

God Is Our Shepherd

Quarter 8 • Lesson 1

Focus on Spiritual Formation

- 1. Connecting:** Learn about sheep and who protects them.
- 2. Teaching:** Learn how Jesus is like a shepherd to us (Psalm 23:1–2; John 10:11; John 14:27).
- 3. Responding:** Act out what God provides for you.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- Student Pages
- *The Action Bible*, image of David and his flock
- Memory Verse Poster
- Crayons

Teacher Devotion

*The LORD is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need.
He lets me lie down in fields of green grass.
He leads me beside quiet waters.*
Psalm 23:1–2

The Lord is a shepherd to His sheep. Jesus is the good Shepherd who provides everything His sheep need. Jesus is with you at all times, just as a shepherd is with his sheep. He will comfort and encourage your soul. The Holy Spirit brings peace to your heart even in difficult situations.

God provides for your needs. Think about what God has provided in your life: loving relationships, His Word, your food and shelter. When you think about God's provision, do you feel a sense of calm and comfort? What things are like your quiet waters? Perhaps you find them in the moments when you take time to talk to God. Perhaps you find them in the smile of a child or a hug from a friend. God is so good, and His love for you is so abundant. This is what it means to be shepherded by the Lord.

Family Connection: Encourage families to talk about how God has provided for them. If possible, make copies of the psalm found at the end of this lesson. Send 1 copy home to each family. Ask families to read it with the children every night before going to sleep.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Learn about sheep and who protects them.

Welcome the children as they enter. Ask them to find a quiet place to sit while they wait for the lesson to begin.

Raise your hand if you know what a sheep looks like. Today you will use your imagination to picture a sheep in your mind. Close your eyes and imagine a sheep. Maybe the sheep pictured in your mind has a big, full coat of wool. The sheep might look fluffy and fat. Now picture yourself feeling the sheep's fluffy wool. Sheep are usually friendly. You can even picture yourself giving the sheep a big hug. Now imagine a predator that wants to get close to the sheep and eat it. This might be a wolf, a dog, a lion, or another big meat-eating animal. Open your eyes.

- Do you think the sheep could protect itself against this predator that wants to eat it? Why or why not?

Allow 2–3 children to respond.

Sheep do not have a way to protect themselves against predators that might want to hurt them. They do not have sharp claws or teeth.

- What do you think the sheep would do if it saw a predator?

Allow 2–3 children to respond.

Sheep do not run very fast, so running away will not help them. I think they would need to call out for help. Let's all make the sound a sheep would make if it needed to call for help.

Lead the children in making the sound of a sheep. Then give a signal for the children to stop.

- Who do you think might come to help the sheep?

A shepherd. Its owner.

The person who helps sheep is called a shepherd. Sheep do not have a way to protect themselves, so they need a shepherd to keep them safe. Sheep need a shepherd to feed them and lead them to water to get a drink.

Close your eyes again and picture your big, fluffy sheep. This sheep has been walking across hot, rocky hills all morning. This sheep is now hungry and thirsty.

- How would the sheep let the shepherd know that it was hungry and thirsty?

Allow 2–3 children to respond.

Maybe it would need to start calling out to the shepherd. Let's all make sounds like sheep would if they needed to tell their shepherd they were hungry and thirsty.

Lead the children in making the sound of a sheep. After about 15 seconds, signal the children to stop.

The Bible says that we are like sheep and Jesus is our Shepherd. Let's find out how He is like a shepherd.

2. Teaching: Learn how Jesus is like a shepherd to us (Psalm 23:1–2; John 10:11; John 14:27).

Listen to the first verse of Psalm 23. Read this verse directly from your Bible.

Optional: If possible, share the image from The Action Bible

The LORD is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need.
Psalm 23:1

- **According to this verse, who is the shepherd?**

The Lord is the shepherd.

- **Who is the Lord?**

The Lord is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

- **What does He give you?**

God gives me everything I need.

God is like a shepherd. He gives you everything you need. What you need and what you want are not always the same thing. You may want a sweet, but your body does not need a sweet. You may want fancy clothes, but you do not need fancy clothes. This verse says that the Lord will provide for your needs. Many, many years after this psalm was written, Jesus came to live on earth. While He lived here, He called Himself the Good Shepherd. It is important for us to understand how Jesus is like a shepherd. Listen to this verse from the Bible:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.
John 10:11

- **If Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who are His sheep?**

We are His sheep.

- **How do you know Jesus cares about you?**

Allow 2–3 children to respond.

Jesus cares very deeply about you. He gave His life so that you could be in relationship with God the Father.

Here is a fun fact about sheep. Sheep will not lie down unless their needs are met. The shepherd will provide protection, food, and water for the sheep. Listen to what Psalm 23 says about our Good Shepherd providing for our needs.

*He lets me lie down in fields of green grass.
He leads me beside quiet waters.*
Psalm 23:2

Sheep eat grass, and they need water to drink. In this verse we see that our Good Shepherd gives us food to eat, water to drink, and a quiet, safe place to rest. Do you remember when we learned that God is our safe place? We see that again in this verse! Our Good Shepherd provides what we need.

Teacher Tip: For children who have little to eat and have other basic needs that are not met, they may wonder why they do not have what they need. Help them learn to ask Jesus to provide for their needs. You can also help them to count their blessings to see how Jesus provides for them each day.

Let's take a moment to pretend we are the sheep in this verse. Think about what it would look like to find a field of green grass after a long walk. Think about what it would be like to rest, eat, and drink. Act out what it would look like to be a sheep doing these things.

