

SESSION 9

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

OBJECTIVE

To have each family member understand that we are a part of the chosen flock of Jesus Christ and therefore must learn to trust Him as our Good Shepherd.

PREPARATION

The committee leading this activity should review and use the *Preparing for the Family Night* checklist in *Appendix B* to plan for the event.

Session leaders should allocate sufficient time to prepare, familiarizing themselves not only with the session but also with each of the following Bible passages: John 10:14, Psalm 23, Matthew 18:11–13, and Proverbs 12:15. In addition, look over any prayers that will be used so that you are comfortable with them as well. If theological questions arise during preparation, the leader(s) should schedule a meeting with the parish priest so that the lesson is fully understood before the session.

On the day of the session, allow time to organize the materials.

MATERIALS NEEDED

For the Whole Group

- Copies of prayers and/or prayer services (*for all participants*)
- Flip chart, masking tape, and markers
- Plastic or paper “sheep for Find my sheep opening activity (*10 per family*)
- Box or container with lid that families can decorate (*one per family*)
- Items to decorate the container: glue, sequins, icons, markers, stickers, etc.
- Index cards
- *Family Time: Closing Activity* handout (*see p. 170*)
- Pens/pencils and paper
- *Family Night: Taking It Home* handouts (*see pp. 171–172*)

For Children’s Break-out Session

- Large white construction paper
- Watercolor palettes with brushes (*one per child*)
- Small paper cups with water (*one per child*)
- Paper towels
- Black crayon
- Picture text (*see p. 160*)
- Glue stick

For Teenagers’ Break-out Session

- *Small Group Activity* handouts (*see pp. 163–164*)
- Good Shepherd Icons handout (*see pp. 165–166*)
- Pens/pencils

For Adults’ Break-out Session

- *Personal Reflection* handout (*see p. 169*)
- Pens/pencils

OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS

We recommend that as a parish family you begin and end your evening with a worship service or prayer. We have included a Small Compline service in Appendix A to reproduce and distribute for all to participate. If you choose a different service, make every effort to have the text available for everyone. For

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alternative prayer time, teach the families this beautiful psalm. It is important to take a few minutes as a group to review the meaning of this psalm so that all can be active participants when praying. Consult with your parish priest for guidance in this.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

—Psalm 23

OPENING ACTIVITY: FIND MY SHEEP (15–20 minutes)

After the opening prayers state the following in your own words:

Who can tell me what a shepherd is? (*Look to the children for answers.*) Today you are all going to become shepherds, but unfortunately you have lost ten of your sheep. It is your job to find them. They are hidden around here (*state boundaries of where they have been hidden*). As a family, you will search, but you will do so in a relay race format. You will sit in a line, and your first shepherd—the youngest member of your family—will go and look for one sheep. When they find it, they will bring it back and sit down at the end of the line. The next shepherd will proceed to look for another sheep and so forth. When you have all 10 of your sheep, you are done. The first family done wins the shepherding award of the evening (*this can be an actual prize, a silly made-up certificate, or whatever you like*). If any of your very young shepherds need the assistance of an older shepherd, by all means assist them.

DISCUSS (*Look first to the children for answers and reflect back.*)

- What is a shepherd? What is their job?
- What qualities do you think a good shepherd needs to have? (*Write these down on a flip chart for all to see.*)
- In the Bible, Jesus says, “*I am the **good shepherd**; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own*” (*John 10:14*). What do you think He meant by this? (*Allow several people to answer before beginning the opening remarks.*)

OPENING REMARKS (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Very good answers! Before we move on, I want to make sure you remember what Jesus said. Let’s all read it together:

Write John 10:14 on a flip chart or project on the wall for all to see. Have everyone recite the passage in unison. If you like, have a quick contest to see who can recite it the loudest—the adults or the children.

