



THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

PSALM 23

GOAL

- ▶ To reveal the tender love of God through the imagery captured in this quintessential Psalm. The relationship lost because of sin is restored by the good shepherd, who is presented in this Psalm as the one who provides, blesses, forgives, restores, comforts, protects, delivers, strengthens, rules, and gives eternal life.
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CHARACTERS

- ▶ **The Good Shepherd:** The relationship that God has with His own people is like the shepherd to his sheep. Jesus proclaims, "I am the good shepherd." A shepherd guides, protects, and provides for his sheep and would lay down his very life for any one of them.

Sheep: In our relationship to God, we are like sheep. Sheep are entirely dependent on the shepherd. They are prone to wander and get lost, but they know their master's voice. To the shepherd, they are prized and precious creatures.

MEMORY VERSES

- ▶ **Psalm 23:1-3:** The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

John 10:11: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.



OVERVIEW

- ▶ **Read Psalm 23:** The image of God in this Psalm is the shepherd, and His people are His sheep. He is pictured as the benevolent provider, the bringer of a peace that is satisfying and permanent, the one who restores and heals, and the deliverer from death and destruction.
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SUGGESTIONS

- ▶ **Talk about the life of a shepherd and his love for the sheep:**
- 1. Provider:** His sheep are never in want. When they are hungry he feeds them, and when they are thirsty he leads them to refreshing waters. He generously provides, and all their needs are met.
 - 2. Restorer:** When his sheep stray, he finds them and brings them back. When they are lured away by an enemy, his voice reminds them that they are his. He is forgiving and merciful.
 - 3. Deliverer:** With his rod and staff, he forces evil to flee. He protects from enemies both seen and unseen, He rescues, and He ultimately delivers from the curse of sin and death to bring eternal life. Talk about Jesus as the Good Shepherd and His love for all of us.
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PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY

- ▶ **Lost Sheep | Supplies:** Small paper sheep with small gift or treat attached to each one. Gift bags for each child to collect “lost sheep.”

Before the class begins, hide sheep with attached gifts around the room. When you are ready for the hunt to begin, hand out the gift bags to each student and send them off to search for the lost sheep.



MEMORY
VERSES
MEANING

▶ **Psalm 23:1-3:** Because the Lord is our shepherd, we have all that we need. He takes us to good places where we can find comfort, care, and rest.

John 10:11: Like David, who rescued one of his little lambs from the attack of a lion, Jesus the Shepherd freely lays down His life for us. The enemy might try to kill and destroy, but Jesus came to bring us life in abundance.

POST-LESSON
ACTIVITY

▶ **Herd the Sheep | Supplies:** a table, two popsicle sticks, masking tape, ten cotton balls, twelve small magnet disks, glue. The night before class, glue each magnet onto a cotton ball. If you like, you can make multiple sets of 10.

To play the game, place the two popsicle sticks about 6-8 inches apart on a table top. These are fences on either side of a field. Lay a strip of masking tape between them as the center line. Place five cotton balls at each end of the "field." Seat one student on either side, and give them each a magnet. Explain that they need to herd their cotton ball sheep across the line, using only their magnets to push the sheep. If they touch their own or their opponent's sheep with their hands, they have to take that sheep and start over with it at their end of the field. The game ends when one of the students has herded all five of their sheep across the tape line.



TAKE HOME

▶ Ask students about what it means for Jesus to be their shepherd:

- 1. Provider:** In what ways has Jesus as your shepherd provided for you? Clothes, shelter, food, water, etc.
 - 2. Restorer:** In what ways does Jesus as your shepherd restore you? Have the students talk about real-life situations in which Jesus has restored with strength, forgiveness, comfort, and emotional and spiritual healing.
 - 3. Deliverer:** In what ways has or does Jesus as your shepherd deliver you? The enemy seeks to destroy, but Jesus delivers and gives life.
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CLOSING PRAYER

▶ Dear Lord Jesus, thank You that You love us and that You know us each by name. Thank You that You provide what we need, protect us, and delivered us from eternal death and destruction by the enemy. Help us to remember to seek Your help and peace in times of need. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 1



Q1a: What does the Lord provide?

A1: The Lord provides everything we need.

Q1b: How has the Lord provided for you?

TN: Let students answer. If they get stuck, remind them that God provides everything they need.

SLIDE 2



Q2a: Where does the Lord lead His sheep?

A2: The Lord leads His sheep to green fields and still waters.

Q2b: When you do something wrong, which is worse: being punished or having a loved one be disappointed in you?

