

LESSON 2

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Cares for Us

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 23

GOD'S BIG STORY: David writes a psalm describing how God is our Good Shepherd, the One who watches out for us and cares for us. God knows exactly what we need and when we need it, and He is our protector and comforter!

WORD OF WONDER: You created the deepest parts of my being. You put me together inside my mother's body. How you made me is amazing and wonderful. I praise you for that. What you have done is wonderful. I know that very well. —Psalm 139:13–14

- PRESERVICE
 - OPTION 1 Interactive Game: The Shepherd's Voice
 - OPTION 2 Interactive Game: The Great Care Challenge
- Welcome Question: What must you do to care for a baby? A houseplant? An animal? A pet rock?
- SMALL GROUP
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: All of Me, This Little Light
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- In Awe of God's Wonder
- Responding in Worship: Reckless Love
- Blessing Your Kids



INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Cares for Us

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 23

WORD OF WONDER: Psalm 139:13–14

Psalm 23 could be the most famous of David's compositions. Take a moment to read it, even if the words are familiar.

David probably used imagery of his experience as a shepherd while writing this psalm. But unless you live in a verdant countryside, you probably don't see shepherds leading sheep from place to place.

Unlike their reputation, sheep are intelligent. They have an impressive memory, recognizing other sheep and familiar humans. This is crucial to the survival of these domesticated animals. Sheep are also dependent on their caretakers.

In David's imagination, his previous role is reversed. He becomes a sheep under the care of God—an ideal shepherd. God plans for the physical needs of those in His care. Yet David admits that God leads the sheep into dangerous places. Just as a human shepherd must bring the sheep through treacherous paths, God guides and protects His sheep on a hazardous road. God's care is not superficial.

In the same way, the life of faith is not free of risk. God has a destination in mind, a place of abundance and redemption. God cares so much for His sheep that He will bring them into dark places, which leads to future triumph. Have you felt like you are under the watchful care of God this week? If you are finding yourself in dark places, have you stayed close to your shepherd?

—Jason Hitchcock

Theology Editor and Ministry Volunteer

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

David grew up as a shepherd boy in the Judean hill country. His experience in leading sheep, directing their paths, and providing nourishment and shelter gave him insight into God, the Great Shepherd who leads and restores us.

WHAT?

Psalm 23 is the most famous psalm in the whole Bible. It has brought truth and comfort to people throughout the ages. The psalmist finds security and rest in the shepherd who cares for him.

WHERE?

David grew up in Judah—the southern part of the nation of Israel. It's not a lush area but is filled with deserts and hills. Shepherds were responsible for finding clumps of grass and rare streams of water to feed and nourish the sheep.

WHEN?

The psalms were written over hundreds of years—from the time of Moses to after the exile from Babylon. David—the author of Psalm 23—would have written it sometime during his life, likely between 1035–970 BC.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY:

Psalm 23 is a wonderful encouragement that we are invited to rest securely in the care of the Great Shepherd. Centuries later, God came to earth in the person of Jesus, who said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Large Group

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Cares for Us

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 23

WORD OF WONDER: Psalm 139:13–14

As kids arrive...

20 minutes before service begins, leaders are in place ready to welcome kids.

Display series theme loop. Play high-energy music in the background.

LG Leader walks around the room on mic and greets kids by name as they enter the room. Be intentional about introducing yourself to new parents and kids.

