

The Good Shepherd

JOHN 10:1-18 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

The good shepherd knows you by name and lays down his life freely.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 15): John 9:35-41, Now I See. Its big idea: Jesus finds us, and admitting we can't see is how we see him.
- After this passage (day 17): John 11:17-53, Resurrection and Life. Its big idea: Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this?

Open

Recall last time (John 9:35-41): religious leaders threw out a man Jesus had healed, and Jesus went and found him. Jesus is still talking to those same leaders here. Ask: Whose voice would you know in one word on the phone, without them saying their name? Read John 10:14: "I am the good shepherd. I know My sheep and My sheep know Me." Big idea: The good shepherd knows you by name and lays down his life freely. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. The Voice the Sheep Know (John 10:1-6, about 10 min)

The one thing: Jesus is the shepherd who comes in the right way and calls his own by name.

Ask: What makes a voice one you would follow, and what makes one you would run from?

2. I Am the Gate (John 10:7-10, about 10 min)

The one thing: Jesus is the one door into safety and full life, and he gives rather than takes.

Ask: Where have you seen something promise you life and then take from you instead?

3. He Lays Down His Life (John 10:11-18, about 15 min)

The one thing: Jesus stays when danger comes and freely gives his life for his sheep, then takes it up again.

Ask: What difference does it make that Jesus gave his life by choice, not by accident?

Close (never cut it)

This passage doesn't hand out a task. It shows who Jesus is and lets people lean on him. Read v14 and v18 slowly, say plainly that he knows each person by name and gave his life freely, then let a few seconds of quiet finish it.

PROTECT THE ENDING

If Section 3 starts late, drop its discussion question and go straight from v18 to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 1, 3, 2, 4, 5 (top to bottom) · Feelings: The sheep happy, The hired hand worried, People who did not understand worried, The Father happy · Code: THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Act it out: Kids are sheep mixed in one pen. Two helpers are shepherds and call their own sheep by name, and those sheep follow. Then a pretend wolf comes: the hired hand runs, and the good shepherd stands in front of the sheep.

1. The Voice the Sheep Know

JOHN 10:1-6 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Thieves climb in some other way. The shepherd uses the gate.
- The shepherd calls each sheep by name.
- The sheep follow a voice they know and flee a stranger's.

The sheep listen for his VOICE.

He calls his own sheep by NAME and leads them out.

Discuss: What makes a voice one you would follow, and what makes one you would run from?

Jesus is the shepherd who comes in the right way and calls his own by name.

MUST COVER

- v1-2: A thief climbs in. The shepherd walks through the gate openly.
- v3-4: He calls each sheep by name, goes ahead, and they follow his voice.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Background: at night several flocks often shared one stone pen. In the morning each shepherd called, and only his own sheep came out.
- v6: The listeners "did not understand." It is fine if the class doesn't get it all at once either.

Illustration idea: A parent at a crowded school pickup calls one child's name, and that one head turns out of hundreds.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Someone who has proven they care about me.
- Listen for: A voice that doesn't pressure or trick me.

If it drifts: If talk turns to bad leaders in general, bring it back to v3: what does this shepherd do that a thief never does? He calls by name and walks ahead.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

He doesn't shout at a crowd. He calls you by name, and he goes first.

Short on time? Skip the optional points and keep the pickup illustration.

Bridge → They didn't understand the picture, so Jesus says it again, more plainly.

2. I Am the Gate

JOHN 10:7-10 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus is the way into safety.
- Through him the sheep "come in and go out and find pasture."
- The thief takes. Jesus gives.

I am the GATE. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved.

The thief comes only to STEAL and kill and destroy.

Discuss: Where have you seen something promise you life and then take from you instead?

Jesus is the one door into safety and full life, and he gives rather than takes.

MUST COVER

- v7-9: "I am the gate." Whoever enters through him "will be saved" and finds pasture.
- v10: The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. Jesus came "that they may have life, and have it in all its fullness."

IF THERE'S TIME

- Psalm 23 (a song of David, Israel's shepherd-king) pictures God leading his sheep to green pasture. Jesus says he is that open door.

Illustration idea: A friend's front door opens and they say, "Come in, stay as long as you like." You don't earn the welcome. It is simply given.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Money, work or success that ended up running my life.
- Listen for: A relationship that drained me instead of giving.

If it drifts: If it becomes a debate about whether there is only one way, note it honestly, then ask: according to v10, what does this gate do to the sheep who come through it?

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Thieves take your life. This shepherd opens the gate and gives you life, because he knows your name.

Short on time? Ask the discussion question to pairs for two minutes instead of the whole room.

Bridge → Now Jesus says what this door cost him.

3. He Lays Down His Life

JOHN 10:11-18 · ABOUT 15 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The hired hand runs from the wolf. The good shepherd stays.
- He knows his sheep and gathers "other sheep" too.
- No one takes his life. He gives it, and takes it up again.

The good shepherd LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE for the sheep.

No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own ACCORD.

Discuss: What difference does it make that Jesus gave his life by choice, not by accident?

Jesus stays when danger comes and freely gives his life for his sheep, then takes it up again.

MUST COVER

- v11-13: The hired hand "abandons the sheep and runs away." The good shepherd lays down his life.
- v17-18: "No one takes it from Me." He has authority to lay it down and to take it up again.

IF THERE'S TIME

• Ezekiel 34 (a prophet writing to Israel in exile) blamed Israel's leaders for scattering the flock, and God promised to shepherd them himself. Jesus steps into that promise.

- v16: "Other sheep that are not of this fold" will hear his voice: "one flock and one shepherd."

Illustration idea: A lifeguard is paid to watch, but a parent will swim into the rip current for their own child without thinking twice.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: It means he really loves us, it wasn't forced.
- Listen for: It means death didn't beat him.