In all areas of our lives, we crave and constantly seek leadership, security, and reassurance. Our Lord states, “I am the Good Shepherd,” meaning He is our leader, our security, our

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reassurance—our Savior. He seeks us out when we are lost, trying to prevent us from falling away from the flock and into harm's way. Our Lord does not forget us, even when we seem to forget or choose to ignore Him. God constantly is calling us back to Him like lost sheep. We need to trust in Him for He is our Good Shepherd. He is the One who sacrificed Himself to provide us with the safety and reassurance that salvation and eternal life bring. He knows what is in our best interest and what our true needs are. This is what we will be exploring today: how we can entrust our lives to God as our Good Shepherd. Before we move on, let's see who remembers what Jesus said. (*Say the following and allow participants to fill in the blanks.*)

"I am the _____; and I know My _____, and am known by My _____."

BREAK-OUT SESSIONS (45–60 minutes)

Three age-appropriate break-out sessions are offered on the following pages. These may or may not work for your parish, depending on the number of families that participate. If you are not able to break into three groups, keep participants together and adapt one of the sessions to best meet your needs.

- Children's Break-out Session—The Lord Is My Shepherd (*pp. 157–160*)
- Teenagers' Break-out Session—Don't Forget the One (*pp. 161–166*)
- Adults' Break-out Session—Following the Shepherd (*pp. 167–169*)

Transitioning smoothly from one activity to the next is critical when leading a session, especially for young children. For this reason, make sure to know exactly where each group is going for the break-out sessions and who is leading them. Give clear instructions and proper support so the lessons can begin promptly.

Please note that the children's and teenagers' groups will vary greatly in age, as well as in developmental and spiritual levels. If there are many children, it would be best to split the preschoolers through 2nd graders into one group and the 3rd through 6th graders into another. Likewise with the teenagers, split the junior high and high school students into two groups when appropriate. However the groups are arranged, make sure that all the young people are fully engaged in the lesson. For more specific information about the developmental needs of children and teenagers, see the *Guidelines* published by the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (www.youth.goarch.org). Above all, always be certain there is enough adult supervision to ensure that the young people will be safe and supported in their learning.

CLOSING ACTIVITY (15–20 minutes)

Reassemble the participants back together as families. Give each family group a Family Time: Closing Activity handout. Have them follow the instructions on the handout, and when most families are done (they can continue at home if necessary) begin the wrap-up discussion.

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DISCUSS (*Look first to the children for answers and reflect back.*)

- What did you learn today?
- What are you going to do as a family when you get home?
- Does anyone remember the passage about Jesus we learned earlier? (*Repeat as a group.*)

WRAP-UP (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Earlier this evening, we spoke about what makes a good shepherd. (*Refer back to the flip chart list you created at the beginning of the evening.*) Christ is our Good Shepherd; He possesses all of these qualities and so many more. We must trust in Him to lead us. Trusting can be difficult. We like to be in complete control of all aspects of our lives, but as Christians our lives are not our own. The only way we can truly be in “control” is to give complete control over to God and trust that He knows what is best for our life. We have started tonight to explore the topic of trust, but this is only a beginning. Trust takes active work daily. We must choose at every moment of the day to turn to God for all things, trusting that He will lead us and keep us safe. As Christians, looking to God to keep us safe does not mean we will never experience difficulties and grief. It means that God will lead us through these and use them to bring us closer to Him. Through trusting our Good Shepherd, we will be led to the pastures of salvation where there is true peace. As we leave, let us remember the words of our Lord: “*I am the **good shepherd**; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own*” (*John 10:14*).

AS FAMILIES PREPARE TO LEAVE

- Remember to close with a short worship service or closing prayer.
- Don’t forget to give families the *Family Night: Taking It Home* handout.
- Let them know when the next Family Night is scheduled.
- Enlist families to help you clean up (*rotate monthly*).
- Thank them sincerely for their attendance and participation.

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

CHILDREN'S BREAK-OUT SESSION

OPENING ACTIVITY: THE SHEEP AND THE SHEPHERD

We just learned that Christ is our Good Shepherd and we are His sheep. Can anyone tell me why sheep need a shepherd? *Allow time for children to give answers and then supplement with the following:*

Sheep need a shepherd to keep them from getting lost and to guide them toward food and water. It is important that all the sheep stay together, otherwise one might be attacked or harmed. A shepherd can look out for danger that the sheep may not see. Can anyone tell me why we need Christ as our shepherd? *Allow time for children to give answers and then supplement with the following:*

We need Christ to shepherd us so that we do not get lost. He will keep danger far away and gives us the food we need for everlasting life. Christ will guide us, His sheep, toward His Father in heaven.

