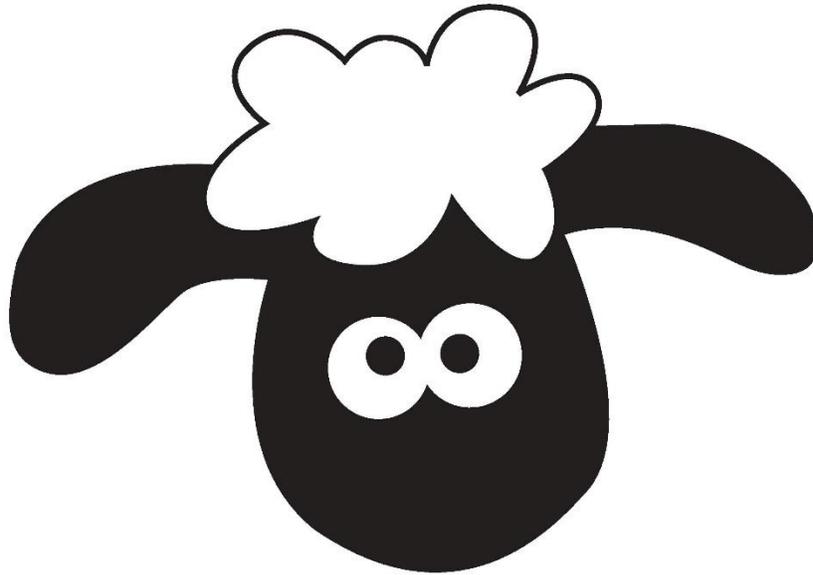


Bible Study Parent Guide

Following are the Bible Study templates that we will be using this summer. For the campers they have been adjusted to be age appropriate as needed. I have added commentary as well for your own enrichment and to help you see the direction we are going with each day.



WHO IS YOUR SHEPHERD?

MENNO HAVEN CAMP & RETREAT CENTER

JOHN 10:1-18

2016

Preface: The theme this summer revolves around the question, “Who is your Shepherd?” There are many people and things in our lives that try to shape and influence how we live: advertisements want us to buy their products, celebrities influence our lives by the example they set, politicians promise to make our lives better if we follow them, our families tell us what they think is best for us. So in the midst of these voices and influences, who are we following? Who do we compare ourselves to in order to measure success? Are we aware of the voices around us, or are we influenced unconsciously? These are the questions we will be probing this summer at Menno Haven. I invite you to join us on the journey!

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Monday

Purpose: To help campers know that there are many voices calling out to us, including Jesus. To encourage campers to listen for the voice of Jesus in their lives.

Activity:

Have campers take turns closing their eyes and turning their backs on the group. Have someone say, "Guess who I am," or "Hello," or some other phrase and have the camper with their eyes closed/back turned guess who was speaking.

Questions to spark thinking: What are some different things voices in our lives that tell us how to live, or give us advice?

-Possible answers: Parents, Friends, Church, Advertisements, movies... etc.

How do they tell us how to live, or how we should live differently?

-Possible answers: By telling us that our lives are missing something. By telling/ showing us. Etc.

Scripture: **John 10:2-5, 14-16** The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. The shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

¹⁴"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I 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.

Questions to think about Scripture: What does this scene look like in your head?

Meditation: A long time ago, shepherds used to keep all of their sheep in the same pen with other shepherd's sheep for the night. In the morning the shepherd would go to the sheep pen and call to their sheep and the sheep would follow the voice of their shepherd. The shepherd then would lead the sheep from the front to the place where there was good grass to eat and water to drink. If a stranger came up and called the sheep, the sheep would not listen because they did not recognize the voice of the stranger. This is true for lots of things. Dogs know the voice of their owners, and little children know the voice of their parents. Often we are like sheep. There are people and things calling out to us for us to follow them: celebrities, companies (like Apple, Nike, or McDonalds...) or parents, family, and friends. Some of these voices are better for us to follow than other voices. Jesus is one of the voices that is calling to us. We hear and learn to know what the voice of Jesus sounds like by reading the Bible, especially the Gospels (Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John). We can also hear the voice of Jesus in other areas of our life.

What does the voice of Jesus sound like?

-Tells us that we are loved, and that we should love others. A voice of gentle guidance. A voice calling for us to follow.

How do we hear Jesus' voice if we can't talk with him in person?

-Bible, prayer, nature, other Christians

Additional thoughts:

We also have voices within us that are calling to us. Sometimes those voices tell us that we are unloved, or not good enough. The voice of Jesus will never tell us that we are unloved. Sometimes we listen to the other voices calling out to us, that's why it is important to know which voices we are following and what the voices are telling us. It is never too late to start following the voice of our shepherd Jesus.