If it drifts: If it moves to how the cross worked in detail, return to v18: say together, "No one takes it from Me." Stay with what Jesus says here.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Nobody took his life. He gave it. The shepherd who knows your name laid it down on purpose.

Short on time? Cut v16 and the Ezekiel background. Keep v11 and v18.

Bridge → Let that last line sit, and move to the close.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Start with a voice. Ask whose voice they'd recognize anywhere. Then read v3-4 together: the shepherd calls his sheep by name.
2. The picture. Explain the shared stone pen where several flocks slept together. In the morning each shepherd called, and only his own sheep came out.
3. The claim. Read v7-11. Jesus says "I am the gate" and "I am the good shepherd." Point out how big a claim that is.
4. The difference. Read v10 and v18. A thief takes. This shepherd gives his own life, and says no one takes it from him.
5. Leave it with them. Don't press for an answer. Leave the question the passage raises: if this shepherd is who he says, whose voice is he?

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

"Isn't 'I'm the only way in, follow my voice' exactly what a controlling leader would say?"

It's a fair worry, and Jesus shares it. He warns about thieves himself. The test he gives is what the leader does with the sheep. Thieves take. He says he lays down his own life for them.

"What does 'take it up again' mean?"

He is pointing to rising from the dead. He claims authority over his own death, and that is a claim you can test.

"Who are the 'other sheep'?"

People outside the Jewish fold he was speaking to. He says they will hear his voice too, so the door isn't just for insiders.

"I've been hurt by church leaders. Why trust this?"

Jesus names that kind of hurt here: hired hands who don't care and run. He sets himself against them. What they did isn't what he does.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don't lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn't serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Let the Bible do the talking

The pictures in v1-18 are vivid enough to carry the lesson.

If you're new: Read each section aloud before you explain anything.

If you've taught for years: Have the class list what the shepherd does, only from the verses, before you teach.

2. Plan for the skeptic and the grieving

"I am the gate" raises doubts, and the wolf touches grief.

If you're new: Keep the controlling-leader objection and its answer on hand.

If you've taught for years: Name both out loud early so people feel safe to raise them.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

This passage assures. It doesn't assign.

If you're new: End on v18 and quiet. Add no homework.

If you've taught for years: Resist a challenge ending. Trust rest to do its work.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you'll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: Whose voice would you know in one word on the phone?

- tell a short story: A child lost at a fair freezes when a stranger calls, then runs at a parent's voice.
- start in the text: Read v3 twice and ask what the shepherd knows about each sheep.

CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: He knows you by name. Nobody took his life. He gave it.
- allow quiet reflection: Read v14 and give thirty seconds of silence.
- call back to the opening: You know a voice in one word. He knows yours, and he calls you by name.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone has been badly hurt by a pastor or church and hears themselves in the hired hand.: Believe them. Point out that Jesus condemns that behavior in v12-13. Don't defend the leader, and offer to talk after.
- Someone objects that "I am the gate" is arrogant or exclusive.: Admit it is a huge claim. Ask what kind of gate v9-10 describes: one that saves and gives life. Then keep going; there's no need to win the argument.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

READ THIS WEEK

- Ezekiel 34:11-16
- Psalm 23
- John 10:27-30

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/10-1-18/lesson

The Good Shepherd

JOHN 10:1-18 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." John 10:11

THE BIG IDEA

The good shepherd knows you by name and lays down his life freely.

1. THE VOICE THE SHEEP KNOW · JOHN 10:1-6

- Thieves climb in some other way. The shepherd uses the gate.
- The shepherd calls each sheep by name.
- The sheep follow a voice they know and flee a stranger's.

The sheep listen for his _____.

He calls his own sheep by _____ and leads them out.

Discuss: What makes a voice one you would follow, and what makes one you would run from?

2. I AM THE GATE · JOHN 10:7-10

- Jesus is the way into safety.
- Through him the sheep "come in and go out and find pasture."
- The thief takes. Jesus gives.

I am the _____. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved.

The thief comes only to _____ and kill and destroy.

Discuss: Where have you seen something promise you life and then take from you instead?

3. HE LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE · JOHN 10:11-18

- The hired hand runs from the wolf. The good shepherd stays.
- He knows his sheep and gathers "other sheep" too.
- No one takes his life. He gives it, and takes it up again.

The good shepherd _____ for the sheep.

No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own _____.

Discuss: What difference does it make that Jesus gave his life by choice, not by accident?

Read this week: Ezekiel 34:11-16 · Psalm 23 · John 10:27-30

For Kids: The Good Shepherd

JOHN 10:1-18 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus knows my name and takes care of me.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

- ☐ Shepherd comes in through the gate.
- ☐ The sheep follow his voice.
- ☐ He calls each sheep by name.
- ☐ A wolf comes; hired hand runs away.
- ☐ Good shepherd gives his life for sheep.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

The sheep: happy · sad · worried

The hired hand: happy · sad · worried

People who did not understand: happy · sad · worried

The Father: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

F P A S T U R E V
L V S D W K R G Y
O S H S O F G D U
C H E U L N A K V
K E P U F F T P O
U E H N A M E K I
N P E H U P O Y C
Y U R B U R D G E
C N D F K S K S U

SHEPHERD · SHEEP · GATE · VOICE · WOLF · PASTURE · FLOCK · NAME

4. SECRET CODE

1=D 2=E 3=G 4=H 5=O 6=P 7=R 8=S 9=T

9 4 2 3 5 5 1 8 4 2 6 4 2 7 1

5. DRAW IT!

Draw the good shepherd and a sheep with YOUR name on it.

6. MEMORY VERSE

"I know My sheep and My sheep know Me." John 10:14 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Jesus knows my name, so I ____.