

Shepherd Training – Basic

Toolbox I

Suggested Session Length: 45 minutes (*there is a bonus 15-minute activity at the end of the training that would extend the session to 60 minutes if used*)

PowerPoint Available: “Toolbox I – Shepherd Training – Basic”

Audience: New DL Elementary and Preschool Shepherds (those who have served in the role for a year or less)

General Topic: Introductory training for new Shepherds serving in Discovery Land.

Supplies:

- Bibles for participants (already placed on chairs/tables)
- Scripture references written onto four sheets of paper – one reference per sheet (Psalm 23, Matthew 18:12-14, John 10:1-5, John 10:11-15)
- Writing utensils
- Blank sheets of paper (at least one per participant)
- Whiteboard and whiteboard markers
- Sample lesson or full curriculum packet for upcoming quarter (if both Preschool and Elementary Shepherds are participating in this training, have both age group resources available) (one per participant)
- Highlighters (one per participant)
- A few Tracker Tickets

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Shepherd training! If you are a new Shepherd serving in Discovery Land, or if you’ve been serving as a Shepherd for less than one year, you’re in the right spot. *Introduce yourself and your serving history/experience with DL.*

In the first half of our training today, we will look at the big picture and learn why Shepherds are an essential part of the Discovery Land team. Then, in the second half of our training, we will talk through what the Shepherd role looks like in action during a morning of Discovery Land.

Slide 2: Our Good Shepherd

Introduction activity (5-10 minutes):

Divide participants into four groups and hand out Scripture references (one reference per team), blank paper, and writing utensils. Instruct teams to read the assigned verses and then write down what they notice about the shepherd in each passage.

Here are some questions to help teams get started:

- *What does the shepherd do in these verses?*
- *What kinds of feelings or actions are associated with the shepherd?*
- *If applicable, how do the sheep respond to the shepherd in these verses?*

Discussion (5 minutes):

After groups have worked through their verses, ask them to share what they've noticed. Record descriptions and concepts on the whiteboard. Add examples as needed, if teams don't note them (these could include: nurturing, attentive, prepared, committed, faithful, etc.)

Slide 3: We get to "Shepherd" Like Jesus!

Jesus is our Good Shepherd, and He teaches us how to be Shepherds! As we care for the kids in our classroom, we are responsible to point them to the Good Shepherd – both through the teaching and also through how we lead and serve.

Slide 4: What are our Kids Dealing With?**Activity (5 minutes):**

Ask participants to share phrases or words that describe what kids in our community and church deal with in daily life. Coach them as needed and create a list on the whiteboard.

Some examples:

- *Often lonely (social media, isolation)*
- *Living in a world that sometimes feels uncertain and unsafe*
- *Very aware of events taking place in the world*
- *Many come from broken families or have difficult relationships*
- *Shaky worldview – not often hearing about "absolute truth" at home or school*
- *May not have any biblical foundation or Bible knowledge*
- *Very proficient in technology – this can be helpful and harmful*

Slide 5: Our Kids Need Shepherds

No matter the age, the students in your classroom are hungry to be seen, encouraged, and heard. They need "Good Shepherds" in their lives who will introduce them to the Gospel and who can help them learn to navigate the world in a Christ-honoring way.

Slide 6: Barna Research on Resilience

In 2020, Barna released research revealing that meaningful relationships within the church (not just with family members) are a key indicator of whether a child will grow up into a resilient disciple who remains faithful to Jesus as a young adult. Before we look at this chart, let's take a look at how Barna is defining "resilient disciples": "Resilient disciples are Christians who (1) attend church at least monthly and engage with their church more than just attending worship services; (2) trust firmly in the authority of the Bible; (3) are committed to Jesus personally and affirm he was crucified and raised from the dead to conquer sin and death; and (4) express desire to transform the broader society as an outcome of their faith."¹

¹ <https://www.barna.com/research/relationships-build-resilient-faith/>

Slide 7: Barna Research Chart

Look at the chart on the PPT and compare the responses from “resilient disciples” to those from adults in the other categories.