SLIDE: SERIES THEME LOOP

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN (2min OR 30sec) Start a countdown to begin game 10 minutes prior to service start)

OPTION 1 Interactive Game: The Shepherd's Voice

SUPPLIES: blindfolds (several, 1 per round)

Display *The Shepherd's Voice Slide* and gather the kids. **Have you ever seen a sheep? What was it like?** Invite kids to respond freely. **Did you know that sheep are a lot smarter than many people give them credit for? They have an excellent memory. They can remember other sheep and recognize their shepherd's voice. Let's play a game called The Shepherd's Voice. In this game, one person will be a sheep and will wear a blindfold. The sheep's job is to recognize the voice of their shepherd!**



Choose one willing kid to be the sheep and help him put on a blindfold. Then choose one kid to be the shepherd (but don't say her name out loud). Explain that the shepherd will say, "(sheep's name), follow me. I am your shepherd." The sheep will try to guess who the shepherd is based only on her voice. If the sheep guesses right, you'll choose a new sheep and a new shepherd. If the sheep guesses incorrectly, the shepherd will repeat the phrase, and the sheep will guess again, up to three times total.

To make the game more challenging, encourage the shepherd to move around the room and speak to the sheep from somewhere different each time. Also invite the other kids to quietly "baaa" like sheep while the shepherd speaks to the blindfolded sheep.

Play several rounds with a different sheep and shepherd each time. Then gather the kids together.

Display the Shepherd Wonder Truth Slide. Recognizing the shepherd’s voice in this game was challenging, but our sheep did a great job! Today we’ll read a song poem, called a psalm, in God’s big story that was written by a shepherd named David. David knew what it was like to be a good shepherd who cares for his sheep. He had also experienced God’s love and care for him. So it’s not surprising that David describes God as our shepherd! Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD CARES FOR US**.



Make It Inclusive: If any kids in your ministry are deaf or hard of hearing, try doing the preteen Curiosity Activity (The Great Care Challenge). It’s a great way to help everyone join in! You can easily adapt it for younger kids by having a teen or adult leader guide each team.

OPTION 2 Interactive Game: The Great Care Challenge

SUPPLIES: scissors (prep only)
RESOURCES: Care Slips ****By Request**

Ahead of time, print the Care Slips. Cut apart the “Things and People Who Need Care” slips on the first page and set them aside. Cut apart the “Items for Caring” slips on pages 2–3 and hide them around the room. If your group is larger than about 36 kids, prepare multiple sets of Care Slips.

Things and People Who Need Care
Baby
Dog
Sheep
Oak Tree
Lizard
Toddler
Dragon
Robot
Hamster
Houseplant
Outdoor Garden
Fish

Wonder Ink LESSON 2 CARE SLIPS SHEPHERD

Display The Great Care Challenge Slide and gather the kids. Help kids form teams of 2–3 (up to 12 teams total, unless you prepared several sets of the Care Slips). Give each team one of the “Things and People Who Need Care” slips. (These include things such as a baby, dog, sheep, oak tree, and lizard.) **Today your team will do The Great Care Challenge! Your team is responsible for caring for the person or thing on your slip. There are slips of paper hidden around the room with items on them that may or may not help you care for the person or thing on your slip. Your team’s job is to find up to three slips that contain items that would help you care for it. When you find slips with items that you don’t want to use, simply put them back where you found them. As you decide whether an item could help you care for your person or thing, try to think creatively—you might come up with some surprising ideas! For example, could a baby bottle help you care for a baby? Pause for kids to respond. Yes! But could a baby bottle also help you care for an indoor houseplant? Invite kids to share their ideas. Someone might even use it to water the houseplant! Once you’ve collected three items that you think work, sit down and raise your hands for a leader to come look at your slips.** When you say, “Go,” teams will begin searching for care items. When teams find up to three items they think will work and raise their hands, you or another leader can come see their slips. Invite kids to explain how they could care for their assigned person or thing with their three items. Be open to their creative reasoning!



Leader Tip: There are nearly infinite ways each item could be used to care for different things and people! This game isn't about finding the "right" slips; it's about working together as a team to think creatively and have fun!

