



Date: _____

Series: Lookin' for a Leader
Fall Year 3, Lesson 25

Tune in to God's Voice

Primary Scripture: John 10:1-17

Key Verse: John 10:4b, "The sheep follow him because they recognize his voice."

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

There are many messages from this world competing to influence the world view and values of our children. Television and movies often present a set of values contrary to God's standards. Commercials can promote materialism. The messages in kids' schools are careful to avoid references to God, but may in fact be communicating quite strongly that we must keep our views about God to ourselves. Within the world's vast array of messages are subtle lies about basic values, beliefs and lifestyles of following Christ. No wonder children can be confused as to which voice they need to follow. Kids need to know the voice of their shepherd. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who wants to communicate with them in a clear and personal way. They need to tune in to the Shepherd's voice.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus, the good shepherd, laid down his life so that we may be a part of his flock and hear his voice.

Jesus in us: Jesus accompanies us through his Holy Spirit. He wants to guide us with his voice throughout our lives.

Jesus through us: As we listen to Jesus' voice, we can be set apart from the standards of this world. We can witness the joys of following the voice of our Good Shepherd to the world.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols, such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Needed: volunteer fathers, a blindfold, a chair

In advance, arrange that three men are present, one of whom is a father of one child in Kids Church. Keep this a secret from the kids, especially the child of that father. When you ask for a volunteer, select that child. Bring the child forward and blindfold her. Then say:

You will hear three voices. Wait until all three have spoken, then do what seems right to you.

Situate the men so that each of them is about six feet away from your blindfolded volunteer, but one to the left, one to the right and one in front of the child. Have them each say these words in their regular speaking voice: "_____ (insert child's name), come to me."

If she doesn't immediately walk toward her father, ask her what voice of those three she would pick and why. Hopefully, she can recognize her father's voice. If she's not sure, have the men say some other, perhaps longer phrase, like "_____, I've loved you since the day you were born." Or if it's a boy, perhaps "Come over here, you rug rat!" Or maybe even let the dad say something unique about his relationship with his child: a pet phrase they say around the house, etc.

Today boys and girls, we learn that this is like Jesus. He is the good shepherd who says that his sheep hear his voice and come to him.

Next, do the experiment in reverse. Have the father blindfolded and three children placed in different positions around him. Each child is to say, "Dad, it's me." Which voice will the father respond to?

When we worship today, we come into the Lord's presence. He wants to talk to each one of us personally. He wants you to hear his voice. So listen closely today. He will say, "I know you. I love you and I will lead you." But know also that as you talk to him, Jesus will hear your voice as well.

God has given us a shepherd, Jesus, who gave his life for us so that we can hear his voice clearly in our lives. Now he will hear our voices as we worship him. Let's do that now.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

There are times we hear but don't obey. For example, have you ignored a parent when he/she says, "It's time to pick up your room and get ready for bed?" You may have heard your mom or dad, but you pretended you didn't and, instead, you kept playing.

Well, there are times maybe we hear God say, "I want you do this." But instead we ignore him and pretend we didn't hear him. Why? Because we didn't want to do what he said. Maybe someone was getting picked on at school and we heard God say that we shouldn't make fun of him or her but, instead, help. We may have pretended we didn't hear God, because we didn't want to help.

Or maybe we did something wrong and we wanted to cover it up. We knew we shouldn't lie about it and we heard Jesus' voice telling us not to, but it was easier to ignore his voice. Maybe we were tempted to argue or hit our sister or brother. His voice told us not to, but we decided to do it anyway.

Think about ways this last week that you heard God's voice but it was easier to ignore him. Tell God about those times right now.

Allow time for silent prayer.

Now pray with me:

Dear God, we are sorry for the ways we have ignored your voice. We thank you for giving us Jesus who is our Good Shepherd. He laid down his life for us so that our sins could be lifted off of us and we could be forgiven. Please forgive us. Now give us your power so that we will listen to your voice and do what you say. Help us to be happy to do it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or you may want help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Hold the offering basket close to your ear and pretend to listen.

Shhhh, everyone. I think I hear something. Is the offering basket saying something? No, of course not. But God does say something to us through our offerings. He says, "Everything you have I have given you. I want you to be thankful and remember that all you have is a gift to you because I love you. You can give me part of those gifts back when you give your offerings. I will use these gifts to help others come to know me as well."

If you have an offering, you can bring it forward and put it in the basket. If you don't have an offering, please come up also and very quietly pretend to lay your heart into the offering basket as well.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

“Double Face Red Light—Green Light”

You need to be familiar with the regular version of “Red Light—Green Light” before you can understand “Double Face Red Light—Green Light.” In the original version, the game requires that one player, a caller, stand in the center or at one end of the room. This spot also marks where the finish line is located. All the other kids begin behind the starting line perhaps 20 feet away. When the caller says “green light,” he or she turns away from the kids who now sneak toward the finish line. Then the caller suddenly says “red light” and turns around quickly. The moving children quickly try to “freeze” still at that point. Any child caught still moving is sent back to the starting line. Whoever gets to the finish line (even with the caller) gets to exchange places with the caller.