BIBLE PASSAGE: PSALM 23

There is a beautiful psalm (*make mention if you used it as the opening prayer for the whole group*) that many of you may have heard. We are going to read it once. Then we are going to read it again more slowly, and while we read it slowly we will discuss it.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

DISCUSS (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

- What is happening in this passage?

ART PROJECT: THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

Good answers, but let's look a little closer at this passage. As we do this, we are going to create a painting to represent this passage.

Pass out sheets of large white construction paper, watercolor paints (one palette with brush per child), and a small Dixie cup with water (it is advisable to have a something to wipe up spills and refill the cups if needed). When everyone is ready, proceed by reading the following passages, asking the questions, and stating in your own words the ideas below.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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- How is the Lord our shepherd?
- What shall we “not want”?

Christ is our leader—and He shepherds us with loving patience. We shall not want for anything: food, love, safety, etc., because God is taking care of us. Does this mean that we will get everything we want—like a Nintendo Wii or all the toys we could possibly imagine? No. When we trust in God, we realize these things don’t matter. These things aren’t bad, but when they become more important to us than God that is a problem. God needs to come first and all that we really need will be provided.

The first thing we want you to do with your picture is to put your name on the back using the crayon. Now think about the question we just answered, “How is the Lord our shepherd?” Write, “The Lord is my shepherd by _____” (*write this on a board for the children to copy*) and fill in the blank by writing how the Lord is your shepherd. When you finish, go over what you wrote one more time with the crayon so it is very dark and there is lots of crayon wax built up. If you need help, let us know. *Make sure there are people available to help children with writing and spelling.*

He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

- How would it feel to “lie down in green pastures” or walk by “still waters”?
- What does “He restores my soul” mean?
- What are “paths of righteousness”?

God gives our soul rest to face each day anew. We can relax knowing He will take care of us. By restoring our soul, He gives us energy to live life. Each day we are new in Christ and we have a choice to live with Him or without Him. With Him, there is life and peace. We are in “still water”—not rough but calm. When we walk in the paths of righteousness, we walk the right way—the way God wants us to go. Sometimes God puts up walls to redirect us from a wayward path. God may want us to go right, but we turn left, so then we might find another wall blocking our way and causing us to turn again and again until we finally follow the way God is directing us.

Now we get to the fun part of our pictures—painting with watercolors. There are four things we need to add: a shepherd (that represents the Lord), green pastures (*check to see all know what a pasture is*), still water, and a path. Leave room because we will be adding more as we read further. You can paint over your writing and it will still stand out because of all the wax from the crayon.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

- What does “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” mean?

A shepherd has a rod and staff to guide His sheep. As Christ is our Shepherd, His rod and staff give us comfort because we know He is leading and caring for us no matter what happens. Even when bad things happen, He will walk with us.

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Let's add to our pictures. We need to give our shepherd a rod/staff.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

- What does "my cup runs over mean"?

If you really love chocolate milk, you would want your cup to be very full. When your "cup runs over," it means that the chocolate milk would be never-ending but not spilling. This is how life with Christ is: our cups run over with good things.

Let's add to our pictures. We need to show God's blessings that run over in our lives. God loves us so much that he gives us many wonderful things—not an ipod or a toy but rather things that can't be bought such as a wonderful family, good friends, or special talents. Add something that represents these blessings to your picture.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

- What does "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" mean?

We will live with God for all of eternity if we follow Him. Sometimes it is hard to remember this at school or when playing with friends. But eternity in heaven is going to be more incredible than anything we could ever imagine.

Let's add three more things to our drawings. First, we need to add a house of God, and then we need to add ourselves to the picture. Finally, we will glue the text from Psalm 23 on the back so that we can keep this and use it for our prayers.

WRAP-UP (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Look how beautiful your pictures are! Christ is our Good Shepherd and we are His sheep. Sheep never worry about anything because they know the shepherd will take care of them even when things get bad. Before we leave, can you all share ways we can follow Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd?