Gather the kids together and display the Shepherd Wonder Truth Slide. **You all did an excellent and creative job finding items you could use to care for the people and things on your slips! Today we'll read a song poem, called a psalm, in God's big story written by a shepherd named David. David knew a lot about caring for sheep, and he had also experienced God's love and care for him. So it's not surprising that David describes God as our shepherd! Our Wonder Truth today is GOD CARES FOR US.**



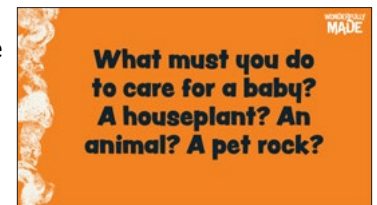
Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, coloring utensils, poster board OR , whiteboard, dry-erase markers (if needed)

SLIDE: WELCOME QUESTION

At service start time, draw kids' attention to the Welcome Question. Invite kids to write answers on the poster board or whiteboard.

Today we'll hear in God's big story about how God cares for us like a shepherd cares for his sheep.



Small Group

Introduce small group time. While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

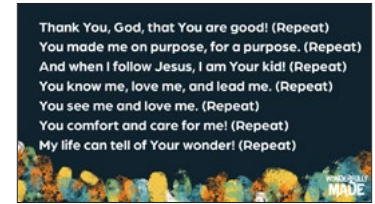
VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is _____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! We are going to pray as we prepare our hearts to worship God!"

Declaring God's Wonder

Display the Shepherd Declaration Slide. Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)
You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)
And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)
You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)
You see me and love me. (Kids repeat.)
You comfort and care for me! (Kids repeat.)
My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Prayer of Invitation

Lead kids in a prayer of invitation before entering into worship and God's big story: **God, You are active and present. Open our eyes and our hearts to hear from You and respond to You. Thank You that You provide for us and care for us. You are a shepherd to us, and we trust You. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

God knows you, loves you, and cares for you. Let's worship and sing praises to Him!

Play [All of Me, This Little Light](#) and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Explain that Psalm 23 is one of the most familiar passages in the Bible. It's part of the Old Testament, and there are many authors who wrote the book of Psalms. Psalm 23 was written by David. He was the youngest of his brothers and was a shepherd, but later in his life, he became Israel's greatest king.

Let's start by reading part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Afterward, we'll watch and experience more of the story!



LESSON 2 THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: smartphone, equipment for displaying photos on screen (i.e. smart TV, computer, HDMI adapter and cable, etc.)

Throughout the script, you'll take group photos of the kids as they create still shots of various parts of today's story. After each photo, encourage kids to sit down and wait until the next photo shoot. If possible, at the end of the story, upload the photos to your computer and show the kids.

In today's part of God's big story, you'll participate in a photo shoot. In different parts of the story, I'll pause and say, "Photo shoot!" When I do, you'll jump up and strike a pose that represents that part of the Bible story. I'll snap pictures of the group, and at the end, we'll get to see today's Bible story with your pictures!

Let's practice! Photo shoot—silly face! Kids jump up and strike a pose with silly faces while you snap a photo. **Oh, you're going to love this one! It's amazing! Take a seat and let's get started.**

There was a boy named David. Before David was a mighty king, he was simply the youngest brother who took care of his dad's sheep.

Photo shoot—sheep! Kids strike a pose, acting like sheep. You take a picture; then kids sit back down. **David was from Bethlehem, and he probably spent a lot of time in the hill country, making sure that the sheep had food and water, leading them to where they would be safe, and protecting them if they were in danger.**

When David grew up, he led lots of soldiers, and he fought many battles. David became known as Israel's greatest king, and he helped make the whole nation of Israel safe and secure.

Photo shoot—great king! Kids strike a pose as a great king. You take a picture, and kids sit back down. **David loved God and wrote song poems to Him. These song poems are called psalms. I wonder if David was thinking of his time as a shepherd when God prompted him to write Psalm 23.**

Display the [first Psalm 23 Slide](#).

"The LORD is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need" (Psalm 23:1). David calls God his shepherd, the One who guides him. The same is true for us. Because God is our shepherd, He takes care of us. God knows exactly what we need and when we need it.



