

The Good Shepherd

John 10

Introduction

Show your children a picture of sheep. How much do you know about sheep? Share what you know. . .

Here are some fun facts: Sheep are intelligent and social animals. According to a 2009 study recorded in "Animal Welfare" Vol. 18, No. 4, sheep feel emotions: boredom, anger, happiness, despair.

Sheep are also able to recognize 50 different faces and remember them for two years. They can also interpret emotions

- Keith Kendrick 2001 study

Sheep have a strong instinct to follow a lead sheep. When one sheep decides to go somewhere the others will follow it. They'll do this whether or not it's a good decision or bad decision. They will wander over winding paths instead of following a straight path - if their leader takes them there.

Sheep have herd mentality. They love to do whatever the group does. Sheep won't leave the herd unless they are sick, about to give birth or something frightens them.

Sheep have predators - wolves in the past, wild dogs and coyotes now - who attack them. Shepherds must watch over them to keep them safe.

Lesson

In the land where Jesus lived, there were lots of sheep. Shepherds were people who watched over sheep day and night. They had a very important job to do: to take care of the sheep. In the morning they called them to follow them out to the green grassy meadows where they could eat and to fresh water where they could drink. In the evening they called them to follow them home to the safety in which they could sleep.

Sheep were not easy to take care of. They had to be watched constantly, because they could wander off together into danger. Sometimes this was out of boredom. It looked more interesting out there. At other times, they were distracted. Maybe they were frightened by something they saw or heard, so they'd run. At other times, they would get so busy chasing after happy little morsels of grass, they would not always notice when they were heading towards danger.

Wolves were dangerous predators to the sheep. They couldn't wait for sheep to go off track. They waited in the shadows to pounce on the sick sheep, the weak sheep, to drag them away and to devour them.

The shepherd knew which sheep were his. The shepherd knew the personalities and the weakness of the sheep. The sheep also knew the shepherd. They would follow the shepherd to safety. If the sheep were in danger, the shepherd was willing to fight the wolves to save the sheep.

Jesus said, **“I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me. And I lay down my life for the sheep.”** John 10:14-15

Jesus compared those who follow him to sheep. He is our Good Shepherd. He made us his children in the living waters of baptism. He cleaned us from our sins. He gives us His Word to keep our souls alive, strong, and healthy. He takes care of us when we are sick or in danger. He comforts us when we are sad. Jesus died to save his sheep from the terrible predators of death and hell. Now we are safe forever in His love and in His care.

Isn't that amazing? Let's thank Jesus for being our Good Shepherd!

Assignment: Draw a picture of Jesus watching over you as you play or sleep.