Sheep of the Good Shepherd Family Lesson

Learn about how Jesus' sheep hear his voice.

Bible Verse: John 10:27. Jesus said, *"My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27, ESV).*

Supplies: Large 4-quart soup pot/Dutch oven, popcorn bowl, oven mitts, ½ c. light olive oil (NOT extra virgin olive oil) or canola oil, ½ c. popcorn kernels, 3 T. sugar premeasured in a bowl, salt, M&Ms.
Set Up: Measure and set out all the supplies nearby before you begin – popcorn pops quickly! Have one person read aloud the explanations while another person makes the popcorn, if possible. (If you let the oil get too hot before adding the corn, you may end up demonstrating manna from heaven.)

Activity: What has ears but cannot hear? (Wait for it…) Corn! The Bible tells us that some people are like corn. They have ears yet do not hear the voice of the Lord because they don't want to follow him. But Jesus said, "*My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27, ESV).* Today, we're going to practice being sheep who follow Jesus by following directions to make sweet kettle corn.

1. **Set out popcorn kernels and all other supplies near the stove**. The Bible describes faith as a seed, just like popcorn kernels are seeds. Those who have faith in God desire to hear his voice.
2. **Pour the olive oil into the pot.** When God wanted to pour out his Spirit on someone in the Old Testament, they were often anointed with olive oil like we poured into our pan. Acts 2:33 says that God the Father gave Jesus *"the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us."*
3. **Put the pan on a burner. Turn the stove to just above medium heat and heat the oil for 1 minute.** The Bible describes the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a baptism of fire, so let's see what happens when we add our "seeds of faith" to hot oil.
4. **Pour in corn kernels and shake pan to distribute evenly. Sprinkle sugar evenly over top and cover. Set your popcorn bowl next to you.** Just like we added sweet sugar to our corn kernels, Romans 5:5 says that *"God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."*
5. **Put on oven mitts. When you hear the first kernel pop, turn the stove down to medium and hold the lid down while you gently move the pan back and forth across the burner. When the popping slows down to a few seconds between pops, remove from burner.** (Sometimes I let it continue popping for a few seconds off the burner before removing the lid.) IMPORTANT – make sure your kids are not close by when you take off the lid, in case a few hot kernels decide to pop out.
6. **Immediately pour popcorn into your popcorn bowl** (use a spoon to pull out any popcorn that's stuck to the side of the pan). **Sprinkle a layer of salt over popcorn, then carefully shake or stir to distribute. Repeat 4 or 5 times, depending on how salty you like it.** Jesus calls his followers the salt of the earth in Matthew 5:13 because we bring the flavor of God's goodness and holiness to others.
7. **Distribute the kettle corn to bowls and top with M&Ms.** When the fire of the Spirit ignites the seed of faith in those who have ears to hear, it explodes like popcorn. Just like our popcorn is coated in oil, the Spirit anoints us with oil so we can follow Jesus, our Good Shepherd, and do what he does. The love God pours into our hearts like sugar helps us love others as Jesus loves us. Like our kettle corn is seasoned with salt, the Holy Spirit gives us words that are *"seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6).* He gives the church a variety of gifts, like the colorful M&Ms, so we can point people to God.
8. **Give thanks to God for giving you ears to hear his voice and enjoy your kettle corn!**