



## Session 11



# GOD, OUR SHEPHERD

**Psalms 23; 1 Samuel 16:11; 17:34-37**

The Book of Psalms is divided into five “books” or collections. The psalms were possibly grouped this way because they were passed around for worshipers to use, or they were grouped by theme and content. The five books together comprise what we know today as the Book of Psalms. The individual psalms are identified by seven specific categories: hymns, laments, songs of thanksgiving, royal psalms, enthronement psalms, penitential psalms, and wisdom or didactic psalms.

Psalms 23 is a psalm of thanksgiving. It is one of the best-loved psalms, and its short text can easily be recited by even young children. David, the author of this psalm, had been a shepherd in his early years, so the context about which he spoke had deep personal meaning to him. David’s life as a shepherd led him to many encounters with wild animals and other dangers, but through it all God sustained David. It’s with that intimate knowledge of shepherding and life-sustaining grace from God that David wrote this psalm.

David introduced God as a shepherd. The shepherd imagery would have been one of care and concern for the sheep. The job of a shepherd was to gently guide the sheep from location to location, taking great pains to ensure the animals’ safety along the way. The sheep were completely dependent on the shepherd for everything. In David’s mind this was the relationship between God the Father and His sheep.

Exchanging images from the constant care of a shepherd, David next compared God to a gracious host. Hosting responsibilities during this point in history were very important. How your host greeted and treated you would say a lot about how you stood socially in his midst. David agreed that in God’s eyes each guest is the same, and each guest receives the same treatment. God is a host who provides not just physical sustenance but also safety from harm. When you are in the presence of the Lord eating at His table, He will invite you to dine with Him forever.

## SESSION FOCUS

### TEXT TRUTH

God cares for people like a shepherd.

### BIBLE STORY

Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 16:11; 17:34-37

### BIBLE VERSE

Psalm 23:1,3

### CHRIST IN CONTEXT

In Luke 24:44, Jesus Himself said that the Book of Psalms tells about Him and that everything written in the psalms about Him must be fulfilled.

### BIBLE SKILLS: Preschoolers will . . .

- Understand the Bible teaches us what God and Jesus are like.
- Begin to understand how Bible verses apply to his life.



### CONNECT WITH FAMILIES

Provide these weekly resources to help families explore the Bible together.

- Explore the Bible at Home (Printable: Music & Print Extras)
- Preschool Activity Page
- Preschool Family Card

### MISSIONS ACTIVITY: TAKE CARE OF ANIMALS



*Tools: Bible, toy farm animals, toy barn and fencing (opt.), a few pictures of farming communities or farm equipment, Book: All About Jesus (Pack Item 19), Story Picture: David's Shepherd Psalm (Pack Item 11)*

- Put the animals and pictures near the barn. Use the pictures as backdrops for children to make farms or ranches.
- Show a farming picture to a child. Remark: "We have farms and ranches in our country. Sometimes missionaries go to countries where the people raise cattle and other animals."
- Encourage preschoolers to pretend they are caring for the animals. Perhaps some of the children live on farms themselves and help their families care for the animals. Or others may help take care of family pets. Affirm the children for helping their families.
- Mention that David cared for sheep when he was a boy. He wrote a psalm about God being like a shepherd.

### LEADER TIP!

Include this special missions-focused activity in addition to preschoolers' Bible Explorations.

**TEXT TRUTH**

God cares for people like a shepherd.

**BIBLE STORY**

David's Shepherd Psalm  
Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 16:11;  
17:34-37

**BIBLE VERSE**

God is my shepherd. He leads me.  
Psalm 23:1,3

# DAVID'S SHEPHERD PSALM

## Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 16:11; 17:34-37

*David lived in Bethlehem with his family. David tended to the family's sheep. Every day David led the sheep from their pens to pastures of green grass. The sheep grazed and ate the grass. Then David led the thirsty sheep to streams of water. The sheep drank and David watched over them.*

*Sometimes while David tended the sheep, lions or bears would come near. David protected the sheep and kept them safe. David loved his sheep and cared for them.*

*David loved music and sang. David would play his harp and sing beautiful praises to God. David may have played his harp while the sheep ate the green grass or sipped the cool water.*

*David loved God and knew God cared for him. David wrote a song about God. In the song David said God was his shepherd.*

*David wrote: "God is my shepherd. He leads me on the right path. I rest in green pastures beside quiet waters. I do not fear because God is with me. God gives me everything I need and comforts me. God's love will be with me all my life. And I will love God as long as I live."*

**LEADER TIP**

You choose! Are your preschoolers ready to learn memory verses? Decide which wording of the session Bible verse you want to use with your group.

