



The Lord Is My Shepherd

Pathway Point: 🌟 God loves and watches over us.

In-Focus Verse: “The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23).

Travel Itinerary

Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known and often-quoted psalms in the Bible. Its message of comfort and reassurance is welcome at any time in life.

Use this lesson to help kids realize that the 23rd Psalm speaks directly to them. Show them that God knows what they face in their lives, and that he’s right there with them—whether they’re tired, facing decisions, or even afraid.

Help your kids see that God, our loving shepherd, wants us to be with him forever.

DEPARTURE PRAYER

(up to 5 minutes)

Set out a supply of scrap paper, and have kids form a circle.

Say: **Think about some problems you’re facing right now; then take a few pieces of paper, and on each one write a word that describes a different problem. When you’re done, scrunch each paper into a ball. You’ll need these in a minute.**

Choose two kids to hold the ends of the beach towel up in the air so it’s flat. Say: **Our towel-holders will hold the towel in the air like a bridge for us to go under. As each person goes under the towel, he or she will pause a moment or two, and the rest of us will toss our paper “problems” in the air over the towel. When you toss, just call out a problem, then pick up another paper problem and do the same thing. Keep doing this until everyone has gone under the towel. Remember, we’re tossing up into the air, not throwing at anyone. Okay? Here we go.**

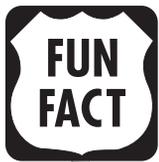


The experiences in this book have been designed for multi-age groups. Select from the experiences, or adapt them as needed for your kids.





If this game gets a little loud—have fun with it! Kids will have fun, and they'll remember what they've learned.



In biblical times, the youngest son usually got the job of shepherd, which was looked on as a necessary, but lowly, position.



Form a line on one side of the towel, and let kids take turns ducking under the towel, pausing, and moving to the other side. As each child goes under the towel, other kids will toss their paper wads into the air, pick up new paper wads from the floor, and continue to throw them into the air and call out problems. During the game, rotate kids to hold the towel so everyone gets a chance to walk under it.

After a few minutes, call time. Ask kids to gather the paper problems and sit in a circle with you. Make sure everyone has at least one.

Ask: • **What was it like to be under the towel when the paper problems were flying?**

• **How is this like the way God loves and cares for us?**

Say: **Just as the towel gave us protection in our game, God's love for us is kind of like an umbrella that gives us protection in real life. Of course, some of you got bonked on the head in our game. And in life, we all face problems sometimes. But even if God allows problems, he's always, always with us. 🌟 God loves and watches over us.**

Let's thank God for his wonderful and powerful love. We'll go around the circle, and each person will place a paper problem in the middle of the circle and thank God for loving us when we face that particular problem. You may want to say something like, "Thank you, God, for loving us when we face problems at school." No matter how many paper wads you have, just say one problem. I'll start.

Begin the prayer by placing a paper wad in the circle and thanking God for being with us when we face the problem you name. Then go around the circle and let each child contribute. Close the prayer by thanking God for his love and care for us.

Keep the paper wads for use in the Story Excursion experience.



(10 minutes)

Big Plans

In this experience, kids will discover that God has a plan for their lives, just as he did for David.

Gather kids and say: **Let's find out more about how 🌟 God loves and watches over us. In the coming weeks, we're going to look at parts of the 23rd Psalm in detail. Today we're going to look at the whole psalm.**

A man named David wrote the 23rd Psalm. David was an important person in the Bible. He was even a relative of Jesus—he lived many years before Jesus, of course. But David didn’t start out so important. He started out as a simple shepherd boy, and he ended up being king!

None of the good things in David’s life would’ve happened without God’s love and care. It’s the same way with us. 🕊️ God loves and watches over us throughout our entire lives.

Right now, you’re still young. But God has big plans for your life. The Bible says so. Listen to what the Bible says. Read aloud Jeremiah 29:11. **Now think of a dream or hope you have for your life. While you’re thinking, I’ll pass out supplies.**

Give each person a sheet of white paper, a white or light-colored crayon, a dark crayon, and a paper clip.

Say: **Use your light-colored crayon to write a word or draw a picture that shows something good you hope for in your life. Maybe someday you’d like to be a great athlete, a person who works with animals, someone who teaches children, or someone who tells others about God’s Word. Or maybe there’s something you’re hoping for right now, like doing better in school!**

Give kids time to write or draw. When everyone has finished, say: **Now use your dark-colored crayon to color over all of what you just wrote or drew.**

As kids are coloring, say: **Sometimes we face worries and may think God isn’t caring for us. David wrote some psalms that asked God to hurry up and protect him or that asked God not to forget him.**

But God never forgot David, and he never forgets us. God is always watching out for us. 🕊️ God loves and watches over us—all the time—even if we can’t quite see it. I’ll show you what I mean.