Allow about 1 minute for the children to follow you. Then tell them they are in a field of green grass next to a quiet stream. Ask them to do whatever they think a sheep would do.

You all showed that a sheep would rest and get what it needed if it were led to a field of green grass next to a quiet stream. A shepherd does everything he can to help his sheep. Jesus also does everything He can to help us because He loves us. Before Jesus died on the cross, He spoke to His disciples about what was going to happen. Listen to these words He left them with:

I leave my peace with you. I give my peace to you. I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be troubled.

And do not be afraid.

John 14:27

Just as He did for His disciples, Jesus gives us His love, His peace, and His salvation. Jesus gave us the greatest gift ever given when He died for our sins. Jesus explains that He does not give us things the way the world does.

- **What are some things the world has that you might want?**

Allow 2–3 children to respond. If they struggle with this question, ask them what some things are that their parents talk about wanting.

Money, power, and possessions are all things the world has. Money helps us to buy things that we need, but it is not necessary to have lots and lots of money. It is also important to have possessions we need. For example, we need clothes to cover us. We do not need our clothes to be fancy. The world offers us these things, but Jesus explains that He offers us more.

Teacher Tip: It is important that children who do have money understand that money is not bad. There is nothing wrong with having money and comfort. The intention of this part of the lesson is to show the children that this is something that is important to the world, but Jesus' love and peace will last forever.

Through His sacrifice, our Shepherd gives us what the world cannot. He also gives us the opportunity to experience the peace only He can provide and His love for us.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd! Those who believe in Him are Jesus' sheep! Jesus knows His sheep, and He gives them what they need.

When you know you belong to God, it can bring you peace. He is God, and His love is deeper than any human love. His love will comfort your heart, even in bad times. Knowing Jesus gave His life to give you the opportunity to have eternal life can bring peace in any difficult situation here on earth.

Close your eyes as I read the first 2 verses of Psalm 23 again. Picture yourself as the sheep and Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

*The LORD is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need.
He lets me lie down in fields of green grass.
He leads me beside quiet waters.*

Psalm 23:1–2

Now picture Jesus, the Good Shepherd, giving the sheep a big hug. That is Jesus giving you a big hug! You can open your eyes now. Jesus is the Good Shepherd!

Teacher Tip: If any children show interest in wanting to know more about Jesus and His gift to us, speak with them after class. If students are interested in learning more about Jesus and what it means to follow him, you can download the Salvation Path below and share it with them.

3. Responding: Act out what God provides for you.

When you believe in God, you are a sheep in His flock. A flock is a group of sheep. The shepherd watches over all the sheep in his flock. Staying in the flock provides safety.

Let's form 4 flocks of sheep. I will point to you and count 1, 2, 3, 4. Remember your number because that will be your flock number.

Separate the children into 4 groups.

When you are a sheep in a flock, you feel safe. Even if the shepherd does not provide everything his sheep want, the shepherd provides what his sheep need. The shepherd always provides love and comfort for the sheep.

Sheep call out if they need the shepherd to protect them. Sheep call out if they are hungry or thirsty. Sheep call out to the shepherd if they are hurt. When sheep fall over, they need help to stand up. When sheep get lost, they need help to find their way back to the flock.

You can pray when you need God to help you. When you call out to God, He is with you to comfort your heart.

- What are reasons you call out and pray to the Good Shepherd, Jesus?

Allow the children to respond.

You pray to your Shepherd, Jesus, for some of the same reasons sheep call out to a shepherd. Maybe you pray when you are hungry, thirsty, or afraid. Maybe you pray when you fall down or get hurt. Maybe you pray when you feel lost. There are many reasons to pray and ask the Good Shepherd to help you.

Optional: If you are using Student Pages, give the children crayons and allow 3 minutes for them to draw pictures of what sheep need and are given by shepherds.

Let's act out some reasons you pray and ask your Good Shepherd to help you. Come up 1 at a time. You will act out something that happened to you to cause you to call out to the Shepherd for help. For example, if you have wandered off to an unsafe place, you would act like you were walking around in a scary place. Maybe there are things you have to avoid, so you keep ducking your head. If you need help thinking of ideas, I will help you.

Everyone else in your flock will guess why you are praying and asking your Shepherd to help you. You can make the sheep sound while you are acting. You can call out in a prayer to God and ask for help. You can say, "Lord, help me." Be sure you do not say the reason you are praying because the flock must guess that!

Allow 1 children from each flock to come to you. Give the first set of children the same thing to act out for each of their groups. Once the first set of children has acted, allow another child from each group to come to you. Give this set of children an opportunity to act while the rest of the members of their flocks guess what they are doing. If there is time, allow more children from each flock to act. You may use your own ideas for the children to act out, or you may use the following:

You do not have enough food to eat, so you are hungry.

You feel alone.

You get lost on your way home from somewhere.

You had a difficult day and you are tired and sad.

You all did a great job! Remember to ask the Good Shepherd to help you this week. Pray to Jesus because He is with you! Listen to this week's memory verse:

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

The LORD is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need.

Psalm 23:1

The Lord is my shepherd—Hold your hands in front of you, and then clap as you raise them up over your head.

He gives me everything I need—Clap as you move your hands down in front of you again.

End class by saying this blessing, based on John 10:11, over the children.

Blessing: May you know Jesus is the Good Shepherd. May you understand that Jesus gave His life for His sheep.

Lead the children in singing this quarter's song, if possible. "My Lighthouse" by Rend Collective: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HA8VtUPgqTc>