To play Double Face Red Light—Green Light, two games of Red Light—Green Light are played at the same time. There are two starting lines, each at opposite ends of the room. The two callers are in the middle of the room where the finish line for both groups is. What is interesting about this game is that children will now have to pay special attention to the voice commands from the caller for that particular side. Kids can get mixed up if they listen to the wrong commands.

The application fits today's lesson. We must listen to the voice that gives us the right direction and obey. If we listen to the wrong voice, we will be sent back in the game of life. Jesus is the right voice for us to listen and follow. There are other voices that might give us the wrong directions in life. We need to ignore those voices. Jesus talks about this in today's Bible reading.

Bible Reading:

Supplies needed: a shepherd's robe and staff, four sets of sheep ears, Scotch tape, masking tape, wrapped candies, small cups of water

Present the following:

“Met a Good Shepherd Lately?”

Dramatic Presentation With Audience Participation

There are six short points to be covered, each with an activity involving four sheep participants. The script need not be memorized. If the key concepts are simply remembered, the activity and dialogue is easily presented. The concluding Bible reading of each section can be written down or read from the Bible. It might even be displayed on screen via overhead projector or computer program.

In advance, mark a sheep pen on the floor by making a rectangle with masking tape. Leave a two foot opening.

Caution: *This event could easily go too long and lose its effectiveness. The presenter is advised to hit each point as quickly and concisely as possible.*

Shepherd Introduction

Hi, kids! Have you met a good shepherd lately? Well, that's what I am. I'm a shepherd from Jesus' time. I want you to imagine that you are back in Jesus' day. In my day, most kids your age would know all about shepherds and would help their fathers take care of sheep. Let's find out what a good shepherd does and hear what Jesus says about himself as the Good shepherd.

Ask for four participants to come forward and give them sheep ears to be taped onto their ears. (You might want to use removable transparent tape.)

Let me tell you what a shepherd does.

1. Gate

Do you know where sheep stay at night? They stay in a sheep pen or sheepfold.

Referring to the outline of the sheep pen on the floor, say:

Imagine this tape on the floor is a pen built up with rocks and mud. At the top of the pen there might be thorns or sharp sticks to keep wild animals from climbing into the pen. There is only one way into the sheep pen.

Point to the opening where there is no masking tape.

That is an opening in the front without any gate. Do you know what shepherds used as a gate? They use their own bodies.

Act out letting in the sheep (have sheep volunteers enter the sheep pen) and lying in the opening as the gate.

After I let all of my sheep in the pen, I lie down to sleep in front of the opening. I let no sheep out, and no wild animal or thief gets in unless they go right over me. My job is to keep the sheep safe.

Jesus said he is the Good Shepherd. But he also said *he is the gate*. He doesn't just lie down in front of the gate like I do. Listen to what he said: "*All who came before I did were thieves or robbers. However, the sheep didn't respond to them. I am the gate. Those who enter the sheep pen through me will be saved.*" (John 10:8-9a.) Will Jesus keep you safe? (Yes.)

What is the sheep pen to which Jesus is the gate? (*Heaven.*)

What is the only way to enter heaven? (*Through believing in Jesus.*)

2. Food and Water

Now I lead these sheep to places to eat. Come over here, sheep, and look at what is on the ground.

Have individually wrapped candies placed in an area on the floor. The children can pick them up and eat them.

Of course, sheep don't really eat candy. They do eat grass, and they eat it all the way down to the roots. They can destroy grasslands unless a shepherd leads them to new pastures.

Lead the sheep over to a place where four small cups of water have been placed.

Are you thirsty? It's my job to lead you to water. Did you know that most animals can smell water and that's how they know where to find it? Can sheep smell water? Sorry, they can't. That is why they need a shepherd.

Did you know that if sheep go too far into a pool of water, they drown? That is because their wool fills up with water and they don't float. Once again, they need a shepherd.

And the Good Shepherd says, “*They will go in and out of the sheep pen and find food.*” (John 10:9b.)

3. Protection

Let me show you something else about sheep. I need one sheep to lie down on his back and keep his feet and hands in the air.

Do you know what happens to a sheep if he is too far over on his back? He can’t get up. Without a shepherd, the sheep could lie around looking like this sheep.

Help roll the child over onto his hands and knees.

Get this! If a sheep senses danger like a wolf or a mountain lion, the sheep will freeze. They don’t have any defenses and they will just wait to be eaten. What do you think they need? That’s right - me, a shepherd. It’s my job to help defend the sheep. I have a club, rocks, or my staff to protect the sheep against attackers.

And the Good Shepherd says, “*A thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But I came so that my sheep will have life and so that they will have everything they need. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. A hired hand isn’t a shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep. When he sees a wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and quickly runs away. So the wolf drags the sheep away and scatters the flock. The hired hand is concerned about what he’s going to get paid and not about the sheep.*” (John 10:10-13.)

What do you think – Would Jesus run away at the first sign of trouble? Of course not. In fact, what did Jesus do to prove that he is the Good Shepherd? (*He gave his life on the cross for us.*)

4. Direction

I want to show you something else about sheep. I need one volunteer sheep to close his eyes while I turn him around a few times. Keep your eyes closed.

