



SESSION **3**

Good shepherd



MEETING AIM

To explore what Jesus meant when he said: "I am the good shepherd."



BIBLE PASSAGE

John 10:1-21



BACKGROUND

This metaphor is easier for young children to grasp, but, depending on your context, some might not be familiar with shepherds and what they do. If so, enjoy playing the sheep and shepherd games at the start, helping them understand what sheep are like and what a shepherd does. This will help them to focus on what Jesus is saying about himself.

+ CIRCLE TIME



You will need: materials to make a 'sheep pen'

If possible, create a sheep pen using chairs, cushions and a wall, with a clearly defined entrance/gate. Encourage the children to join the group by coming in through the 'entrance'. Talk about what sheep are like, what they like to eat, how they skip and what their wool is used for.

+ SHEEP GAMES



You will need: lots of small paper/card copies of a sheep

Explain that you will call out the children's names. When each child hears their name, they are to jump up and, with a "baa", hop from one foot to another like a little lamb.

With slightly older children, do this again, dividing the names between two adults. Only when Adult One calls out a child's name should the child jump up, otherwise he or she remains sitting.

Create a small outline of a sheep and print off lots of copies. Hide these around the room or, if possible, hide them outside. Invite the children to go in search of the sheep that are lost. Can they find all the sheep you have hidden?

+ BIBLE STORY



You will need: sheep pen from 'Circle time'; a shepherd's crook

Gather the children together in your sheep pen and tell this story:

Gemma was a shepherd. Her job was to look after the sheep that belonged to the farmer. She had four things to do.

Gemma had to lead the sheep to a patch of land with lots of green grass. Sheep like to eat grass best of all. Sometimes she had to lead the sheep along a narrow path or a rocky track. The sheep were good at following her in a line, but sometimes they would go off in every direction. *The children follow you in a line around the outside of your sheep pen. Sometimes you hop from side to side, or walk, or stop, or take tiny steps, and the children copy you. Go back into the sheep pen.*

Gemma also had to make sure the sheep had plenty of water. She might lead them to a stream or fill a water trough. *On their knees, children bend down and imagine lapping at water.*

Gemma also had to check that no sheep had a sore leg or a stone stuck in their foot. *Ask if anyone has got a sore leg or scratch, and ask if they cried when they got hurt. A sheep in pain would make a very sad "Baa!" Practise saying "Baa!" sadly.*

At night, Gemma brought the sheep into the sheep pen and checked they were all there. She knew the name of every sheep. Then she lay across the entrance of the pen so that no sheep could get out during the night. This also meant that no wolf could get in to attack the sheep, and no person could sneak in to steal a sheep. Gemma was keeping them all safe. *Children lie down like sleeping sheep, and you lie across the entrance.*

Gemma had a very important job. Jesus said he was a shepherd who looked after sheep, just like Gemma. The sheep Jesus is looking after are the people who love him.

He knows the name of each of the sheep; each person who loves him.

He makes sure each person who loves him is looked after, and has everything they need.

He makes sure each person who loves him is safe, and not in danger.

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has a chance to contribute.

- What is the most important thing the shepherd does? Remind the children of the four things Gemma does.
- If you were a sheep, what would you most want Gemma to do for you?
- What do you most want Jesus to do for you?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: A3 paper; small circles of card; glue; cotton wool; black felt-tip pens

On the top of a sheet of paper, write: "Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd.'" Below it, fill the space with a 'sheep pen' circle with a break for the entrance. Give each child a circle of card to write their name or make a distinctive mark. Using glue, cover their name with cotton wool. Encourage them to stick their 'sheep' inside the pen, adding legs and a head with a black felt-tip pen. Comment that no one will know the name of each sheep because the name has been covered up. But the good shepherd knows the names of all his sheep. This could be displayed in the church building.

Carry on chatting about the story and the children's ideas as you work.

+ PRAYER



All the children lie down, as though for a game of sleeping lions. Encourage them to close their eyes and listen carefully because you will ask them to say three things in their heads to Jesus, the good shepherd, who loves them.

First, Jesus knows each of them by name. Can they picture Jesus as a good shepherd and hear him saying, "[Name], I love you and I know your name"?

Second, Jesus, the good shepherd, looks after us just as he looked after the sheep, making sure we have everything we need. Invite the children to think of someone they know who has hurt themselves or is ill, and ask Jesus to look after them.

Third, Jesus, as a good shepherd, keeps people safe at night. Invite each child to ask Jesus to be with them when they are fast asleep at night.

Amen

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