



Animals and the Bible 2

The Good Shepherd and His Sheep: What's in a name?

Equipment: Bag or other suitable container, and pieces of paper with some amusing names for would-be pop stars and their groups. You might even want to make these animal themed! E.g. Mr Pink Fairy Armadillo; The Dung Beetles etc

Plan:

- ✎ Ask if anyone has ever dreamed about being a pop-star. Talk about how celebrities like pop-stars often choose a name for themselves.
- ✎ Play a game with the names in the bag. Children get to pick a name from the bag, which they can either accept or reject for their future pop career. But they can only have one more try! You might regret declining to be The Blue Tongued Skink if you end up as The Baboon's Bottom.
- ✎ Use this to discuss how names are important, and the names which we give ourselves and other people tell us a lot about the way in which we see the world. A football coach would probably not encourage his star striker by calling him 'my baby bunny rabbit'. Rightly or wrongly, we just don't see rabbits as dynamic and macho! Similarly people are more inclined to call their boyfriend/girlfriend something like honey, cupcake or sweetie than lentil, sprout or cabbage.
- ✎ So it says a lot that Jesus called himself a shepherd, and called the people he loved sheep. If Jesus had seen sheep as smelly and unimportant, he wouldn't have done this. He recognised that there were positive and special things about sheep.
- ✎ Sheep are trusting; they will follow each other and a person whom they trust. Sheep are (contrary to popular opinion) intelligent, they can tell human beings apart easily by sight, smell or voice and are capable of solving problems (e.g. they've been known to get over cattle-grids by rolling on their backs).
- ✎ When Jesus was thinking of a way to explain who he was, and how he felt about his people, he chose to talk about sheep. He looked at the world around him, and drew on an animal for inspiration. In doing so he treated animals, and sheep in particular, as something to be respected and honoured.
- ✎ That Jesus was prepared to talk about animals in this way demonstrates that he appreciated them. And if Jesus noticed and celebrated animals and the things which they have to teach us, we should follow his example.
- ✎ **Let's pray:** Good Shepherd you noticed and honoured sheep. Open our eyes and our minds to notice the animals which surround us, inspire us to celebrate and care for them as creatures with feelings, not objects to be used. Amen.