It is very clear that having meaningful relationships both in childhood and adulthood, particularly within the church community, is a significant influence on adults who are resilient disciples. As Shepherds in the DL classroom, we have the incredible gift of doing life with these kids, of inviting them into the church community, and of helping them grow in their walk with Christ. We can build meaningful relationships with kids that will impact them for the rest of their lives!

Now that we’ve learned how we can follow the model of our Good Shepherd and why we’re needed as Shepherds in Discovery Land, let’s get into the details of the role itself.

Slide 8: Walk Through the Morning

The Discovery Land classroom team is made up of a Lead Teacher, Discover Time Leader, and Shepherd. All three leaders stay with their class for the duration of the morning. The Lead Teacher is responsible for preparing for and teaching the Bible Lesson. The Discover Time Leader prepares for and leads the weekly hands-on Discover Time activity. The Shepherd serves in primarily a support role all morning, caring for students and assisting the classroom team. During each part of the morning, there are some unique ways for the Shepherd to support the students and leaders.

We’re going to walk through a morning in Discovery Land, using our curriculum as a guide. Each week you will read through the entire lesson – including the Discover Time, prep sections, and Bible Lesson – so that you are prepared to lead with excellence and serve your students well.

Hand out highlighters and a sample lesson or instruct participants to turn to the first lesson of the upcoming quarter in their curriculum packet.

Slide 9: Pre-Service Review Game and Worship

Have participants find and highlight the Pre-Service Review Game and Worship section in the lesson.

As students arrive, we will be gathered in a large group, playing the Pre-Service Review Game. Students will be asked review questions from previous lessons and on general Bible knowledge. This game provides structure during a transitional time and helps students recall what they’ve learned in previous weeks. It also helps introduce concepts to visiting students and students who have not attended recently. After the review game is done, we will transition to a time of worship.

What does a Shepherd do during this time?

- Focus on welcoming students. Help them transition from being with their family to being at church and help them get connected and fully participating. Here are two specific tips for success:
 - Look for “lost sheep” and connect them to a friend. Who are “lost sheep”? Visitors, newer students, and students who find it challenging to join the group.
 - As you welcome students, get down to their level – this makes you feel more approachable, and shows them that you want to get to know them.
- Help kids participate in the Pre-Service Review Game. Be a role model by cheering for correct answers and by helping redirect students who have lost focus.
 - High fives mean a lot to these kids! Encourage them!

- You are allowed to help students. If a student has not been able to answer a question, whisper a hint or even the entire answer to them, so they can successfully participate.
- When it is time for worship, participate alongside the students. It is so important for kids to see teenagers and adults worshiping Jesus!
 - Learn the hand motions to the songs ahead of time, so you are comfortable and confident.
 - Find students who look confused or nervous and stand next to them – no need to say anything or force them to participate – just be present with them.

Slide 10: Discover Time

Have participants find and highlight the Discover Time section in the lesson.

After the Pre-Service Review Game and Worship, elementary classes will transition to the Discover Time activity. This is a hands-on learning activity where students will have a memorable experience that will equip them to personalize and connect with the Bible Lesson. Preschool students also take part in a Discover Time activity, but it takes place after the Bible Lesson.

What does the Shepherd do during this time?

Be alert and help students get involved! The Discover Time is when an “all hands on deck” strategy is essential. Every leader is needed! Here are some tips for success:

- Carefully read the Discover Time activity ahead of time and be prepared. Depending on the activity, you may be asked to serve as a Team Captain, a judge, or a referee. Connect with the DT Leader before the morning begins to find out how you can be helpful.
- Understand the goal of the DT activity.
- Be the kids’ biggest cheerleader during this time! Help keep them actively involved and focused.
- If a student seems nervous or confused, get down to their level and help them understand the activity so they can confidently participate. You may need to be their partner for the entire activity – connect with the DT Leader to see if that would be helpful.

Slide 11: Bible Lesson

Have participants find and highlight the Bible Lesson Introduction section in the lesson.

After the Discover Time activity, elementary classes head to the classroom for the Bible Lesson. (Remember, preschool classes have the Bible Lesson before the Discover Time activity.)

What does the Shepherd do during the Bible Lesson?