Close by praying Psalm 23 all together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

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PICTURE TEXT

(cut and give one to each child)

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DON'T FORGET THE ONE

TEENAGERS' BREAK-OUT SESSION

OPENING INTRODUCTION

We just learned that Christ is our Good Shepherd. What's important to remember here is that He does not just see us as a large herd. He sees us as individuals and cares about each of us personally. When one of us is lost, He looks for us, calls to us, waiting anxiously for our return. When one of us is hurt, He carries us. We are part of His flock; without every one of us the flock is not complete. Let us read what the Bible says about this before we go into today's activity.

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 18:11–13

For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY: GOOD SHEPHERD ICONS

We are going to explore this concept by looking at some icons and discussing the above passage further and what it means to your lives.

Break young people into groups of 4–5 and hand out the Small Group Activity handout (see p. 163–166) with the icons. Give groups 10 minutes to discuss. When groups are finished, proceed with the following discussion.

DISCUSS (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

- What were some differences between the two icons?
- What did you learn from looking at the icons and reading the passage?
- How would you feel if you were that one sheep?

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Christ is our Good Shepherd and He cares about each of us equally. He comes to us and carries us in times of need. We must trust Him completely—give our lives over to Him.

DISCUSS (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

- Is it easy to trust people? Why or why not?
- Is it easy to trust God? Why or why not?
- What keeps us from trusting God for all things?
- What are ways that we can place all our trust in God?

WRAP-UP (*Paraphrase in you own words.*)

When we think about trusting God, we must look toward these icons for an example. The person/sheep is being carried by God. All their weight is on Him. They have surrendered completely to let the Lord shepherd them to safety. This is what we too must do—

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surrender our lives to Christ our Good Shepherd. Our Shepherd loves each of us individually and infinitely. He is there for us, calling to us.

Close with the following prayer:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
—**Psalm 23**

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

You have two very different copies of the icon Christ the Good Shepherd.

Start by looking at Icon 1:

- What do you see?
- How does it make you feel?

Next, look at Icon 2:

- What do you see?
- How does it make you feel?
- How does it differ from the first icon in appearance and how it makes you feel?

What do both of these icons tell you about Christ the Good Shepherd?

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Read the following passage again:

