

Chapter 6

Featured Story

Jesus Is the Good Shepherd
(John 10:1–18)

Lesson Goals

- to recognize that Jesus loves and cares for us as a good shepherd cares for his sheep
- to recall that Jesus seeks us out when we stray, and we can return through the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- to explain that we express our sorrow for having sinned in the Act of Contrition

Lesson at a Glance

Go (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer
Engage Activity

Seek (30 minutes)

Featured Story
Core Learning Activity

Find (20 minutes)

God's Treasure of
Forgiveness
Lesson Wrap-Up
Closing Prayer

Materials Needed

- *The Catholic Children's Bible* and chapter 6 activity booklet
- a stuffed toy lamb
- one white balloon for each child, already blown up and decorated with a sheep's ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, drawn with a black marker; a ruler or stick for each child
- Saint Mary's Press® Big Book *The Good Shepherd* (optional)
- materials for any of the optional activities you choose

Music Suggestions

- "I Am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)," by Paul McIntyre (Paul McIntyre)
- "The Baa Baa Song," by Sibling Harmony (Sibling Harmony)

Jesus Loves and Cares for Us



Background Focus

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are not simply confessing our sins to the priest. We are confessing them to God. The priest is God's representative, who has the power, in God's name, to forgive our sins. In every sacrament, the priest acts in the name of Jesus. Getting to know Jesus as the Good Shepherd helps the children to understand that the priest, who acts in the name of Christ, will welcome them with love and care.

You may want to remind the children that we have many shepherds in our lives. Parents and teachers are shepherds; police and firefighters are shepherds who risk their lives each day to care for the community; and children themselves are shepherds when they look out for younger children or animals. All people who love and care for others are signs of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who loves and cares for all.

Go (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer

- Invite the children to turn to page 1 in their chapter 6 activity booklets and locate the prayer on the page.
- Begin prayer by leading the group in the Sign of the Cross, then saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." Allow about 10 seconds of silence.
- Read the prayer in the activity booklet to the group. Invite all of the children to say "Amen," and then close with another Sign of the Cross. Have the children put their activity booklets away for now.

Engage Activity

- Begin the lesson by using the stuffed lamb as a puppet. Walk the lamb along the front desk or on the desks of the children as you say, in the voice of the lamb: "Baaa! Baaa!"

- Tell the children that the lamb is lost, and then continue with these or similar words:
 - This lamb should be with his flock, but here he is, wandering around this room.
 - This lamb needs someone to find him! This lamb needs a shepherd!
- Ask a volunteer to be the shepherd, and have him or her come forward.
- Continue with the following words:
 - What should the shepherd say to this poor little lost lamb? *(Take suggestions. Tell the shepherd to repeat some of the better suggestions and say them to the lamb, "Poor lamb. Come with me. I will take you home," etc.)*
 - Yes, that is exactly what a good shepherd would say to a lost lamb! This is what Jesus, our Good Shepherd, says to us. He says: "I am here to find you again. I will bring you home." When we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are coming home again to the flock of the Good Shepherd, Jesus.
- Allow the shepherd to take the lamb to his or her desk. Explain that you will name a new shepherd every few minutes, so that all the children get a turn at being a shepherd to the lamb.

Seek (30 minutes)

Featured Story

- Invite the children to open their Bibles and to find John 10:1–18 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (pages 1675 and 1678).
- Direct them to turn the page to the Featured Story on page 1676 and place an "I found it!" sticker on the page. Tell them that the words between the leaves on the page are a shortened version of the Scripture verses on the previous page and on page 1678.
- Ask the children to look at the artwork on pages 1676–1677. Invite them to describe what they see in the artwork and to predict what the Bible story might be about.
- Invite a volunteer to read the title of the Featured Story, and then to look at the vocabulary words at the bottom of the page. Ask a volunteer to read each word, and another volunteer to read the definition.