Reflection: How was last night and this morning? How does the activity at the beginning relate to this lesson? What are voices that you have followed or are following now?

Personal Time: Allow for 5-10 minutes for the campers to sit either in silence or writing in their journal.

Commentary: The first lesson focusses on the voices around us. Some are calling specifically at us, (parents for example) others are just shouting in our direction (advertisements). In the midst of this noise there is the voice of Jesus calling each of us, offering guidance, and letting us know that we are not alone. We hear the words of Jesus in the Bible, in creation, and in the voices of others. The first step to following someone is learning what their voice sounds like, and being able to tell it apart from the other voices around you.

Tuesday

Purpose: For campers to understand what it means that Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

Activity: Have the campers get in line behind their counselor and put their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Then have the campers close their eyes as the counselor leads the group around some obstacles and back to the place of Bible Study.

Questions to Spark Thinking: How many of you kept your eyes closed the whole time? Why was it so hard to keep your eyes closed? What was it like following someone where you didn't know where you were going? Did you trust where I was leading you? Why did you trust me (or not trust me...)?

Scripture: John 10:11-15 [And Jesus said,] "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The 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. ¹³The 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—¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Questions to think about scripture: What do these passages make you think of? What images come to mind? Looking at these two passages of scripture, what makes someone a good shepherd?

Meditation: In the book of John, Jesus says that he is the Good Shepherd. For the people back then they would have known what that meant, but it can be hard for us to understand in today's world. A good shepherd always does what is best for the sheep. The shepherd leads the way out of the cramped sheep pen where the sheep stay for the night and into the world beyond. They lead them to the best places to find food and nourishment and refreshing water. Sometimes the way to the best pasture (do they know what pasture means?) is through the hot and dry desert. They are also with the sheep to offer protection from harm. The shepherd uses a rod or staff to help guide the sheep away from dangerous places and to protect the sheep. On top of all of this the good shepherd Jesus is willing to risk his life for the sheep (us). Jesus even died so that we could have freedom from the power of sin.

How are some ways that Jesus is a good shepherd to us?

-He shows us the best way to live. (As seen in the Bible.) He gives us nourishment and refreshes us. (By hearing the Word, little daily blessings, sending people into our lives to refresh us). He protects us from harm. (See further thoughts...) Shepherd Jesus loves us completely.

Additional thoughts: How does Jesus protect us, when bad things still happen to people? This is a very good question that can be answered different ways. Bad things happen in this world because of sin. People have the choice between good and evil and sometimes when people choose to do wrong it effects the lives of others. Maybe things could have been worse, but Jesus protected them from the worst part. There is no easy answer to this question, but we can be confident that Jesus cares about us and is with us even when bad things happen in our lives. Sheep are entirely dependent on their shepherd for everything. If they have a bad shepherd then they might not get the best food or water, or be fully protected. That's why we should do our best to follow Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd.

Reflection: How is the week going so far? What does it mean that Jesus is our good shepherd? Are we following the right shepherd in our lives?

Personal Time: Allow for 5-10 minutes for the campers to sit either in silence or writing in their journal.

Commentary: The term "Good Shepherd" doesn't mean as much to us in our world today as it did in Jesus' day. A shepherd is someone who guides, who has knowledge about what is best for their flock, who protects, who is always available to the sheep, and ultimately influences the quality of life the sheep will have. If sheep follow a bad shepherd they will experience worse care. Jesus is our shepherd. Jesus provides spiritual nourishment for us, gives us joy in the midst of sorrow, and hope in times of despair. We are never alone to face a challenge, but can always count on Jesus as a companion.

Wednesday

Purpose: to help campers be aware that there are things in our world that do not have their best interest in mind.

Activity: Either individually or as a group, come up with some product that you would like to sell. Be creative! Glow in the dark playdough that levitates! A hat that can transform into whatever hat you want! Once you have your product, come up with a short catch phrase or sales gimmick for the product.

Questions to spark thought: What is something that you would like to have that you don't right now? What is something that you hope no one ever steals or takes from you or your house? (Or, if you were a robber, what would you try to take from someone??) If you were borrowing a friend's video game and someone tried to steal it, how hard would you try to stop the robber?

Scripture: John 10: 1-13 "Very truly I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.^[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The 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. ¹²The 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. ¹³The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Questions to think about scripture: What do the thieves and robbers do in this scripture? What about the hired hand? How does that compare to the good shepherd from yesterday?

