

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 your child 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 your child to turn to page 1 in the chapter 6 activity booklet and locate the prayer on the page.
- Begin prayer by making 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 aloud. Invite your child to say "Amen," and then close with another Sign of the Cross. Have your child put the activity booklet away for now.

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 in the Act of Contrition, we express our sorrow for having sinned

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, already blown up and decorated with a sheep's ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, drawn with a black marker; a ruler or stick
- Saint Mary's Press® Big Book *The Good Shepherd* (optional)

Music Suggestions

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

Engage Activity

- Begin the lesson by using the stuffed lamb as a puppet. Walk the lamb along the table or desk as you say, in the voice of the lamb: "Baaa! Baaa!"
- Tell your child 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 your child to be the shepherd, and hand the lamb to your child.
- Continue with the following words:
 - What should the shepherd say to this poor little lost lamb? (*Share 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 hold the lamb for a few minutes and keep it near during the lesson.

† Seek (30 minutes)

Featured Story

- Invite your child to find John 10:1–18 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (pages 1675 and 1678).
- Direct your child 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 your child 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 your child to read the title of the Featured Story, and then to look at the vocabulary words at the bottom of the page. Read each word aloud, and ask your child to read the definition.
- Introduce the Bible story 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 aloud the Bible story on page 1676. Then ask 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 your child.

- Have your child 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 aloud Understand It! on page 1677, or invite your child to read.
- Invite your child to summarize what they just heard, asking them key questions about the reading to check for comprehension.

- Review these key points:
 - 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 your child to read the left-hand column of Live It! on page 1677, or read it aloud yourself.
- Pray the verses of Psalm 23 together.
- 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 your child to look at the images in Tell It! on page 1677.
- Encourage your child to summarize the Bible reading, using the images in Tell It!
- Have your child 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. (If you make two balloon sheep, you may also play this game with your child.)
- Ask your child to stand at one end of the room, and to listen to the following instructions:
 - You will be given a sheep. You will be the shepherd. Hang on to your sheep by the little knot at one end. *(Give a balloon to your child.)*

➤ I will also give you a ruler or stick. *(Do so now.)* 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 your child to join you at the table or desk when the sheep have been led to the sheep pen.
- Invite your child 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 your child 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.

✕ Find (20 minutes)

God’s Treasure of Forgiveness

- Invite your child 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 your child to turn to page 3 in the activity booklet and complete the activity. *Answers:*
 1. *Contrition*, 2. *sin*, 3. *encouragement*,
 4. *penance*, 5. *possible*

Lesson Wrap-Up

- Invite your child to think back over all of the different things they did in this lesson, and invite them to share some of the key things they learned.
- Take some time to get input, and write answers on a piece of paper.
- Ensure that the following points are made, write them on the paper, 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.
 - In the Act of Contrition, we express our sorrow for having sinned.
- Ask your child to place the chapter 6 sticker in the correct circle on the treasure map.



Closing Prayer

- Begin prayer by making 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 1993 in *The Catholic Children’s Bible*). Then close with a final Sign of the Cross.

Additional Family Suggestions

For additional ideas, activities, and prayers that can be used by your family for this chapter, please refer to the Family Page on page 4 of this chapter’s activity booklet.