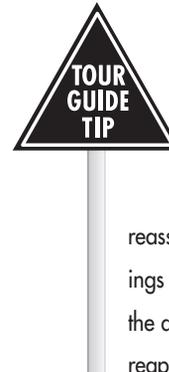
Show kids how to use the edge of a paper clip to scratch away the dark crayon coloring on their paper. What they wrote or drew with the light-colored crayon will reappear.

Say: **Look! Your hope for something good is still there, even when you couldn’t see it.**

Ask: • **How is the dark coloring like our problems or worries?**

• **What can we do to help us remember that, no matter what’s going on in our lives, God’s still watching over us?**

Say: **God’s love and care are always with us. Sometimes we get so**



Younger kids may strongly resist coloring over their drawings—reassure them that their drawings won’t be lost, and promise the drawings will actually reappear in a cool way.

caught up in our own problems or worries that we don't see God. But  God loves and watches over us in every situation, just as he did for David. Let's find out more about this guy who wrote the 23rd Psalm.



(20 minutes)

Discovering David

This activity will take kids on a quick tour of David's life, helping them discover how his words in Psalm 23 apply to their lives.

Items to Pack: Bibles, copy of the "Psalm 23 Stations" handout on page 14, paper wads from the Departure Prayer, sticky notes, a basket, markers, yellow construction paper, scissors, tape, 2 pieces of white poster board, blue poster paint

Ahead of time, copy the "Psalm 23 Stations" handout on page 14, and cut apart the instructions for each of the four Travel Stops. Then create the Travel Stops in your room. At each Travel Stop, place the appropriate instructions (face down) and a Bible. Kids will need to add their paper wads from the Departure Prayer. You'll also need to draw a fierce face on one poster board to represent Goliath and paint a blue lake or stream on the other. Set up each Travel Stop as follows:

Travel Stop 1: Close to a wall, place markers and a basket to hold about half the paper wads from the Departure Prayer. On the opposite wall, place something to represent "still water"—such as a large piece of white poster board with a blue lake painted on it.

Travel Stop 2: Place markers and a pad of sticky notes.

Travel Stop 3: In a corner of the room, place markers and the rest of the paper wads. High up on the wall, tape the poster board with the fierce Goliath face drawn on it.

Travel Stop 4: Place yellow construction paper (one sheet per person), markers, scissors, and tape on a flat work surface.

Open your Bible to Psalm 23, and show kids the passage. Say: **David wrote the 23rd Psalm—and a bunch of the other psalms in the Bible, too. I'm not sure when he wrote this psalm, whether he was young or old. But it's a great example of how  God loves and watches over us, no matter how old we are.**

Form four groups, and assign each group to one of the Travel Stops. Tell kids not to turn over the instructions until you say "go." Say: **At each of these stops, you'll explore a part of Psalm 23 and a part of David's life. You'll have a few minutes at each Travel Stop, and I'll let you know when it's time to move to the next stop. Are you ready? Turn over your instructions and begin!**



TOUR GUIDE TIP

Pretend you don't notice when kids are sticking you with sticky notes. You might want to station yourself at Travel Stop 4 and help kids with the crown-making activity.

Give kids a few minutes at each Travel Stop. When kids have rotated through all four stops, have them sit in a circle with you.

Ask: • **Talk about your favorite Travel Stop.**

- **Tell why you chose to write what you did on your crowns.**
- **What's the favorite thing you learned about David?**
- **How does this help you understand Psalm 23 better?**
- **What feelings did David express in just this one psalm?**

Say: **David expressed many feelings in just this one psalm.** (If kids don't mention the following, mention them also: He acknowledged God for all God provides. He talked about how God guided him in making right decisions. He said that even when he was scared, God was with him. And he said that God not only gave him blessings here on earth, God offered him eternal life, too.)

That's a lot to say in such a short space!

Let's try writing our own psalms.



(10 minutes)

My Own Psalm

This experience will help kids discover that Psalm 23 applies directly to them.

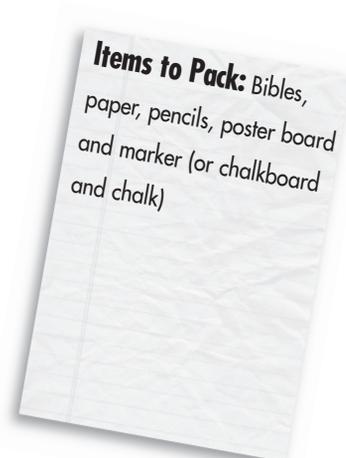
Give each person a sheet of paper and a pencil.

Say: **Let's try writing our own psalms to God, using the four parts of David's psalm I've written down. If you need to refresh your memory, feel free to read Psalm 23 as many times as necessary. Mention things from your life in your psalm, just as David did. Your psalm doesn't have to be long, and you won't have to show it to anyone else if you don't want to. Just write about how God helps you in these four areas.**

Give kids time to write, and offer help as needed. When everyone has finished, gather kids. Ask willing kids to share the psalms they wrote.