Meditation: Sometimes people steal things. Usually it's not because they are mean people, they just want something that they don't have, and can't think of any better way to get it than to take it by force. However, if someone robs us, it means that they don't have our best interest in mind. They are only thinking about what they want, and not about the people they are taking things from.

Often, we don't care for things that are not ours the same way we treat our own possessions. For example, if a friend lets you borrow their toys or phone you might not take care of it as well as you would if it was your own.

Today's scripture talks about how thieves and robbers come to kill and destroy. Their only goal is to make themselves better, gain more money, or cause chaos. They don't actually care about the health and welfare of the sheep.

It is similar with the hired hand. His only goal is to work for the shepherd. If his life was threatened he will leave the sheep because he cares more about himself than his boss's sheep. Like if you are using a phone and you accidentally leave it on the ground and someone is about to step on it. You will move a lot faster to protect it if it is your phone, than if it is a friend's phone.

There are also things in our lives that claim to have our best interest, but run away when things get tough. Think of a shoe company. Do they really care about you? Or do they just care about you buying their shoe? Or video games? Do the makers of video games really care about your health and how you are doing as a person, or do they just care about how much you play their games?

We are surrounded by companies and people that claim to help us, but ultimately care more about themselves than about us. But the Good Shepherd Jesus does care about us and does not run away when our lives get rough. He stands there with us through the hardship and does not leave us alone to face the chaos of the world.

Reflection: What are things in your lives that maybe care more about themselves than about you, but still pretend that they care? When have you followed a false shepherd or hired hand?

Personal Time: Allow for 5-10 minutes for the campers to sit either in silence or writing in their journal.

Commentary: It is becoming common to hear that another company has decreased the quality of their product in the name of profits. We also know that many companies do a poor job of paying their workers a fair wage. Many companies offer products that are meant to make our lives easier or more comfortable but we quickly fill our extra time with busy schedules and become dissatisfied with what we have. These things offer us a better life, but never seem to fill our deepest longings. Many places you hear that the poorest people are often the most happy, they are more thankful for what they have and have learned to be content in their situation. When we hear the voices around us we should pay special attention to what they are saying to us. Are they offering us a quick fix? A pleasure that quickly fades? A symbol of status that has no lasting value beyond making ourselves look better? We should be aware of the thieves, robbers, and hired hands around us, and the empty promises they give us. Instead we should follow our good shepherd who gives us what we need.

Thursday

Purpose: To realize that the significance of the shepherd laying down their life.

Activity: Trust Falls

Questions to spark thinking: What are you willing to sacrifice for someone? Would you sacrifice more for someone you know better? How much would you give up for a stranger?

Scripture: **John 10:10-18.** 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."

Questions to think about Scripture: How do the good shepherd and the hired hand react differently when the wolf comes? How does the shepherd in the story protect the sheep from the wolf?

Meditation: One of the responsibilities of a shepherd is to stay with the sheep and protect them from dangerous things. Besides dangerous mountains or cliffs, there are many wild animals that could hurt the sheep, such as wild dogs, lions, or wolves. Part of the shepherd's job is to protect the sheep from these wild animals, and care for a sheep if it were to get injured. In today's scripture we see how the hired hand runs away from the dangers that come, but the good shepherd stays with the sheep. However, in the story, the shepherd has an interesting way of defending the sheep. The scripture says that the shepherd "lays down his life for the sheep." This means that the good shepherd Jesus values the lives of the sheep more than his own, and is willing to give up his life for the sheep.

Does it make sense for the shepherd to protect their sheep to the point of death?

If the shepherd dies protecting the sheep, what stops the wolf from attacking the rest of the sheep?

It could be that people understood what Jesus was talking about as he described the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep, and maybe there was some rock slinging going on, but the story does not mention it. Instead it says that the good shepherd stays with the sheep, and lays down his life for the sheep when the wolf comes. By sacrificing their life for the sheep the shepherd shows how much they care for the sheep, and loves them. And somehow, by laying down their life, the shepherd is able to protect the sheep from the wolf. The sheep have life because the shepherd laid down his life. But there's more! Jesus says that he lays down his life, but also takes it up again! What this means is that Jesus loves us (his sheep) enough to sacrifice his life for us, but his death is not final. Jesus is raised up, (resurrected) and can still continue shepherding the sheep. But wait! There's even more! Did you listen closely to the scripture? It says that Jesus knows his sheep, and his sheep know him, and Jesus lays down his life for "the sheep." Jesus doesn't just lay down his life for his own sheep, but Jesus lays down his life so all sheep can have life. John 3:16 says that God loved the world so much that God sent Jesus into the world to save it. All we need to do is trust our shepherd Jesus and follow him.

