# The LORD Is My Shepherd

PSALM 23 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

**THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES**

With the LORD as my Shepherd, every step is in his care.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage: —
- After this passage (day 2): 1 Samuel 17:32-37, The Shepherd Who Wrote It. Its big idea: The LORD is my shepherd: he does for me what David did for lambs.

## Open

Ask: When you were a child, who made sure you had what you needed? Read Psalm 23:1: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Big idea: With the LORD as my Shepherd, every step is in his care.

## Run Sheet

### 1. The Shepherd Who Provides (Psalm 23:1-3, about 12 min)

The one thing: The psalm rests on who the Shepherd is, so the sheep lacks nothing it needs.

Ask: Why do you think a king would call himself a sheep?

### 2. The Shepherd in the Valley (Psalm 23:4, about 12 min)

The one thing: The promise in the valley is the Shepherd's presence, and fear loses its grip there.

Ask: What changes when the psalm switches from “He” to “You”?

### 3. The Host Who Welcomes (Psalm 23:5-6, about 11 min)

The one thing: The LORD welcomes his people as honored guests and keeps them for ever.

Ask: What would it feel like to have goodness and mercy chasing after you?

## Close (never cut it)

Read the whole psalm aloud together, slowly. Point out that it begins and ends with the LORD's name, and everything in between is held inside it. Let the last line be the last word.

**PROTECT THE ENDING**

If the last section starts late, skip its optional notes and go straight to reading v6 aloud.

**KIDS SIDE ANSWERS**

Story order: 5, 4, 3, 1, 2 (top to bottom) · Feelings: The sheep lying in green grass happy, David walking in the dark valley worried, David hearing the Shepherd is with him happy, David at God's table happy · Code: I SHALL NOT WANT

Act it out: One child is the shepherd and the others are sheep. The shepherd leads the sheep to a “field” to rest and a “stream” for a drink, then walks with them through a “dark valley” (a dimmed corner) to a table set with cups.

## 1. The Shepherd Who Provides

PSALM 23:1-3 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

### THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- David, a shepherd who became king, calls the LORD his Shepherd.
- Every verb belongs to the Shepherd: makes, leads, restores, guides.
- He leads “for the sake of His name.”

“The LORD is my SHEPHERD; I shall not WANT.”

“He RESTORES my soul.”

Discuss: Why do you think a king would call himself a sheep?

The psalm rests on who the Shepherd is, so the sheep lacks nothing it needs.

### MUST COVER

- v1: David was a shepherd before he was king (1 Samuel 16:11), and God told him to shepherd Israel (2 Samuel 5:2).
- v2-3: count the verbs. The Shepherd does the work: makes, leads, restores, guides.

### IF THERE'S TIME

- “Lie down” is a causative verb in Hebrew: the shepherd brings the sheep to rest (compare Ezekiel 34:15).
- “Restores” comes from the Hebrew word for turning back, the word the prophets used for returning to God.

Illustration idea: A child asleep in the back seat on a long drive does not know the route. They know who is driving.

### RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Even the strongest person still needs someone to lead them.
- Listen for: Kings were called shepherds, so he is saying who his real king is.

If it drifts: If the talk moves to people who do lack things, say that the psalm will face the valley in v4. Bring them back to who does the verbs in v2-3.

### TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

A king called himself a sheep, because with the LORD as Shepherd every step is in his care.

Short on time? Drop the Hebrew notes. Keep v1 and the list of verbs.

Bridge → Then the path goes down into a dark valley, and the psalm changes how it talks.

## 2. The Shepherd in the Valley

PSALM 23:4 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

### THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The psalm does not skip the dark valley.
- Here David stops talking about God and talks to Him.
- The rod protects; the staff supports.

“I will fear no evil, for YOU are with me.”

“Your rod and Your staff, they COMFORT me.”

Discuss: What changes when the psalm switches from “He” to “You”?

The promise in the valley is the Shepherd's presence, and fear loses its grip there.

