

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

- Welcome Question: What must you do to care for a baby? A houseplant? An animal? A pet rock?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder Activity
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Elementary Responding in Worship: A Journey Through Psalm 23
- Preteen Responding in Worship: The 23rd Psalm
- 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).

Small 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

Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils, board games or games

[Games & Activities Guide](#)

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

As kids arrive ...

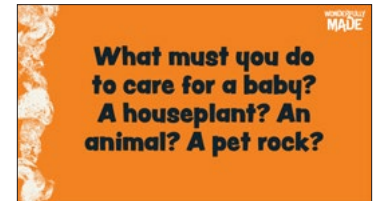
Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious"

questions to engage kids. Say "I'm curious.." before each question and give kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- **Who cares for you when you're sick? How do they help and care for you?**
- **Who is someone that you help care for?** (Kids might share about a younger sibling, a friend who is sad or hurt, a grandparent or older relative, etc.)



Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity or game, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

Word of Wonder Activity

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.

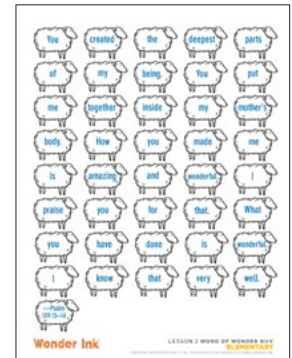
— Psalm 139:13–14 (NirV)

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid), cotton balls (about 40–50 per small group), cardstock (optional), large disposable cups or resealable baggies (1 per small group, optional), glue (1 bottle per small group, optional)

RESOURCES: [Sheep Shape Sheet NirV\(1/SG\)](#)

Ahead of time, print one copy of the Sheep Shape Sheet NirV for each small group, onto cardstock if possible. Each small group will need 40–50 cotton balls; consider putting them in large disposable cups or resealable baggies.

Our Word of Wonder for the Wonderfully Made series was written by David and reminds us that God made each of us in an amazing way! Let's say the verse together. Open your Bible to Psalm 139:13–14. If possible, display the Word of Wonder Slide or watch the [Elementary Word of Wonder Video](#). Read Psalm 139:13–14 several times together.



We learned in God's big story today that God is like a good shepherd who takes care of His sheep. God cares for us! Let's practice our Word of Wonder by putting wool on sheep! Invite kids to gather around the Sheep Shape Sheet. Say the verse together. Then give one kid a cotton ball and have him place it on one of the sheep, covering up a word. Say the verse together again. Continue by having the kids take turns covering a different sheep each time. Eventually, kids will be saying the verse with all the sheep covered up. Consider putting a dot of glue on each cotton ball to hold it in place. (To speed up the activity, invite kids to cover up several sheep each time.)

Leader Tip: For Preteens. Modify this activity to be a relay race. Cut out each sheep shape and put a piece of tape on it. Challenge kids to take turns choosing a sheep, running to the opposite side of the room, and taping their sheep to the wall in verse order. To speed up the game, have each kid choose two sheep at a time.

God's Big Story

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!

Read Psalm 23 together.

Elementary Questions

- **What does a shepherd do to take care of sheep?** (Possible answers: leads and guides sheep, protects sheep from danger, provides food and water, knows each sheep and talks to them, cares for sheep that are hurt or sick, etc.)
- **What might happen to a flock of sheep if there is no shepherd?**
- **How are we like sheep?**
- **How is God our shepherd?** (Reread Psalm 23:1–4 together for ideas.)
- **How does God show He cares for you? List all the ways you can!**
- **Who can you care for the way that God cares for you? How can you care for this person?**

God is our Good Shepherd, and we are His sheep. We can trust Him to see us, love us, and care for us. Let's talk with God right now. Tell Him how you need His care and thank Him for caring for you.

Make It Inclusive: Some kids in your ministry may not always have their basic needs met. They, or people they know, might be facing food insecurity or homelessness and trusting God as their Good Shepherd might be particularly difficult. Be present and show care. If you're concerned about a child's needs, talk with a ministry leader about how the church can offer support.

Preteen Questions

- **How does a shepherd take care of sheep?** (Possible answers: leads and guides sheep, protects sheep from danger, provides food and water, knows each sheep and talks to them, cares for sheep that are hurt or sick, etc.)
- **What might happen to a flock of sheep if there is no shepherd?**
- **How are we like sheep? How is God our shepherd?** (Reread Psalm 23:1–4 together for ideas.)
- **David says, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid" (Psalm 23:4a). What's a dark valley (a difficult situation) that you've experienced? How did God help you?**
- **How does God show He cares for you?**
- **Who can you care for the way that God cares for you? How can you care for this person?**

God is our Good Shepherd, and we are His sheep. We can trust Him to see us, love us, and care for us. The Good Shepherd loves to talk with His sheep—He knows their voice, and they know His! Let's talk with God right now. Tell Him how you need His care and thank Him for caring for you.

Small Group Prayer Time

Gather kids in a circle and invite them to pray for the person on their right. If they aren't sure what to pray, they could pray a simple prayer like this:

God, thank You for caring for (name). Help him/her to listen to Your voice and follow You. Amen.

Elementary Responding in Worship: A Journey Through Psalm 23

SUPPLIES: cardstock, masking or floor tape

RESOURCES: [Stepping Stones Sheet \(3-4/ Elem SG\)](#), [Prayer Journey Pictures NIV\(1 set/SG\)](#), Gentle Stream Sound Effect (optional), Dark Valley Sound Effect (optional)

Ahead of time, print several copies of the Stepping Stones Sheet onto cardstock. Print double-sided, flipping on the short edge, so there's a heart on the back of each stone. (If not, simply draw one.) Cut out the stepping stones and use them to form a path around the perimeter of the room, spacing them about a foot apart. Tape the stones to the floor with the heart facing down.