Photo shoot—the Lord is my shepherd! Kids strike a pose that represents God as their shepherd. You take a picture, and kids sit back down.

Display the [second Psalm 23 Slide](#).

David writes more about God, his shepherd:

"He lets me lie down in fields of green grass. He leads me beside quiet waters" (Psalm 23:2). Because of God, David feels new strength and refreshment.

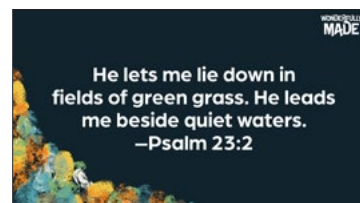


Photo shoot—lie down in green pastures or take a drink from a refreshing stream! Kids strike a pose. You take a picture, and kids sit back down.

Because God cares for us, He guides us on the right paths. As we walk in His way, His name is honored!

Display Psalm 23 Slide 3.

David says, “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid. You are with me” (Psalm 23:4a).

As a shepherd, God has His rod and staff—with God’s power and strength, there is no need to fear. He always knows the right way, which brings us comfort even in hard times.

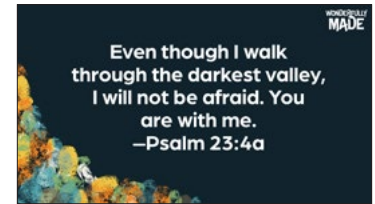


Photo shoot—I’m not afraid! Kids strike a confident pose. You take a picture, and kids sit back down.

David then says that God prepares a huge meal for him right in front of all the people who don’t like him!

Photo shoot—eat a feast! Kids strike a pose and pretend to eat food. You take a picture, and kids sit back down.

God is so generous with His care that He pours oil on David’s head—a sign in the Bible of great holiness and of being set aside for God’s good purposes. God is so generous that David’s cup overflows!

David knows that God cares for him so much that he trusts God’s goodness and love will be with him always. He will live with God forever.

Photo shoot—extreme excitement! Kids strike a pose and show excitement like David must have felt! You take a picture, and kids sit back down.

God watches out for us and cares for us, just like a shepherd does for his sheep. God knows exactly what we need and when we need it. He protects us and comforts us and is generous with us. We can trust the Lord as our shepherd because God cares for us.

Photo shoot—excited sky jump! Kids jump in the air and shout today’s Wonder Truth: God Cares for Us. You take a picture. (Try to take this photo while kids are in the air!) Kids sit back down.

If time allows, display the photos on the screen and review the story together as you look through them. If you don’t have time now, plan on showing the photos at the end of the lesson.

Leader Tip: Be sure to get signed photo release forms from each parent/guardian before publicly displaying or posting kids’ photos. (Keep in mind you might not be able to post pictures of some kids, such as children in foster care.)

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Display the Shepherd Wonder Truth Slide. Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD CARES FOR US**. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in action in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

Psalm 23 is a wonderful encouragement that we're invited to rest securely in the care of the Great Shepherd. About one thousand years

later, God came to earth in the person of Jesus, who said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).



In Awe of God's Wonder

Spend a few moments allowing kids to think about the wonder of God's story.

If you could paint a picture of what you heard in this psalm, what would you include? Invite kids to open their Bibles to Psalm 23 to look at it as they think about their answers.

What part of your picture reminds you the most about who God is? Give kids a chance to share their ideas with a partner before reporting them to the group.

Leader Tip: Preteens will get to paint a picture of Psalm 23 during the worship response activity in the IDENTITY section of the lesson.

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson.

***Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. See the "Worship Posture Tutorial" on the RBKids Resource Page.

WORSHIP VIDEO: [Reckless Love](#)



Blessing Your Kids

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: God, thank You for being our Good Shepherd. May we see that You care for us like a shepherd cares for his sheep. May we go into our week with ears to hear Your voice and courage to follow Your good path.