- Introduce the Bible story to the children by explaining that where Jesus lived, there were a lot of sheep and a lot of shepherds. Continue with the following points:
 - People saw shepherds all the time. They knew it was hard work being a shepherd and taking care of sheep all day and all night too.
 - Today we might compare being a shepherd to a rancher taking care of cattle or even to those of us who take care of a pet.
 - Many animals are totally dependent on us for their food, their water, and their well-being. We can't let them down. In this story, Jesus tells us that he will never let us down.
- Read the Bible story on page 1676 to the children. Then ask the children several questions to check for comprehension, such as these:
 - Who is the Good Shepherd? *(Jesus)*
 - What does the Good Shepherd do? *(He takes care of the sheep and is willing to die for them.)*
 - There is a wolf in this story. What could the wolf do to the sheep? *(He might snatch the sheep and scatter them.)*
 - If we are the sheep of Jesus, what do you think the wolf is? *(The wolf is anyone who wants to harm us or to lead us on the wrong path.)*

Note: You may want to read the Saint Mary's Press® Big Book *The Good Shepherd* to the children.

- Have the children turn to page 2 in the activity booklet and complete the maze by drawing a line from the shepherd to the lost sheep.

Understand It!

- Read Understand It! on page 1677 to the children, or invite a volunteer or volunteers to read.
- Invite the children to summarize what they just heard, asking them key questions about the reading to check for comprehension.
- Review these key points with them:
 - Sheep need to be cared for.
 - A good shepherd loves his sheep and knows each one.
 - A good shepherd risks his life to save his sheep.

- Jesus called himself “the good shepherd.”
- Jesus knows us, loves us, and died for us. He is a shepherd worth following forever!

Live It!

- Invite a volunteer to read the left-hand column of Live It! on page 1677, or read it aloud to the group.
- Pray the verses of Psalm 23 with the group.
- If time permits, you might want to play one of the Good Shepherd hymns noted in “Music Suggestions” at the beginning of this lesson.

Tell It!

- Ask the children to look at the images in Tell It! on page 1677.
- Encourage several volunteers to stand and summarize the Bible reading for the group, using the images in Tell It!
- Have the children use some of the smaller stickers to mark parts of the Featured Story pages that capture their interest. Remind them to save enough stickers to use on the remaining chapters.

Core Learning Activity

Leading the Sheep

- Set up chairs in a circle to designate the sheep pen.
- Explain that today we will play a game to remind us that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leads us and guides us.
- Gather the children at one end of the room, and ask the children to listen to the following instructions:
 - Each of you will be given a sheep. You will be the shepherd. Hang on to your sheep by the little knot at one end. (*Distribute a balloon to each child.*)
 - I will also give you a ruler or stick. (*Distribute a ruler or stick to each child.*) When I say, “Go!” drop your balloon sheep and use the ruler or stick to gently guide your sheep into the sheep pen on the other side of the room. You may not use your hands!
 - Get ready! Get set! Go!
- Ask the children to return to their seats when the sheep have been led to the sheep pen.

Note: If your group is large, allow a few children at a time to take turns shepherding their sheep into the pen. Do not distribute the rulers or sticks until right before their use.

Process the Activity

- Invite the children to share what they learned about their balloon sheep. (*They are not easy to lead and guide with gentleness. Sometimes they go anywhere but where they should go!*) Remind the children that Jesus leads and guides us with gentleness, even when we want to go every which way.
- Invite the children to share their experiences of being a shepherd in the activity. Explain that being a shepherd is not an easy job. But Jesus never gives up. He wants us to stay with him and follow him because he is the Good Shepherd.

Additional Activity Options

If the core activity would not work for your group for any reason, you may choose to use any of the Additional Activities on page 52 in its place.

✕ Find (20 minutes)

God’s Treasure of Forgiveness

- Invite the children to recall the different steps of the Sacrament of Reconciliation that have been covered up to this point. You may want to point them to *The Rite of Reconciliation and Key Words* booklet to read through the steps of the individual celebration on page 2, stopping them when they get to the confession of sins.
- Continue with these or similar words:
 - After we confess our sins, the priest may give us some words of advice or encouragement. He will then give us a **penance**. A penance is a prayer or good action that shows that we will do better. Doing a penance shows, in a small way, that we want to make up for what we have done. Sometimes a penance is a prayer to pray. Sometimes it is an action to do. Sometimes it is a kind act to help someone that we have hurt in some way. It is important to do our penance as soon as possible.