Today we read David's words about God in Psalm 23. David describes God as a good shepherd who guides and cares for His sheep. Let's use our imaginations to take a journey through Psalm 23!

Display the first Prayer Journey Pictures NIV and invite kids to stand on a stepping stone. **In front of you is a path, similar to a path that a shepherd might lead his sheep along. I'm going to walk along the path as I read words from Psalm 23, and I invite you to follow me slowly. Listen carefully to the words and picture the scene in your imagination.**

Slowly read Psalm 23:1–3a as you walk on the stepping stones around the perimeter of the room with the kids following. Or invite another leader to read the verses as you lead the kids along the path. To make the experience more multisensory, play the Gentle Stream Sound Effect. Walk one time around the room, then pause and ask these questions to prompt kids' imaginations. (You can invite them to share their answers or to simply think about them quietly.)

- **As you listen to these words, what do you imagine? What do you see? What do you hear?**
- **Where is the shepherd as you lay down in green grass? Is he looking at you? What expression does he have on his face?**

Display the second Prayer Journey Picture NIV or NIV. Read Psalm 23:3b slowly as you walk the perimeter of the room with the kids following. After another lap, pause and ask:

- **What does the right path look like? What do you notice around you?**

Display the third Prayer Journey Picture NIV or NIV. Read Psalm 23:4 slowly as you walk the perimeter of the room with the kids following. To make the experience more multisensory, play the Dark Valley Sound Effect. After another lap, pause and ask:

- **As you listen to these words, what do you imagine? What do you see? What do you hear?**
- **Where is the shepherd? What's he doing?**



Display the fourth Prayer Journey Picture NIV or NIV. Read Psalm 23:5 slowly as you walk the perimeter of the room with the kids following. After another lap, pause and ask:

- **Imagine a table that is set for a feast! What does it look like? Smell like? Taste like?**
- **Now imagine God, your Good Shepherd, pouring oil on your head as a symbol that He has chosen you for a special job. What does the oil feel like on your head? Are you excited? Confused? Nervous?**

Display the fifth Prayer Journey Picture NIV or NIV. Read Psalm 23:6 slowly as you walk the perimeter of the room with the kids following. After another lap, pause and ask:

- **God's goodness and love will follow you forever! What picture comes to your mind as you hear these words?**
- **How do these words make you feel?**

Invite kids to step off the stone they're on, carefully remove the tape, and lift the stone from the floor. Have them turn their stones over. **What's on the back of your stone?** Kids respond freely. **Yes, a heart! Hearts represent love, and even when we don't realize it, God's love is with us and follows us everywhere we go!** Invite kids to take their stepping stone/heart home as a reminder that God cares for them and His love will follow them every day of their lives!

Make It Inclusive: If any kids in your ministry have limited mobility, modify the prayer journey to be done with kids seated. Rather than walk the perimeter of the room, they can simply close their eyes and imagine each part of the psalm.

Preteen Responding in Worship: The 23rd Psalm

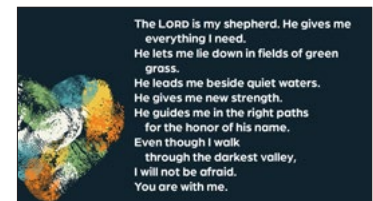
SUPPLIES: butcher paper, disposable cups (1 per 2–3 kids), water, paintbrushes (1 per kid), paper towels, tempera paints (several colors), posterboard (several sheets, optional), pastel chalks (optional)

RESOURCES: [Psalm 23 Art Response NlrV 2/SG](#), “Psalm 23” from the [Wonderfully Made Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, set out a large sheet of butcher paper for kids to paint. If your group is large, consider setting out several large sheets of butcher paper. Alternatively, set out several sheets of posterboard. Fill disposable cups halfway with water (1 cup per 2–3 kids). Set the water cups, paintbrushes, tempera paints, and paper towels near the butcher paper or posterboard. An alternative to tempera paints is to use pastel chalks.

Today we read David’s words about God in Psalm 23. David describes God as a good shepherd who guides and cares for His sheep. Let’s spend some time imagining the scenes that David describes in this song poem. I will read Psalm 23 slowly, and as I do, you’re welcome to close your eyes and pay attention to each detail. What words and images stand out to you?

Display the Psalm 23 Art Response NlrV and read it slowly while kids close their eyes and listen carefully. (If there are strong readers in your group who enjoy reading aloud, invite them to read some or all of the Psalm out loud.) Keep the slide on the screen and prompt deeper thought and discussion with these questions:



- **What words or image stood out to you? Why?**
- **What part of the psalm reminds you the most about who God is? Why that part?**

Next, invite kids to gather around the butcher paper or posterboard and spend time painting an original masterpiece titled *The 23rd Psalm*. Kids can paint the scene or image that stood out to them most or depict multiple images from Psalm 23. (Show kids that they can dip their paintbrushes in water and wipe them with a paper towel when they want to switch colors.) Leave the Psalm 23 Art Response Slide on the screen for kids to refer to and play “Psalm 23” from the [Wonderfully Made Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as kids create.

After several minutes, invite kids to share what they’re painting and what it shows us about what God is like. If possible, display their original artwork in the room and leave it up throughout the Wonderfully Made series as a reminder that God is our Good Shepherd who cares for us.

Make It Inclusive: Some kids struggle to work on communal art projects—and that’s OK! Have paper and coloring utensils available for kids who would prefer to create their own artistic renditions of *The 23rd Psalm*.