For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.
—**Matthew 18:11–13**

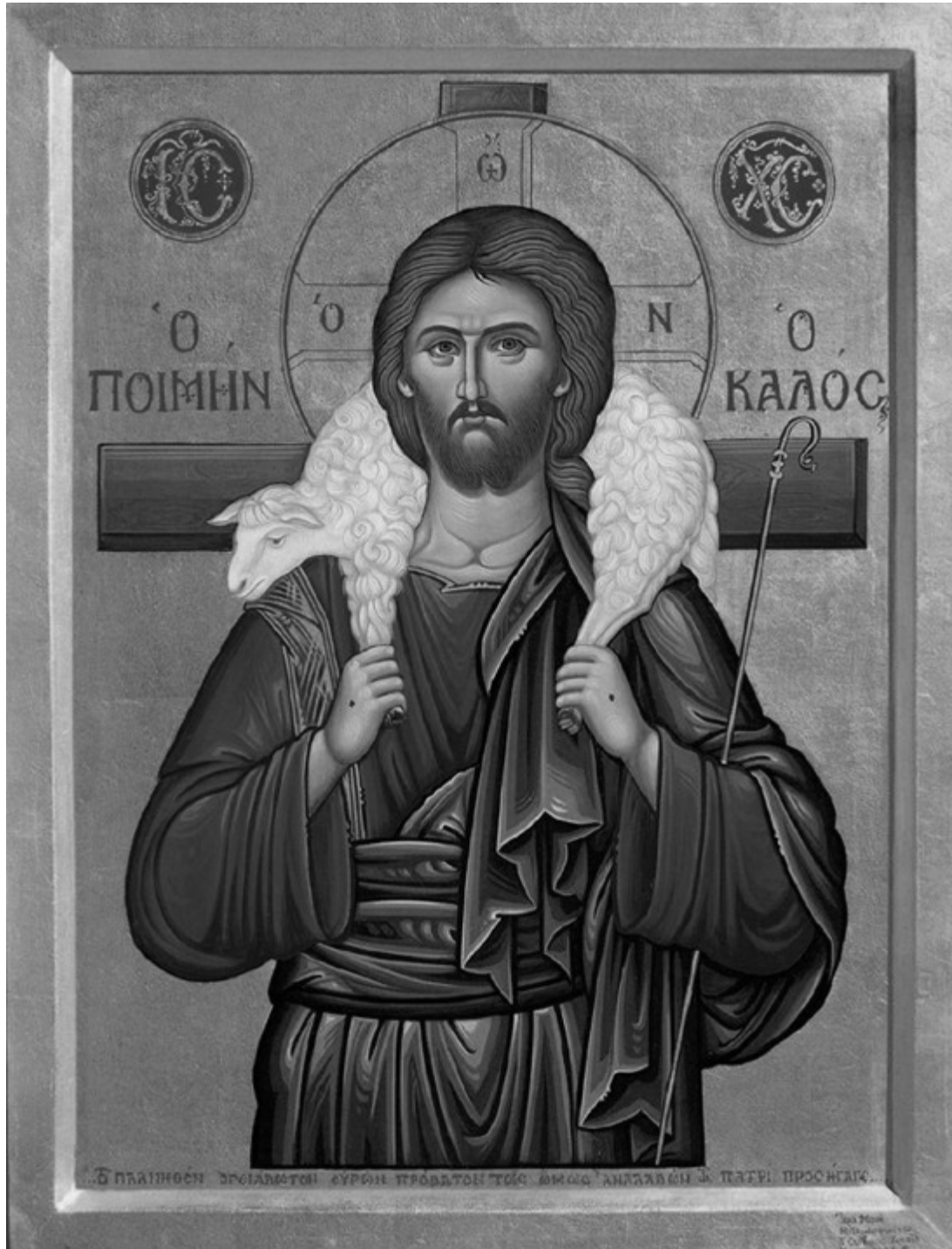
Now, discuss the following:

- What is this story telling us?
- How does it relate to the icons?
- Why do you think the Father goes after the lost one?
- Why is there more rejoicing over one found?
- What does this mean to our life?

Finally, discuss the following:

- Is it easy to trust people? Why or why not?
- Is it easy to trust God? Why or why not?
- What keeps us from trusting God for all things?
- What are ways that we can work to place all our trust in God?

ICON 1



Icon of the Good Shepherd icon from the late 20th century

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ICON 2



Icon written by the hand of Athanasios Clark

FOLLOWING THE SHEPHERD

ADULTS' BREAK-OUT SESSION

OPENING ACTIVITY: LEAD AND FOLLOW

We just learned that Christ is our Shepherd and we are His sheep. Sheep are called to follow their shepherd who leads them. We would like you to break into groups of 4–5. Briefly discuss two words: lead and follow. In your discussion, ask yourselves, “What does it mean to lead? What does it mean to follow?” You will have five minutes before we discuss this as a whole group.

DISCUSS (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

- What does it mean to lead?
- What does it mean to follow?
- Is one of these easier to do?
- Is one of them more desirable?

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Leadership is a skill that many desire. We want to lead others. Our society tells us it is better to lead than follow. But if we are all leaders, then who follows? As Christians, we are called to follow Christ, but many times we get caught up following our own wants and desires. We begin following our own lead—it is very easy to slip into doing this. When we follow our own lead, our lives are not centered on Christ. We may still be going to church, participating in church events and organizations, but we are living a self-centered rather than Christ-centered life. The church recognizes that following Christ is not easy and for that reason she provides us with guides: spiritual fathers. A spiritual father is a member of the clergy with whom we develop a special relationship. We go to confession with him, and he knows all our difficulties and joys. His role is to help us follow Christ in all that we do.

BIBLE PASSAGE: PROVERBS 12:15

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
But he who heeds counsel is wise.*

DISCUSS (*Reflect back.*)

- What is this passage saying?
- What does it mean to our lives?