Ask for the participants and the entire audience to remain quiet while you spin a child three times. Have the sheep you are spinning keep his eyes closed. Ask the child to find his seat while his eyes are closed. He will obviously have a hard time doing so. Go to the area of the room where the child sat and call out his name.

Over here. I'm standing right at the place where you came from. Open your eyes. Do you think you can find me now? Sure, you can.

A shepherd's job is to give directions to the sheep. If the shepherd gets out of sight of his sheep, the sheep panic. The shepherd calls to them in a loud singsong voice like this. Try to yodel.

The sheep recognize the shepherd's voice and know which direction to go.

And the Good Shepherd says, *"But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep respond to his voice."* (John 10:2-3a.)

5. Name

Right from the start, I give the sheep names. I know their names and they follow me. Let me give you some names. *(Going down the line of children.)* I will call you Fluffy and you Buffy. You will be Muffy and you will be...George!

Since I like my sheep, I like to call them by name. When I call them they come. Let's see if it works. Here Fluffy, Buffy, Muffy, and George!

And the good shepherd says, *"He calls his sheep by name and leads them out of the pen."* (John 10:3b.)

What do you think – do they follow him? Of course they do. He has named them. He has protected them all their lives. He has led them to water and food. He meets their every need. That's the kind of shepherd you have – Jesus, the Good Shepherd.



Witness

Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Let's apply what we have learned by using our imaginations and think about what we would say or do in certain circumstances. When you can think of what you would do or say in one of the circumstances, raise your hand, and then you might be called to come up for Witness and Tell.

SITUATION 1: GOING TO CHURCH

Let's say that one of your close friends invites you to do something special together on Sunday morning. She (or he) wants to come by with her parents and pick you up for breakfast at a nice restaurant. The problem is the plan is for Sunday morning. You explain that you usually go to church on Sunday morning. This is what she says: "I believe in God, too. But I don't believe that you have to go to church. I think church is dumb. Why don't you skip this time?"

You think about this and then try to listen to what Jesus says to you. What does he say in his word? After you think about that, then what do you say to your friend?

Let kids give their own example. You might finally point out that Jesus wants to get to know us closer. He said that going to church to worship him and listen to his word is an important way to get closer to him. Maybe that is why he made worship a commandment. If we let other things get in the way of that time, soon we will not be close to him at all.

SITUATION 2: MAKING FUN OF SOMEONE EVERYONE PICKS ON

Let's say that during recess two of your friends make fun of Otis because he can't dribble the basketball more than one time in a row. They call him a spazoid and then look at you. They say, "Yeah, what do you think about Otis? He's the ultimate spazoid, don't you think?"

That's a message from the world isn't it? Make fun of others because sometimes it makes you feel better about yourself. But you listen to a different voice. It's the voice of your Shepherd. What does he say?

Let a volunteer answer.

What do you then say to your friends?

Let the volunteer continue the answer.

If the kids are giving responses that reflect biblical values, then don't add much to what they say. Respect them for their answers. You can communicate much affirmation by complimenting them and not adding your own comments.

You may want to read 1 Thessalonians 5:11,

"Therefore, encourage each other and strengthen one another as you are doing."

Another passage that presents the "flip side" is Galatians 5:15,

"But if you criticize and attack each other, be careful that you don't destroy each other."

SITUATION 3: A FRIEND NEEDS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HOW GOD CAN HELP HER.

Let's say that at recess you notice a girl that you don't know very well who seems very sad. You ask her if she is okay. She says, "It doesn't matter. No one cares. My parents are getting divorced and no one cares. Not even God cares."

What do you think Jesus would say about helping her? What could you do or say?

This can be a very real situation to many children, because likely there are several children in your group that relate to the pain of divorce first-hand.

Let kids talk about how they would offer help. But point out that every situation may be different. Yet, Jesus says that in every case we are to care about others. Sometimes this might mean listening. Sometimes it might mean being a special friend to that person.

At all times, it would be important to pray for this person. A verse that relates directly to this kind of pain is Romans 8:28 – ***"We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God – those whom he has called according to his plan."***

An excellent way for the prayer to develop is to say that we can't see right now how God will work something good out of the circumstance, but we trust God to do it, because it is what he promised.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Options: (select one from the options below)

_____ **Prayer Line Option:** Kids line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone to speak their prayers briefly.

_____ **Prayer Chairs:** Adults or children with special prayer needs are invited to sit in the chairs. Kids gather around them, lay hands on their shoulders or knees and take turns praying.

_____ **Popcorn Prayer:** The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and turns it toward kids who are raising their hands to pray. The kids speak their prayers into the microphone.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire prayer along with you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Supplies

Attention Grabber:

- volunteer fathers
- blindfolds
- chair

Songs of Worship:

- your choice

Offering:

- basket

Bible Reading:

- shepherd's robe and staff
- four sets of sheep ears
- Scotch tape
- masking tape
- wrapped candies
- small cups of water

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