## BIBLE VERSE

From the Bible text:

*The Lord is my shepherd. He leads me. Psalm 23:1,3*

Paraphrase:

*God is my shepherd. He leads me. Psalm 23:1,3*



## CIRCLE TIME (10-15 MINUTES, DEPENDING ON YOUR AGE GROUP)

### GATHER

- If the weather is agreeable, plan to take preschoolers outdoors for part of Circle Time. Take the Bible, Story Picture, and device to play the animal sounds.
- Find a safe shaded location to spread the quilt. Invite children to be seated.
- Play the animal sounds, inviting children to name the animals. When you hear the sound of a sheep, stop to say: “The sheep sound reminds me of a song in the Bible about a shepherd.”

### HEAR THE BIBLE STORY

- Show preschoolers the Story Picture. Ask children if they know who is shown in the picture.
- Comment: “This picture shows King David. When he was a young boy, David cared for his family’s sheep. He was their shepherd. Later, when David was older, he wrote a song about a shepherd. Listen to the story.”
- Open the Bible to Psalm 23. Tell the story in your own words. Tell the children that David’s song is in the Book of Psalms.
- Thank the children for listening to the story, then tell them you will return to the room for the rest of Circle Time.
- When you get back to the room, put today’s Text Truth Flower on the Spring Wall Poster. Say: “David wrote about God, our shepherd. God cares for people like a shepherd cares for his sheep.”

### PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

- Distribute Bibles to preschoolers. Help them locate Psalm 23. Read the psalm from your translation of the Bible.
- Show preschoolers today’s Bible Verse Strip. Ask children to stand as they say the verse together a few times.

### PRAY

- Pray briefly, asking God to love us and care for us. Thank God for the Bible and the songs David wrote to help us think about God.

### TOOLS

- Bible
- Music & Print Extras
- animal sounds app
- quilt or sheet

### PACK ITEMS

- 11 Story Picture: David’s Shepherd Psalm
- 15 Bible Verse Strips
- 16 Spring Wall Poster
- 17 Text Truth Flowers

### LEADER TIP!

Show preschoolers where the Book of Psalms is located on the Bible Timeline for Kids.

## EXPLORATION STATIONS (45-60 MINUTES)

### TEXT TRUTH

God cares for people like a shepherd.

### BIBLE STORY

David's Shepherd Psalm  
Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 16:11;  
17:34-37

### BIBLE VERSE

God is my shepherd. He leads me.  
Psalm 23:1,3

### PACK ITEMS

11 Story Picture: David's Shepherd Psalm  
32 Bible Times Instruments

### PRINTABLES

Psalms Book Pages

Set up at least three stations to provide choices of multisensory activities and movement for busy preschoolers. Use the Bible in every exploration.

### MAKE A BOOK ABOUT PSALMS

*Tools: Bible, white construction paper, glue sticks, Psalms Book Pages (1 set per child)*

- Open the Bible to Psalm 23. Put the art supplies near the Bible.
- Show a child the psalm in the Bible. Say: "David loved music. He often sang praises to God. David loved God and knew God loved him."
- Invite the child to make a book about Psalms. Give the child four sheets of paper folded in half, a set of Book Pages, and a glue stick. Guide the child to arrange the pages in order.
- When the child completes his book, write his name on it. Read the book to the preschooler.
- Tell the Bible story, then read a few verses from Psalm 23.

### MOVE TO MUSIC

*Tools: Bible, Music & Print Extras, colorful ribbons tied to hard plastic bracelets*

- Tie several 6-inch pieces of ribbon to each bracelet. Make three or four ribbon bracelets.
- Begin playing music and waving a ribbon bracelet. When a preschooler wants to join you, let him choose a bracelet.
- While you enjoy moving to the music, say: "David loved God. David often sang praises to God. We can praise God with our songs and music, too."
- Wave the bracelets as you say the Bible verse together.
- Turn to Psalm 23 and point to David's name.

**MATCH PICTURE CARDS**

*Tools: Bible, Bible Times Instruments, Activity Page*

- Place one set of picture cards in the Bible at random locations. Put the other set with the Activity Page.
- Show a preschooler the Activity Page picture showing David strumming a harp.
- Say: "David played a harp when he was young and watched sheep graze. David played music and made up songs to praise God. Even when David was king, he used music to sing about God."
- Show the child the pictures of various Bible times instruments. Say: "Some pictures of instruments are in the Bible. Look for them, then match them to these picture cards."
- After cards are matched, open the Bible to Psalm 23 and summarize the Bible story.

**PRETEND TO BE A VETERINARIAN**

*Tools: Bible, toy animals (including sheep), toy medical kit, child's white shirt*

- Put the medical kit and shirt in a chair.
- Mention that David's family had sheep, and as a young boy, it was David's responsibility to take care of the sheep.
- Say: "David watched the sheep to make sure they were safe. He helped the sheep find grass to eat and water to drink. David cared about the sheep."
- Ask children if any of them have animals they care for at home. Ask the children who helps take care of animals. (veterinarians)
- Say: "David wrote a psalm that said God was like a shepherd. God watched over David and kept him safe from danger like a shepherd would keep his sheep safe."