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

As any athlete would tell you, training begins with a good coach. A coach helps you progress through your training safely and wisely. When we start any training, we are often overexcited and try to do too much. We don't yet have the endurance to continue, so we stop. Our coach knows the shape we are in and can help start our training with the proper focus. The spiritual father has the same role. He is our spiritual coach—training us to be athletes for Christ!

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PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take the next five minutes to reflect silently on the following story. When the time is done, those who would like are welcome to share some of their thoughts.

DISCUSS (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

- How did you feel when you read this story?
- Are there areas of our lives that cause us to act like the butterfly?
- What causes us to react this way?
- How can we seek guidance in this?
- What are the barriers that keep us from this?

WRAP-UP (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Living a Christian life isn't always easy. Sometimes we think we are living it but we are merely going through the motions—not challenging ourselves and even hanging onto some harmful behaviors. By developing a relationship with a spiritual father, we can learn to train properly and learn how to follow our Lord in all that we do.

Close with the following prayer:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
—**Psalm 23**

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Read the story below and reflect on the questions.

A professor had lost his wife, three children—a son and two daughters, all college graduates, and he blamed God for that, and ceased every connection with Him. While working, however, one evening, he saw a beautiful butterfly close to his kerosene lamp. He became afraid that it would burn itself. He took then a handkerchief and tried to chase the butterfly out the window, so it would not go near the lamp and be burned. “I am trying to save it, and it probably thinks that I am trying to harm it,” the professor said to himself.

“But I am doing the same,” he added. “God tries to save me and I think that He is chasing me.”

—Adapted from Lovely Little Stories by Metropolitan G. Polizoides

- Are there areas of my life that cause me to act like the butterfly?
- What causes my reaction?
- How can I seek guidance in this?
- What barriers keep me from doing this?

FAMILY NIGHT: TAKING IT HOME

“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.” —John 10:14

PRAY TOGETHER

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
—Psalm 23

MORE ON THE SHEPHERD

... which have no shepherd.	Numbers 27:17
... to shepherd the church of God ...	Acts 20:28
... returned to the Shepherd ...	1 Peter 2:25

Want to find more?

Grab your Bible and concordance and look up the word “shepherd” or anything else you want to look for.

THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW BY REV. FR. ANTHONY CONIARIS

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus is constantly with His sheep. “... he goes before them and the sheep follow him ...” (John 10:4). Even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we fear no evil for He is with us. He never allows us to stay in the valley but always leads us through it to a place beyond, which He has prepared for us. The word He uses is not *in* but *through* the valley of the shadow. How tremendously comforting it is to believe that the Lord who is my Shepherd is guiding me, that He will not allow me to stay in the valley of the shadow but is leading me through it to something better beyond. The 23rd Psalm brings comfort to all people but especially to those who are sick and in sorrow. It is universally one of the most favorite prayers for those on the sickbed.

I remember the story of a lady who was facing a serious operation. She was very frightened. She had the best doctors and she knew it. She had many friends praying for her and she knew it. But still she was fearful. They called her priest. He prayed. But still she was in great terror. Her pastor suggested that she read the 23rd Psalm. She did. She prayed it over and over again. Finally her fears began to subside. After the operation, she told her pastor, “I don’t know how many times I read the Shepherd Psalm. It must have been over a

hundred times. It made me feel that God was really with me. It made me feel that I was like one of His sick little lambs and that He was holding me in His arms, My fear vanished..”

Another example is John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth. He had literally been “on top of the world.” But soon after that glorious accomplishment for which he received such wide acclaim, John Glenn had an experience that brought him so far down to earth that he literally had to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The future looked great for him. He was planning to run for Congress when he had the kind of accident most of us consider a joke—he slipped and fell in the bathtub. He injured himself and was left with severe dizzy spells. That marked the end of his great plans for the future. Soon thereafter his wife became ill, then his father and mother. Then came a series of financial setbacks.

This man who had been soaring through space found himself being crushed mercilessly by life. But John Glenn was a committed Christian, a man of prayer. As he struggled through the valley of the shadow, he never felt alone. He feared no evil for he felt



the comforting and strengthening presence of the Good Shepherd who was leading him through the valley to better pastures beyond. As Glenn himself said, “There is a luxury in a thing like this being forced upon you. You stop to see where you are going. You pick up all the pieces and start in the direction you feel is best.”