- The priest will then invite us to pray an **Act of Contrition**. The Act of Contrition is a prayer that tells God that we are sorry and will not sin again.
- The word **contrition** means “true sorrow for sin and a desire to avoid sin in the future.” Our Act of Contrition in the Sacrament of Reconciliation tells God that we are sorry for our sins. In the sacrament, we can say the Act of Contrition by heart or we can read it from a card. We should practice ahead of time, so that we know what we are saying to God and can say it with our whole heart.
- Invite the children to turn to page 3 in the activity booklet and complete the activity. *Answers:*
 1. *Contrition*, 2. *sin*, 3. *encouragement*,
 4. *penance*, 5. *possible*

Teacher Note: This content is presented in a child-friendly way in the *God’s Treasure of Forgiveness Student Booklet*. You may wish to have the children read all or parts of chapter 6 to supplement your presentation. Or use the concluding points under “Things to Remember” to wrap up the lesson before prayer.

Lesson Wrap-Up

- Invite the children to think back over all of the different things they did in this lesson, and invite volunteers to share some of the key things they learned.
- Take some time to get input from the group, and write their answers on the board.
- Ensure that the following points are made, write them on the board, and circle them:
 - Jesus loves and cares for us as a good shepherd cares for his sheep.
 - Jesus seeks us out when we stray and we can return through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
 - We express our sorrow for having sinned in the Act of Contrition.

- Ask the children to place the chapter 6 sticker in the correct circle on their treasure maps.



Closing Prayer

- Begin prayer by leading the group in the Sign of the Cross, then saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God,” followed by a few seconds of silence.
- Play a Good Shepherd song or hymn from the list of “Music Suggestions” at the beginning of this lesson.
- End by praying an Act of Contrition (see page 1995 in *The Catholic Children’s Bible*). Then close with a final Sign of the Cross.



Additional Activities

Materials Needed

- a large piece of green poster board
- a picture of Jesus the Good Shepherd (pictures for this activity can be found by searching through Good Shepherd and sheep clipart on the Internet)
- a small picture (one-fourth of a page) of a sheep for each child
- cotton balls
- glue

Materials Needed

- none

Materials Needed

- a computer with Internet access
- a computer projector
- four pieces of paper with the lyrics for each part of the song: refrain, verse 1, verse 2, and verse 3

A Poster of the Good Shepherd (15 minutes)

- Explain that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and each one of us is a sheep. Tell the children that the entire Church, including the Pope and bishops, is the flock of Christ. Explain that today we will make a poster showing that we belong to the Good Shepherd.
- Write “We Are the Sheep of His Pasture” at the top of the green piece of poster board. Tack the poster to a bulletin board or tape it to a wall.
- Distribute a sheep to each child. Distribute the cotton balls and glue. Tell the children to glue the cotton balls on the sheep, covering it except for the face.
- Tape each child’s sheep to the poster. As you do so, say: “_____, the Lord Jesus is your shepherd. May you follow him all of your days.” Then put your right hand on the child’s head and make the sign of the cross on the forehead with your thumb.
- Display the poster, if you wish, in the vestibule of the church on the day of First Reconciliation.

Run, Sheep, Run (15 minutes)

- Move the desks and chairs to the sides of the room, or find a space where there is a clear area.
- Choose four or five children to be “wolves.” The rest of the children are sheep. The goal for the wolves is to “capture” as many sheep as possible. They do this by tagging the sheep, at which point the sheep freeze in place.
- Explain that sheep that haven’t been tagged can free the frozen sheep by simply tagging them. This unfreezes the sheep and puts them back into play.
- Allow the activity to continue for 5 minutes or so, and then choose new wolves and restart the game.

Video Song (15 minutes)

- Show the video “The Baa Baa Song (He’s the Good Shepherd),” available on YouTube (2:06). Gather the children in a circle as they watch, then play the song again and let the children clap and dance along.
- Invite the children to form four groups after you have sung the song several times. Assign each group a part of the song—refrain, verse 1, verse 2, verse 3—and give them the lyrics to that part.
- Ask each group to create hand motions that go with the lyrics of the refrain or the verse assigned to them. When finished have the small groups teach the whole group.