TN: To be sure, punishment is not fun, but it feels far worse when someone we love and respect is disappointed in us. We want to be good, so we try our best to obey the rules; but our desire to be good stems from our love and respect for the Lord and our loved ones. The stronger our relationship is with the Lord, the easier it is for us to avoid temptation and not fall into sin.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 3



Q3a: What is the dark valley?

A3: The dark valley is a passage that leads to greater things.

Q3b: Will God make it so you don't have to go through scary situations?

TN: No, unfortunately, we live in a fallen world. This means that we are surrounded by people who are sinning, and the consequences of their sins and our own sins can affect us negatively. God doesn't stop bad things from happening to us, but He will protect us and guide us through them. Every bad situation we face is an opportunity to see God at work in our lives. They help to strengthen our faith and trust in the Lord.

SLIDE 4



Q4a: What is on the table God has prepared?

A4: The table contains a complete feast with every good thing.

Q4b: When playing baseball, you're standing in the wrong spot and you miss a fly ball. Should you assume that you will never get a runner out?

TN: There's no reason we should assume that we will never get a runner out because of this one mistake. When we follow and obey God, it's like we're standing in the exact right spot in the field and the ball just falls into our gloves—the blessings just come into our lives. When we sin, it takes us out of that perfect spot, and we miss the ball. We've learned our lesson, and when the next batter comes to the plate, we'll be right where we're supposed to be. God doesn't change His mind. If He has decided to bless us, we're going to be blessed. We may need to wait until the conditions are just right again, but nothing will stop God from blessing those He loves.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 5



Q5a: What does the Good Shepherd use to anoint his sheep?

A5: He uses the oil of healing and protection.

Q5b: Can you think of anything that would separate you from the love of God?

TN: Let students answer. Then tell them that there is absolutely nothing they can do that will ever make God not love them. There is no sin they could commit that would make God turn His back on us.

SLIDE 6



Q6a: Does the shepherd ever leave His sheep alone?

A6: No, the shepherd is always with His sheep.

Q6b: Have you ever met someone famous or someone you admire? What color was room painted where you met this person?

TN: If the meeting wasn't inside, describe some small detail about the setting. The point is, there are many verses in the Bible that describe what Heaven is going to look like, but none of us is going to care that the streets are paved in gold when we are in the presence of the Lord. Just like the color of the room or the curtains is insignificant when you remember meeting this famous or admirable person, all that will matter when we are in Heaven is the presence of the Lord.



**MEMORY
VERSES**

▷ **Psalm 23: 1-3:** The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

John 10:11: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

BIG IDEA

▷ In God, we find forgiveness, strength, protection, mercy, grace, and a love beyond understanding.

**CLOSING
PRAYER**

▷ Dear Lord Jesus, thank You that You love us and that You know us each by name. Thank You that You provide what we need, protect us, and delivered us from eternal death and destruction by the enemy. Help us to remember to seek Your help and peace in times of need. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 1



The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. I am His, and He knows me by name. He watches over me day and night, and He provides everything I need.



In kindness and mercy, He leads me to beautiful green fields and quiet still waters. He restores my soul with forgiveness when I fall, with courage when I am weak, and with comfort when I am sad. By His love, He leads me to desire righteousness, and I am moved to adore Him because of His grace.

SLIDE 2



In steady confidence and bold courage, I walk through a valley shadowed by death. I will not stay in this dark place, because it is only a passage that leads to greater things. There is no danger here that can hold me or destroy me, so I will not be afraid. My shepherd is with me. With the authority of a king, He carries His rod and staff and uses them to protect me from all harm. Vicious enemies threaten my life, darkness sometimes confuses and frightens me, and at times I am distracted and dangerously wander off the path; but when I see Him, I take comfort in His strength, and I am restored by His mercy. I may stumble, but my shepherd will not let me fall.



SLIDE 3



He prepares a table before me—a complete feast of every good thing. Although the enemy seeks to steal, kill, and destroy, I am not afraid, because the Great Shepherd promises me life. I will not be robbed of His blessings.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 4



The Good Shepherd never grows weary, and I know I can rely on His strength. He anoints my head with the oil of healing and protection, and with it, He marks me as His own.

SLIDE 5



On this journey from pastures to gentle streams, and from dark valleys to abundance and back, I am never left alone. My shepherd is with me. His favor and His mercy will follow me every single day of my life, when at last we will arrive at His magnificent home in His perfect kingdom, where I will enjoy His blessings forever.