Because John Glenn was able to say, “The Lord is my shepherd ...” he could say, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me ...”

What a difference it makes in life when one believes and can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want ...”

—Taken from *No Man Ever Spoke as This Man: The Great I Am's of Jesus* published by Light and Life Publishing (www.light-n-life.com)

FAMILY ACTIVITY: TAKE THE SUMMER CHALLENGE!

Where does God rank in your family's summer plans? Will He go with you on vacation or will a break from school and work mean a break from God? This summer we invite you to take the Summer Challenge. Instead of taking a rest from your spiritual life, your family can use the summer to grow closer to God. However you, meet the challenge, email us at familycare@goarch.org. We can use your story to inspire other families. Be creative! Be committed! Be with Christ! Here are some ideas to get you started:

Go to Church! Summer is a wonderful time to worship with your family. Attend Divine Liturgy as well as the other services offered throughout the season. If you are vacationing, visit different Orthodox churches. To find an Orthodox church close to you, visit www.scoba.us. Don't forget to check the church calendar for special fasting periods and other celebrations. Information can be found at www.onlinechapel.goarch.org.

Camp Out! No, not the kind where you pitch a tent in the middle of the wilderness (although that can be fun), we're talking about sending your children to one of the many wonderful Orthodox summer camp programs. It is a great way for them to experience the faith. To find a program near you visit www.camp.goarch.org. Also, check with your parish priest to find out if your Metropolis hosts a family camp you can attend together.

Take a Hike! Summer is a great time to really appreciate the beauty of God's design. So hike, bike, fish, and swim—just get out there! While you're there, consider pausing to read Psalm 104, which is a beautiful poem of God's creation. Next time you attend a Vespers service, take notice that it begins with this psalm.

Be an Explorer! Decide on something you want to learn about Christ and His Church this summer and explore! Perhaps you want to learn how to chant (www.onlinechapel.goarch.org) or you want to learn more about the Gospel (www.family.goarch.org). Consider ordering Where Does God Go for Summer Vacation? a workbook to guide your children in their summer's spiritual journey. This book can be ordered at www.youth.goarch.org.

Help Out! Christ was a servant to all, and He wants us to be the same. Consider projects you can do to help others both in your neighborhood and globally. Check with your local parish and social agencies for ideas. Also check with the following: International Orthodox Christian Charities (www.iocc.org) and the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (www.ocmc.org) if you want to help people outside your community. For something really different, consider volunteering your time with Project Mexico (www.projectmexico.org) and build a house for some very special families.

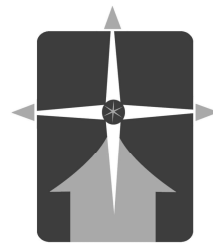
Listen Up! We are surrounded daily by so much noise. Why not try listening to something different? Orthodox Christian Network (www.receive.org) has music and interviews that edify the soul. Also, check out Ancient Faith Radio (www.ancientfaithradio.com), another Orthodox Internet broadcast. Have your children listen to their weekly children's story time called *Under the Grapevine*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- *Encountering Women of Faith* edited by Kyriaki Karidoyanes Fitzgerald, published by InterOrthodox Press.
- *The Shepherd and the 100 Sheep* by Michael Hudak, published by Liturgical Press.
- *St. Gregory Palamas Greek Orthodox Monastery* (www.sgbm.goarch.org).

FAMILY CHALLENGE

This month we challenge you to use your new "Control Box" to give control over to God so that He can lead you. Whenever you have a difficulty, big or small, put it on a piece of paper, turn it to prayer, and then put it in the box for God to help you with. This will physically remind us to turn to Him for help with our difficulties and trust in Him to find resolve. When you find a difficulty still weighing on your heart, seek counsel from your spiritual father. He will guide you to find peace with it.



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Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
79 Saint Basil Road • Garrison, New York 10524
familycare@goarch.org • www.family.goarch.org
Phone: 845-424-8175 • Fax: 845-424-4172