

Psalm 23

“Jesus: Our Loving Shepherd”

Scripture: Psalm 23

Memory Verse: John 10:11 “*I AM the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*”

Lesson Focus: This is probably the most famous of all of the Psalms as David here expresses so beautifully not only his love for God, but God’s tender care of him. We will walk through each verse but then conclude with Jesus’s reference back to this Psalm when He referred to Himself as the good shepherd.

Activities and Crafts: Coloring Picture of a Shepherd, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Bring it Home Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for 1st & 2nd: Write Your Own Poem to the Lord

Starter Activity: Poems

Start off the lesson reading a children’s poem to the kids. I would suggest something that rhymes, is short, and funny. If you have a favorite, feel free to share that. If not, one option would be to share the [Shel Silverstein, “Sick” poem](#). Read your poem and then ask the kids a couple of questions.

1) What do you like about this poem?

A: It might be catchy, easy to understand, and fun.

2) What makes poems different from normal or everyday writings? *

A: It rhymes, it has structure and a beat, and it is easier to remember.

Robert Frost, a famous American poet, said that “*poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words.*”

In the same way, the book of Psalms are like people’s emotions (inspired by God) that go from heart, to head, and then out through the mouth into timeless, beautiful words. If we are willing to listen, the Psalms will capture us and draw us in, just like a poem draws us in.

Q: How many of you are familiar with “Roses are Red and Violets are Blue...” poems?

Teachers: Consider first rattling off a few funny endings to this well-known rhyme and then use this version below to transition into the lesson:

Roses are red, violets are blue

Open your Bibles now, because Jesus love you!

Bible Study:

This Psalm is introduced to us as a “Psalm of David”. Let’s first talk about who the author of this Psalm was.

Q: What was David most famous for according to the Bible?

A: He was a young man who, against all odds, (and by God’s power) defeated Goliath!

Something a little less known about David, but perhaps more important, is that he was described as someone “*who was after God’s own heart*”. (**1 Samuel 13:14**) One way he showed this was writing down words of poetry that expressed His deep love for God. *

Psalm 23 is one of those poems and it is probably the most famous of all of the Psalms. For it so beautifully shows God’s care for David and David’s love for God.

Psalm 23:1: David calls God his shepherd. *

Q: What is a shepherd? A: Someone who takes care of sheep.

The Bible says that David was a humble shepherd before he became a famous king. David knew first-hand not only how helpless sheep are, but how much they need a good shepherd to take care of them.

Q: How many of you kids have pets? Are your pets relying upon you to care for them?

Just for a minute imagine yourself in your pets’ position. * As a pet, are you going to need someone to take care of YOUR needs? Yes! In the same way, David compares his own life to that of a sheep who needs God to be his shepherd to take care of His needs.

Psalm 23:2: What a beautiful picture of rest, safety, and happiness!

Teachers: Consider having the kids close their eyes for a minute and imagine themselves in the most calm, safe, and happy place. Then have them open their eyes and ask them to share where they were. Also share what your place was.

I think this verse describes a sheep’s favorite place to be: lying down in green pastures or beside still waters, but also knowing that their loving shepherd is watching over them! *

In the same way, David expresses here that he experiences tremendous joy and satisfaction when he is with the Lord simply enjoying what He has provided for him.

Psalm 23:3: Notice that God not only provides but also is leading him.

You pet-owners should know what is best for your pets. But does your pet always follow your instructions? No! Sometimes we have to train and teach them! *

Sheep are not the smartest of animals and are known to go astray and wander into trouble. In the same way, David recognizes that about his own life. But he expresses here that God is leading him and he trusts that God's way is the best way!

Psalm 23:4: There are seasons where sheep will be lying down in the green pastures or beside the still waters, but there will also be seasons where they will be in danger! *

David knew that the right path, the path that God was leading him on was not always going to be easy. But he is determined to not be afraid!

Q: Why? Because he is so brave? No! Because he is so tough? No!

A: Because he knew that his Shepherd, God, was right there with him.

Psalm 23:5: Even David's enemies appear to notice that God is taking care of David!

David was anointed and chosen by God to be the King of Israel, but he had to wait a long time for God to remove the previous king Saul who had turned his back on God. Saul and David played this cat-and-mouse game for many years and there were several times when it seemed like Saul was going to get David! Yet David always escaped! *

David is here perhaps describing the astonishment of his enemies as they observe God taking care of him and working all things together for good for him.

Psalm 23:6: Wow! Such confidence in God to favor him with goodness and mercy all of the days of his life!

Notice after all of the pictures of blessing expressed in this poem (i.e. green pastures, quiet waters, comfort, protection, etc.) the greatest joy of all is expressed in dwelling or BEING WITH God. This was David's desire more than anything: Not the gifts or blessings of God, but to be with God Himself!

So some of you may be thinking at this point, *"Big Whoop for David! So God blessed him and took care of him. What does this have to do with me?"* EVERYTHING!

John 10:11a: Hundreds of years later, Jesus Christ came and referred back to this Psalm when He claimed that HE IS the good shepherd! *

Jesus said He came that we may have life and have it abundantly. (**John 10:10**) This abundant life does not mean being rich in stuff, but it means being rich in joy!

The more your heart looks to Jesus, the son of God, as your good shepherd, the less you will want (v.1), the more you will be satisfied (v. 2), the more you will be wise (v. 3), the less you will be afraid (v. 4), and the more you will be confident (v. 5-6).

Why? Because this is what you were created for: to be in RELATIONSHIP with God, your Creator! But something had to happen first.

Key Point: In the second half of **John 10:11** Jesus said that the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep!

Q: What is Jesus talking about here? A: His death on the cross! This is what we just finished covering in the gospel of Luke!

Boys and Girls: His death and resurrection is the **ONLY** thing that makes it possible for us to enter into “green pastures and quiet waters” with God.

Isaiah 53:6 says “*that all of us like SHEEP have gone astray, each of us has gone his own way*”. * That means that we all have sinned and strayed from God and we need someone to bring us back. The verse continues, “*the Lord has laid on Him (Jesus) the sin of us all.*”

Jesus Christ is the one who took our sins upon Himself on the cross. The Bible says that when we believe and trust in Him through faith, then we become His children, His sheep! David looked ahead by faith to God’s promised Messiah. We look back!

Q: Have you believed? Is God your shepherd? If not, let today be the day! If you have believed, then believe in Him more! Like David, may your heart be one that is after God’s and follow Him this week!

We started our lesson talking about poems and rhymes. We will finish with one more: *

*“Jesus Christ knew how wicked man had been
And knew that God must punish sin
So, out of pity, Jesus said
He’d bear the punishment instead”
(Jane Taylor, “Hymns for Infant Minds”)*

BRING IT HOME

Read Psalm 23

What does it mean
that God is our
shepherd?

Parent Signature:

Parent Challenge:
What is your favorite
Psalm in the Bible?
Why?

Read John 10:11

What did Jesus say He
was and how did He
prove it?

