
Correct Answer: **Agree** (Their wool fills with water and they sink.)
- *If a sheep senses danger like a wolf or mountain lion, it will run—Do you agree or disagree?* Correct Answer: **Disagree** (A sheep will freeze. They don't have any defenses, so they basically just wait to be eaten.)
- *If a sheep rolls too far over on its back into a certain position, it won't be able to get up?—Do you agree or disagree?* Correct Answer: **Agree** (Sheep have been known to lie there until they die.)

- *So what do you think about sheep? (They're not very smart. In fact, they have been called the stupidest creatures on the face of the earth.)*
- *How does it make you feel that God compares you to a sheep?*
- *Why do you think God compared you to a sheep? (Because one thing about sheep is always true—They are dependent on the shepherd. They cannot survive without someone to take care of them.)*
- *How does it make you feel that you are dependant on God? Do you like being dependant?*
- *Is dependence a crutch?*
- *What would you say to someone who says that Christianity is for weak people who need God as a crutch in order to make it through life?*

Illustration—Hold Your Breath

Time your class to see who can hold their breath the longest.

SAY: Most people can't even go a minute without air. You're dependant on it. So, is air a crutch? No, it's a necessity. Because of how you were made physically you are dependant on air to breathe, food and water, shelter, etc. In the same way that these are necessities, not crutches, so is a relationship with God. You were created to know and walk with your Creator.

Choose a volunteer—To Read Psalm 23:1-2

- *Why do you think the Bible says that the sheep will “want” or “lack for” nothing? (Because the Shepherd provides everything he needs.)*

SAY: The rest of Psalm 23 is the day in the life of a sheep.

- *What do green pastures and still waters have to do with you? (Sheep won't drink from rushing water. They needed still or “quiet” waters and fresh green pastures, and they couldn't find either of these without the shepherd. The shepherd provided for the needs of the sheep.)*
- *What are some ways that God provides for your needs? (He gave your parents a job to provide food, a home, etc. Everything good in your life ultimately came from God. *James 1:17* says, “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”)*

SAY: Besides food and water, sheep also needed rest in the heat of the day.

- *Have you ever had a tough experience in the middle of which God gave you rest?*

Choose a volunteer—To Read Psalm 23:3

- *How does God restore your soul?*
- *How does God guide you in the paths of righteousness?* (The shepherd carried two pieces of equipment a rod, which was like a large club for fighting off predators, and a staff. The staff hooked at the end to pull sheep away from a danger but if they were on a narrow trail, the shepherd would tap them on the legs to force them, or literally “to drive them” up the path and to keep them on that path. This is what idea here refers to. It’s not that the shepherd is up ahead and the sheep are trailing behind but that the shepherd is behind tapping, pushing and driving the sheep in the right direction to make sure that none get lost.)
- *How does it affect “His name’s sake” when someone who claims to know Christ doesn’t live for Him?*

Choose a volunteer—To Read Psalm 23:4

SAY: Notice that this isn’t the “valley of death” but the “shadow of death.” There will be many times before you die that you will walk through deep dark difficulties and in those times watch what you can do.

- *What are the sheep doing in the valley?* (They’re walking—not running, not panicking. Why? Because although they are surrounded by evil, they don’t fear it. They are comforted because the shepherd is with them. He was their provider; Now he’s their protector.)

SAY: Many people think that King David, who had been a shepherd and wrote this Psalm, wrote it when he was a boy. Actually when he wrote these words he was probably in the “valley of the shadow of death.” Many people agree that he probably wrote this at the time in his life when King Saul, who was jealous and angry with him, was closing in on him and was within only about one day of catching and killing him. In the middle of trials he took comfort because He understood what it meant for God to be his Shepherd.

Choose a volunteer—To Read Psalm 23:5-6

- *Take another look at Psalm 23—Something important changes in verse 4. Can you see what it is?* (Before verse 4 the shepherd had been referred to in third person—i.e., “He makes...He leads...He restores...He guides.” But something happens when a person walks through the valley of the shadow of death. Now, the shepherd is no longer “he” but “you,”—“You are with me... You prepare... You anoint,” as if, in the sheep’s mind, the shepherd has moved from being “over there” or distant to being very personal and close.)

SAY: Throughout the day the shepherd would pick special berries and put them in a pouch. Then at the end of the day, the shepherd would herd the sheep inside a

sheepfold. A sheepfold was like a large horseshoe-shaped stone structure that was several feet tall with no roof or ceiling and didn't even have a door, just an opening. Thorns covered the top and the edges, so that there was only one way in—the door-less gate. As each sheep would enter, the shepherd would feel them for scrapes and wounds. If they were hurt, he would pour oil on the wound. Then once they were all inside, he would give them the treats he had picked throughout the day. Finally, the shepherd would lie down across the opening so that anything that would enter would have to come through him. The shepherd became the door of the sheepfold.

- *How does this paint a picture of God?*

KEY VERSE

Choose a volunteer—To Read John 10:1-11

- *How does the picture of the shepherd being the only way into the sheepfold paint a picture of Jesus and salvation?* (There was only one way in—through the door. There is only one way into heaven, through Jesus. The shepherd became the door to the sheepfold; Jesus is the door to heaven.)

- *What did you notice about how sheep listen?* (Sheep are one of the dumbest animals in creation but they still know how to listen to and follow the voice of their shepherd.)

- *What could we, as Christians, learn from how sheep listen?* (They won't follow the voice of a stranger but they follow their shepherd's voice.)

SAY: The shepherd knew each of his sheep by name—even if he had a hundred or more. They were important to him and you are important to God. He knows more about you than you know about yourself. The God of the universe knows you by name. He knows every hair on your head and He loves you and has great plans for your life. But the only way you'll be a part of those plans is if you give your life to Him and follow Him, just like the sheep follow the voice of their shepherd.

- *In what ways does Jesus, the Good Shepherd, speak to his people?* (Through the Bible mainly. Also through other people, situations, and in the stillness of your heart, etc.)

- *In what ways have you “heard” God’s voice? In what ways has God spoken to you?* (Ask for specific situations. If no one answers, mention that many people don't “hear” God because they don't listen, and many times this is the result of not actively having a daily one-on-one time with Christ.)

- *When God speaks in the stillness of your heart or through others, what is the first thing you should do?* (Compare what you feel like He is saying to what the Bible states. God will *NEVER* contradict His Word.)

SAY: Furthermore, a good shepherd would die rather than abandon his flock. No matter what the danger—a lion, a bear, etc. He would face it on behalf of the sheep and if an

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animal killed one of the sheep before he could rescue it, he would go after the animal to rescue the body of the sheep. Then he would cut off its ear and take it to the sheep's owner as a way of proving that he did everything he could to save the sheep.

- *In what ways does this show a picture of Jesus? In what ways should we be like a shepherd in trying to reach others for Christ? (Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and in so doing He has done everything possible to provide a way of salvation and if we share Jesus' heart, we will have a passion for those who are lost, to do all we can to bring people to Christ.)*

SAY: If you have not given your life to Jesus, then you're like a sheep without a shepherd. The Bible says that you are lost, and the best thing you can do is to trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior and give your life to Him.

- *But if you are a Christian, do you share Jesus' heart to seek and save those who are lost? If not, what is holding you back from sharing God's heart for others?*

WRAP IT UP

Prayer Time

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