Focus on being an attentive, supportive leader! As the Lead Teacher leads from the front of the classroom, you support from the back. Here are some tips for success:

- Elementary classrooms:
 - Make sure every student has a Bible and has help looking up Scripture references. *Explain what to do if a child doesn’t have a Bible and encourage shepherds to learn the books of the Bible themselves, if they don’t already know them, so they can help their students. Have participants find and highlight the “Find it” header in the lesson.*
 - Be the “Tracker Ticket Master”! *Hold up Tracker Tickets.* Tracker Tickets are an incentive system and discipleship tool used to build excitement, motivation, and spiritual disciplines for students. Tracker Tickets can be earned by elementary students throughout the morning and then spent at the Discover Market. Use these tickets to encourage students

who are participating and motivate others to stay focused. *Explain the guidelines in your church's ministry for how students earn Tracker Tickets and the Tracker Tickets currency rate. The Tracker Ticket currency rate chart is included on the PowerPoint, but edit it as needed for your own context.*

- **Preschool and Elementary classrooms:**
 - Carefully read the Scripture passage and study the Bible Lesson ahead of time, so you can be prepared. Your Lead Teacher may ask you to read Bible verses aloud, dress up in a costume and act out the lesson, or assist with props/visuals in another way. Be ready to help bring the Bible to life for the students in your class! *Have participants find and highlight the "Scripture Outline" header in the lesson.*
 - Anticipate distractions and redirect students as needed. To do this well, you need to be an active presence. Sit with the students or stand right behind them. Use your body – move to sit or stand near a student who seems distracted – your presence is often enough to help remind students to focus. If students require extra redirection, shoulder taps or a hand placed on the student's back, making the "hush" signal with your finger, or pointing to the teacher are helpful signals that will not distract other students from the lesson. If needed, you can also quietly move a student to a different seat in the classroom.
 - One valuable way you can support your teacher is by praying for them as they teach. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give them the right words, that students will hear exactly what God wants them to hear, that God's Word will be honored, that distractions will be eliminated, etc.

Slide 12: End-of-Class Review Game / Review Activities / Pick Up

Have participants find and highlight the End-of-Class Review Game (Elementary) or Classroom Review Time (Preschool) section in the lesson.

After the Bible Lesson, your class will participate in a review game or activity as their parents or guardians arrive to pick them up. Elementary students play a simple review game, and preschoolers participate in two structured review activities.

What does the Shepherd do during this time?

- Help with the review game/activities. If you feel confident, offer to lead this game or activity! There are always elementary review game ideas in the back of your curriculum, and the preschool review activities are in each week's lesson.
- Encourage students as they participate. Look for opportunities for connection, such as cheering for them or high-fiving them when they answer a question correctly.
- Stay with your classroom team until all students are picked up.

Slide 13: Bonus Tips for Success

The most important part of your role is building meaningful relationships with your students. Here are some additional ideas, outside of Sunday morning, that can help you do this:

- Learn your students' names and use them often.
- Know your students – their gifts and talents, personalities, preferences, etc.
- Keep track of students' birthdays and find a small way to celebrate them (such as sending a postcard). *Work with your ministry leader to coordinate this.*
- Pray for your students regularly, by name.

Slide 14: Q&A

After questions are covered, close in prayer.

Bonus Activity: Application!

This 15-minute activity can be added to the conclusion of this training if time allows (it would make the training 60 minutes instead of 45).

Present scenarios to participants and talk through how they can be an effective Shepherd in each situation. Here are a few example scenarios:

Preschool Scenarios:

- A new child comes in crying
- A child becomes upset when it is time to leave Worship for the Classroom
- A child is wiggly and unable to sit still during the Bible Lesson

Elementary Scenarios:

- A student is attending for the first time
- A student that attends infrequently doesn't know any of the answers during the Pre-Service Review Game and looks disappointed
- An older elementary student becomes irritated when their team loses the Discover Time activity
- A student is worried because they forgot their Bible in the car and it's too late to go get it

All Ages Scenarios:

- A child never wants to participate in any active Discover Time activities
- A child with special needs cannot follow the Discover Time directions like other kids
- Two girls are talking to each other throughout the entire Bible Lesson