But what about the hired hand? The hired hand ran away when the wolf came. There are shepherds around us that are like the hired hand, or false shepherds. They claim to offer us good things in life, such as popularity, success, and wealth, but when trouble comes they do not stand by us, they run away. They care more about themselves than they do about the sheep. Jesus is not like the false shepherds. Jesus truly cares about the sheep, even the sheep that are not his. The good shepherd Jesus lays down his life so we can have life.

Reflection: What are some examples of false shepherds in our world? What makes them false shepherds? Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. What does that mean? What shepherd are you following?

Personal Time: Allow for 5-10 minutes for the campers to sit either in silence or writing in their journal.

Commentary: Today's section is very powerful. In it we hear of how Jesus lays down his life for the sheep and the sheep are saved. This is a direct allusion to the cross and Jesus' loving sacrifice that has saved us from the power of sin and death. Here I think it is important to note how it is that the shepherd Jesus defeated the wolf. It does not say that it was done with violence and killing of the wolf. Instead the wolf is defeated by the laying down of life. This is a mystery beyond the scope of this week, but it is a worthwhile point to dwell on. In death the shepherd has the power to bring life. The passage also notes how the death is not a death just for the sheep of the shepherd, but so that all sheep can be freed from the wolf! None are left out. What more do we need to know which shepherd to follow?

Friday

Purpose: To help the campers apply this week's learnings to life.

Activity: Review what each daily topic was. What was their favorite skit? Activity?

Questions to spark thinking: What part of this week has changed you the most? How are you going to live differently when you get home?

Scripture: John 10:1-18 "Very truly I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

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Questions about Scripture: What part of this scripture speaks to you the most? What sticks out for you? What parts do you still have questions about?

Meditation: We are now at the end of the week. We've spent time this week learning about the voices that speak to us, what a good shepherd is like, the thieves and the robbers, and how the good shepherd Jesus lays down his life for the sheep. So now what? How should we live differently knowing that Jesus is our good shepherd who loves us, and lays down his life for us to have life? First, we need to be aware of the voices calling out to us. We should pay attention and listen to what we hear around us so we can follow the right voices. Jesus is always speaking to us, but it can be hard to hear sometimes when life gets busy and noisy. Second, we can be confident that Jesus is a good shepherd. He wants what is best for us, even if it doesn't make sense to us at the time. When hardships happen in our lives Jesus stays with us. Knowing that Jesus is a good shepherd helps

us to trust Jesus and be more confident about following Jesus. Third, we should be on the lookout for thieves and robbers, and careful about hired hands. There are things in the world that only care about making themselves better at our expense. There are also things that claim to offer us a better life, but when life gets tough the help they offer is incomplete. Can you think of some examples? Like the voices, we should be aware of these false shepherds and the things they offer us to make our lives better.

Fourth, we now know that the shepherd Jesus loves us so much that it doesn't even make sense. Jesus is willing to give up his life so that we have life. Other shepherds may not care as much about us as Jesus does. So how should we live differently? We should be aware of the different advertisements, media, and people that are trying to tell us how to live, and compare what they are telling us with how Jesus tells us to live. We should trust that Jesus will always be with us, and wants what is best for us. We should be cautious of what others offer us, and what they tell us is lacking in our lives. They may offer to help make our lives better, but then what they give us never fully satisfies us. Finally we should follow Jesus as our shepherd and guide in life, because unlike other shepherds in our world, Jesus loves us enough to stay with us when life gets tough, and die so that we can have life.

Reflection: Can you think of any ways that you are going to live differently after this week? (answers may not be Bible/faith related, which is still ok!) What did you learn this week that is new to you, or that you remembered in a fresh way?

Personal Time: Allow for 5-10 minutes for the campers to sit either in silence or writing in their journal.

Commentary: Today we reviewed the week. There is more that could have been said. There is always more that could be said. Jesus is alive and continues to speak to us through the stories in the Bible and the circumstances of our lives. This week your camper has experienced a unique opportunity. They have been immersed in a temporary community, surrounded by nature, and guided by mentors and an environment with a faith foundation. They have made new friends and will have many new stories to tell. I encourage you to ask them about what they learned about Jesus or God this week. Who are their shepherds in life? It will take them time to process the experience. In many ways they have been living in a different culture for a week, and will need to readjust to life at home. Be patient. The stories will come.