Ask: • **How can the psalm you wrote help you this week?**

Say: **Psalms are a way of talking to God, which is good to do any time. This week remember what you wrote. Hang your psalm in your room at home, or put it in a school notebook. Let it help you remember that just as God loved and watched over David, 🔄 God loves and watches over us.**



Write these four themes of David's psalm on a chalkboard or sheet of poster board for kids to refer to. The parts are (1) God's provision; (2) God's guidance in making right decisions; (3) God's help when we're afraid; and (4) God's blessings and promise of eternal life.

SOUVENIRS

(10 minutes)

The Lord Is My Shepherd

Kids will begin their Travel Journals and create their first Souvenir.

This experience will help kids see that God, through the Bible, speaks directly to each of us.

Distribute one pocket folder to each child, and have kids write their names on the front. These folders will serve as kids' Travel Journals to collect the Souvenir experience in each lesson. Kids will take their Journals and Souvenirs home after Lesson 13 to remind them about the 23rd Psalm.

Give each person a pen or pencil and a copy of the "The Lord Is My Shepherd" handout.

Say: **God loves and watches over us. To help you understand that for sure, read through Psalm 23 on your handout. Write your own name on all the blank lines.**

Give kids time to write. When they've finished, ask:

- **How does writing your own name in Psalm 23 make it seem different from when you first heard the psalm as David wrote it?**
- **What's one thing you can do this week to remember how God loves and watches over you?**

Say: **Let's thank God right now for his incredible love for us.**

Have kids place their handouts in their Travel Journals.

Items to Pack: Bibles, copies of the "The Lord Is My Shepherd" handout on page 15, pocket folders (1 per child), pens, pencils

FUN FACT

In the book of Genesis, many important people were shepherds: Abel, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, and Jacob were all shepherds. The wives of Isaac and Jacob were shepherdesses. And Joseph introduced his family to Pharaoh as shepherds.

HOME AGAIN PRAYER

(10 minutes)

Use this experience to reinforce how much God loves kids.

Say: **There are all sorts of ways to talk to God. We can speak to him, write to him as David did, sing to him, and even dance for him. David did that once, but that's a whole different part of the Bible.**

For now, let's combine a few methods as we pray to God. I'll say verses of Psalm 23, adding a motion. Then you'll repeat the words and motions.

Here we go.

Have kids stand in a circle with you. Say Psalm 23 aloud and lead kids in the following motions.

The Lord is my shepherd (*point to self*);

I have all that I need. (*Stretch arms out wide.*)

He lets me rest in green meadows *(put palms together at one side of face);*

He leads me beside peaceful streams. *(Make wavelike motions with hands.)*

He renews my strength. *(Make muscles.)*

He guides me along right paths *(walk in place),*

Bringing honor to his name. *(Point up.)*

Even when I walk through the darkest valley *(cup hands over eyes),*

I will not be afraid *(hug self),*

For you are close beside me. *(Point left and right.)*

Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. *(Cross fists in front of you.)*

You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. *(Pretend to eat.)*

You honor me by anointing my head with oil. *(Touch hands to head.)*

My cup overflows with blessings. *(Cup hands in front of you.)*

Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life *(turn in a circle),*

And I will live in the house of the Lord forever. *(Stretch arms up high.)*

Amen.

Psalm 23 Stations

Directions: Cut apart the four sections below, and place each at the appropriate Travel Stop.

Travel Stop 1

Read Psalm 23:1-2 together.

- David was a shepherd boy when he was young.
- Take two of the paper wads, and write one word on each that describes something good God gives you. Then guide your sheep (those paper wads) across the room to the “water” and back—without using your hands.

Travel Stop 2

- Read Psalm 23:3 together.
- One time, after they became enemies, David could have killed Saul, but he knew that wouldn't please God. Instead, he snuck up on Saul and secretly cut off part of his robe.
- Write one word on a sticky note that stands for something you need God's help with. Then take the note, sneak up on your leader, and stick it on his or her back. Don't get caught!

Travel Stop 3

- Read Psalm 23:4 together.
- When David was young, he faced an enemy who was big—really big—like 10 feet tall! He killed this giant, who was called Goliath, using only a few small stones and a slingshot.
- Take two or three of the paper wads, and on each one write one worry or fear that you'd like God to help you with. Then see how many times you can hit Goliath with your paper “stones.”

Travel Stop 4

- Read Psalm 23:5-6 together.
- God cared for David, and he took him from being a shepherd boy to being king.
- Your job is to make a kingly crown to wear. On your crown, write the first thing you'd do to bless others if you were king.

The Lord is _____ shepherd;
_____ has all that _____ needs.
He lets _____ rest in green meadows;
he leads _____ beside peaceful streams.
He renews _____ strength.
He guides _____ along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.
Even when _____ walks through the darkest valley,
_____ will not be afraid,
for you are close beside _____ .
Your rod and your staff protect and comfort _____ .
You prepare a feast for _____
in the presence of _____ enemies.
You honor _____ by anointing
_____ head with oil.
_____ cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue
_____ all the days of _____ life,
and _____ will live in the house of the Lord forever.

(Psalm 23)

