

I am the good shepherd: John 10: 10-18

1. **True/False quiz:** how much do you know about sheep?
 - a) The wool on many sheep would go on growing forever if they weren't sheared by the farmer (True)
 - b) The average lifespan of a sheep is 5-6 years (False: 10-12 years)
 - c) Sheep can roll over on their backs and get stuck. They can suffocate if no-one helps them. (True, especially if their fleece is thick and gets wet, or if they are pregnant)
 - d) Sheep love eating the plant Lily of the Valley, even though it is poisonous to them. (False. It is poisonous but not usually found in the wild where sheep graze)
 - e) Sheep have rectangular pupils in their eyes so that they can see behind them. (True)
 - f) Sheep are prone to bugs and parasites because of their thick wool (True)
 - g) Sheep eat for up to 8 hours a day (True)
 - h) Sheep have very poor memories and so don't make friends with other sheep (False – they form close bonds with other sheep, people or other animals and can become depressed when separated from them.)
 - i) Some rams can run at up to 40 miles per hour (True. When rams charge they can pick up speed for short bursts. 20mph is very common. Californian Longhorns can reach 40 mph)
 - j) Sheep struggle with uneven ground and prefer soft green fields. (False)
2. Why do you think God compares people to sheep, as Jesus does in today's story? What have people got in common with sheep? (Group animals/followers; not always the brightest/can end up in danger, need looking after; skittish – get excited or frightened and tend to react quickly . . .)
3. Let's read the passage: John 10: 10-18, then see if you can solve the puzzle, which I will write on the board. Some of the words seem to have become mixed up!

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

The good shepherd:

- a) _____ his sheep [WONKS]
 - b) _____ his sheep [SLADE]
 - c) _____ his sheep [SIDE ROF]
 - d) _____ his sheep [RADUGS]
 - e) _____ his sheep [KESSES]
4. Who do you think **KNOWS** you best? The people who do will know all about your weaknesses. Have you ever thought 'I'm so glad that my friend/my teacher/my mum didn't see me behaving like that!' I have! We should be thankful for families who love us and forgive us. But even our families don't know what's going on inside our heads. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows us completely. He knows our worries, he knows our

faults. He knows about our sin like the bugs and burrs that get stuck inside the sheep's wool. And he still loves us and cares for us because he is our good shepherd.

5. Who **LEADS** you/persuades you what to do in life? Isn't it good that the one who leads us, as Christians, is the one who knows and cares for us. Just as the shepherd leads his sheep! He provides them with food (the bread of life) and shows them the way to go (the light of the world) and he protects us (the gate). Sometimes we may not like the paths he takes us down, or may think that we can see an easier way, or a more fun way. But the person who is guiding us knows exactly what is best for us. We can trust him completely. Why? Because he is the good shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep.
6. Would it normally make sense for a shepherd to **DIE FOR** his sheep? Why? Why not? We all love to see stories of great rescues, don't we? Bondi rescue anyone? Or the RNLI Saving Lives at Sea? Remember the young man in France who climbed up the outside of a block of flats to rescue a child who was dangling from a balcony? To save someone's life and to be prepared to die in order to do so, shows the greatest love of all. This Good Shepherd, Jesus, dies for us because the greatest danger, for us, is our sin. Our sin would separate us from God forever and keep us out of Heaven. The Good Shepherd dies to take the punishment that should be ours so that we can be forgiven and know God forever.

Was the Good Shepherd forced to die for his sheep? No. He chose to. That's how much he loves us. That's how much he loves you. (And the good news? Does the Good Shepherd stay dead??)

He **guards** his sheep to prevent them from getting into danger or to protect them if danger comes. In Jesus' time there were lions in Israel, which would carry off sheep, and the shepherds might be hired hands, paid to look after the sheep or the owners, staying out in the fields to look after them. What do you think the difference between the hired hand, or the owner would be, if a lion came prowling by?

In our lives, there are people or things which will tempt us away from God, but if we stay close to the Good Shepherd, we know that he will protect us and lead us home. Look again at verse 28-29. If you are Jesus's sheep and know his voice then you are completely and utterly safe. Jesus and God are one, and no one can possibly snatch you out of God's hand. We still have troubles and dangers to pass through, but we are just as safe on that journey as the sheep already in the sheepfold.

He **seeks** his sheep. Who do you think that Jesus meant when he said there were other sheep 'not of this fold?' Who is he talking to? He was talking to the Jewish people that he mainly preached to when he was here on earth; the other sheep are from other countries, other cultures, other times – like you and me! Every time we hear God's word, we hear him calling us to be part of his flock and to have him as our Good Shepherd!