### MUST COVER

- v4: “Even though I walk through” the valley: the psalm promises company in it, not a way around it.
- v4: “He” becomes “You.” At the darkest point, the Shepherd is close enough to speak to.

### IF THERE'S TIME

- “The shadow of death” is one Hebrew word for the deepest darkness (Job uses it for the grave).

Illustration idea: In a power cut at night, a child who can hear a parent's voice in the dark stops crying long before the lights come back.

### RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: God is closest when things are hardest.
- Listen for: It is easier to talk to someone than about them when you are scared.

If it drifts: If someone shares a loss, let it be heard and thank them. Then read v4 again slowly and let the words do the comforting.

### TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Even in the valley, every step is in his care, because he is with you.

Short on time? Drop the Hebrew note on “shadow of death.” Keep the switch from He to You.

Bridge → After the valley, the scene moves indoors, and the Shepherd becomes a host.

## 3. The Host Who Welcomes

PSALM 23:5-6 · ABOUT 11 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

### THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The Shepherd becomes a host who sets a table.
- Oil and an overflowing cup mean a generous welcome.
- Goodness and mercy follow all the way home.

“You prepare a TABLE before me in the presence of my enemies.”

“Surely goodness and mercy will FOLLOW me all the days of my life.”

Discuss: What would it feel like to have goodness and mercy chasing after you?

The LORD welcomes his people as honored guests and keeps them for ever.

### MUST COVER

- v5: a table, oil on the head, a cup filled past the brim, even with enemies watching.
- v6: “follow” is a hunting word in Hebrew (pursue). The psalm ends “in the house of the LORD forever.”

### IF THERE'S TIME

- The word for “anoint” here is about generous welcome, the word for making rich, not the one for crowning a king.

Illustration idea: A grandparent who keeps refilling your plate before you can say you are full.

### RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Usually trouble is what chases us.
- Listen for: It sounds like God won't let you go.

If it drifts: If it turns to who our enemies are, keep it short. The point of v5 is who sets the table.

### TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

From the field to his house, every step is in his care.

Short on time? Drop the note on the oil. Keep the table and “follow.”

Bridge → So read the first line again, now that you have seen where it leads.

## With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Start with care. Ask: Who looked after you when you were young? What did that feel like?
2. Read it. Read Psalm 23 aloud. It is short; read it twice.
3. Meet the writer. David guarded sheep as a boy and became king, and still called the LORD his Shepherd.
4. The valley. Read v4 again. The psalm does not pretend life is easy. It promises company in the dark.
5. Leave the question. Ask: What would it mean for you if the LORD really were your Shepherd? Leave it with them.

### QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

“Isn't this just a funeral psalm?”

It is read at many funerals, because it speaks to the valley. It was written for the whole of life.

“Does it mean believers never lack anything?”

David also walked through valleys and faced enemies. It means the Shepherd's care does not run out.

“Who are the enemies in verse 5?”

David had real enemies. The point is that God's welcome holds even with them watching.

“What does this have to do with Jesus?”

Jesus called himself “the good shepherd” (John 10:11) and said he lays down his life for the sheep.

## Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

### EVERY LESSON

**1. Pray before you prepare**

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

**2. Study the text first**

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don’t lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

**3. Teach one big idea**

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn’t serve it, cut it.

**4. Point to Christ**

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

### FOR THIS LESSON

**1. Let the Bible do the talking**

This psalm is short and well loved; its own words carry it.

If you're new: Read it aloud twice before teaching anything.

If you've taught for years: Have the class find every verb the Shepherd does before you explain any.

**2. Plan for the skeptic and the grieving**

Many people know this psalm from funerals.

If you're new: Expect someone to be carrying a loss; leave room after v4.

If you've taught for years: Prepare one gentle sentence for v4 and resist the urge to explain grief away.

**3. Let the passage land the way it lands**

Psalm 23 assures; it gives no homework.

If you're new: End by reading the psalm, not by assigning a task.

If you've taught for years: Let the inclusio of the LORD's name (v1 and v6) be the closing image.

### BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you’ll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

## Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

### OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: Who made sure you had what you needed when you were a child?

- start in the text: Read v1 and ask: what would it take to say “I shall not want” and mean it?
- use an object: Hold up a walking stick and ask what it is for. A shepherd's staff is something to lean on.

### CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: With the LORD as your Shepherd, every step is in his care: the pasture, the valley and the table.
- allow quiet reflection: Read v4 slowly and give the room a full minute of quiet.
- send them out with a verse: Send them out with v6: “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.”

### WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone has recently lost a loved one and this psalm was read at the funeral.: Acknowledge it gently, thank them, and read v4 again without explaining. The psalm's promise is presence.
- Someone says, “I do lack things. This isn't true for me.”: Take it seriously. Point out that the same psalm has a dark valley and enemies, so David is not describing an easy life. He is naming who cares for him in a hard one.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: “Thanks. Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t spoken yet.” Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can’t answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: “Great question. Let’s catch it after class so we can finish the passage.”

### READ THIS WEEK

- Isaiah 40:11
- John 10:11-18
- Psalm 78:70-72

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/psalms/23/lesson

# The LORD Is My Shepherd

PSALM 23 (BSB) · THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Psalm 23:1

### THE BIG IDEA

With the LORD as my Shepherd, every step is in his care.

### 1. THE SHEPHERD WHO PROVIDES · PSALM 23:1-3

- David, a shepherd who became king, calls the LORD his Shepherd.
- Every verb belongs to the Shepherd: makes, leads, restores, guides.
- He leads “for the sake of His name.”

“The LORD is my _____; I shall not _____.”

“He _____ my soul.”

Discuss: Why do you think a king would call himself a sheep?

### 2. THE SHEPHERD IN THE VALLEY · PSALM 23:4

- The psalm does not skip the dark valley.
- Here David stops talking about God and talks to Him.
- The rod protects; the staff supports.

“I will fear no evil, for _____ are with me.”

“Your rod and Your staff, they _____ me.”

Discuss: What changes when the psalm switches from “He” to “You”?

### 3. THE HOST WHO WELCOMES · PSALM 23:5-6

- The Shepherd becomes a host who sets a table.
- Oil and an overflowing cup mean a generous welcome.
- Goodness and mercy follow all the way home.

“You prepare a _____ before me in the presence of my enemies.”

“Surely goodness and mercy will _____ me all the days of my life.”

Discuss: What would it feel like to have goodness and mercy chasing after you?

Read this week: Isaiah 40:11 · John 10:11-18 · Psalm 78:70-72

# For Kids: The LORD Is My Shepherd

PSALM 23 · NAME: _____

Big idea: God takes care of me like a good shepherd.

### 1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

☐ I live in God's house forever.

☐ He sets a table for me.

☐ He walks with me through the valley.

☐ The Shepherd leads to green grass.

☐ He leads beside quiet water.

### 2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

The sheep lying in green grass: happy · sad · worried

David walking in the dark valley: happy · sad · worried

David hearing the Shepherd is with him: happy · sad · worried

David at God's table: happy · sad · worried

### 3. WORD SEARCH

**C V P G V H U D K**
**V A A K P O N B P**
**V L S T A B L E P**
**P L T F R L O R D**
**B E U B H O U S E**
**C Y R C S N H Y P**
**U O E S D C F D K**
**P V S W A T E R S**
**S H E P H E R D G**

SHEPHERD · LORD · PASTURES · WATERS · VALLEY · TABLE · CUP · HOUSE

### 4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=H 3=I 4=L 5=N 6=O 7=S 8=T 9=W

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ | | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | | ___ | ___ | ___ | | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| **3** | | **7** | **2** | **1** | **4** | **4** | | **5** | **6** | **8** | | **9** | **1** | **5** | **8** |

### 5. DRAW IT!

Draw a shepherd leading sheep to green grass and quiet water.

### 6. MEMORY VERSE

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Psalm 23:1 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

God takes care of me when _____. _____