**GUESS THE INSTRUMENT**

*Tools: Bible; Story Picture: David's Shepherd Psalm; small pillowcase; variety of instruments such as maraca, triangle and beater, handbell, drumstick, tambourine*

- Put the instruments in the pillowcase.
- Move the bag slightly to make an instrument sound. When you have a child's attention, ask him if he can guess the instrument that made the sound.
- Invite the child to feel in the bag without looking, then identify instruments. Give hints as needed.
- Look at the Story Picture. Remark that David played a harp. Ask the preschooler if he has heard a harp played. Comment that the music is peaceful and soft.
- Say: "David played a harp and sang to God."

## TEXT TRUTH

God cares for people like a shepherd.

## BIBLE STORY

David's Shepherd Psalm  
Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 16:11;  
17:34-37

*The Bible story is printed on the back of the Story Picture.*

## BIBLE VERSE

God is my shepherd. He leads me.

Psalm 23:1,3

## PACK ITEMS

11 Story Picture: David's Shepherd Psalm  
32 Bible Times Instruments

## LEADER TIP!

Call on children one at a time to place their word block on the floor where they think it should go. Remind the children to use the sentence strip as a guide.

# NEXT HOUR (MORE EXPLORATIONS FOR PRESCHOOLERS)

Look for printable Next Hour Helps in Music & Print Extras.

## STRUM A GUITAR

*Tools: Bible, Bible Times Instruments, child's or adult's guitar, Activity Page*

- Strum the guitar strings, then sing a song such as "God Is So Good" or other praise-type song. A child may want to strum the instrument or sing along.
- Show the child the picture on the Activity Page. Ask the preschooler to point to King David's harp. Comment that the harp and guitar both have strings that a person plucks or strums.
- Review the Bible story as the preschooler enjoys making music. Then invite him to match the pictures of Bible times instruments.

## ARRANGE WORD BLOCKS

*Tools: Bible, wooden blocks, square sticky notes, sentence strip, marker*

- Write today's Bible verse on the sentence strip. Then print individual words of the Bible verse on the sticky notes. Put each sticky note on a block.
- Read the verse from the sentence strip. Help a child find the verse in the Bible.
- Challenge preschoolers to work together to put the word blocks in order to form the verse written on the sentence strip.
- Say the verse with the preschoolers. Remark: "David began his psalm with these words."

## FIND PSALMS IN BIBLES

*Tools: several Bibles, several magnifying glasses, paper, marker*

- Spread the Bibles on a table and put a magnifying glass on each Bible. Print the word *Psalms* in large letters on the paper and lay it on the table.
- Pick up a magnifier and hold it over the paper. Read the word. Say: "I see the word *Psalms*. Psalms are songs and poems in the Bible. They are in the Old Testament. Let's look for Psalms in these Bibles."

- Give a Bible and magnifier to children at the table. Assist them in opening their Bibles to the middle, then turning pages to find the heading *Psalms*. Once the Bible book is found, guide children to locate Psalm 23.

## LISTEN & DRAW

*Tools: Bible, Music & Print Extras (or other recorded praise music), paper, crayons, colored pencils, Story Picture: David's Shepherd Psalm*

- Play music and listen for songs about God's love and care. Sing along to familiar praise songs.
- Invite preschoolers to draw whatever they choose while the music plays. Comment that hearing certain types of music helps some people think about happy times or people they love and favorite things.
- Open the Bible to Psalm 23, then show children today's Story Picture. Say: "David wrote a song about God. David loved God and he remembered the ways God had helped David in his life."
- Lead preschoolers to say the Bible verse.

## CIRCLE TIME

### GATHER

- Lead children to finish their activities, straighten the room, and join you in the circle.
- While children are busy, collect a few items that were used in activities today. Put the items in a bag.

### REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

- Hold the bag with activity items. One by one, take out an item and ask children to tell how the item was used. Listen for opportunities to note that the item helped preschoolers learn about David, the Book of Psalms, or God.
- Review highlights of today's story. Show preschoolers the Story Picture for children to view.

### PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

- Ask preschoolers where the Book of Psalms is located in the Bible.
- Call on volunteers to come to the front and open the Bible to the middle, to Psalms.
- Locate Psalm 23 and say today's Bible verse. Ask volunteers to stand one at a time and say the Bible verse.

### PRAY

- Thank God for taking care of us and loving us.
- Thank God for the Bible and the words people wrote to help us think about God.
- Ask God to help children know God loves them.