

CALVARY CHAPEL OF PHILADELPHIA

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

## 4 YEAR OLDS

### TEACHER'S PACKET

# SUNDAY MORNING

Study 2

*My Shepherd*



# My Shepherd

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

**Objective** This lesson will teach the students that like a shepherd, God will take care of them, guide them, protect them, and bless them.

## Key Verses

Psalm 23—Main Teaching Passage

Matthew 6:25-34

Matthew 7:7-11

Luke 11:3

**Memory Verse** - Psalm 97:9 (July Memory Verse)

"For You, LORD, are most high above all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods."

## Hook

Have one student volunteer to come to the front. Ask them to close their eyes, stand a few feet from you, and spin around a few times. With their eyes closed, have them follow your voice to find you.

Afterward, ask the student if they peeked. Explain that in order to keep your eyes closed, you have to trust that the teacher will take care of you. Today, we will learn how God is our caring shepherd who takes care of His sheep, which are us, His people.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

In Psalm 23, David writes a song of praise comparing God to a shepherd. He begins by stating that because the Lord is his shepherd, he does not have a lack or need. In order to live, sheep need pastures to eat and water to drink. Just as a shepherd provides for his sheep, God provides for His children. This concept is reinforced in Matthew 6:25-34 and Matthew 7:7-11, where Jesus teaches that God knows what we need and will give it to us if we ask. Therefore, we will not lack anything we need. David then shows how the Lord guides them (verse 3). God directs our path the way a shepherd shows his sheep where to go.

In verse 4, David says that God protects us. Just like a shepherd protects his sheep from other animals that may try to harm them, God protects us and keeps us safe from those things which would destroy us. As a sheep can't protect itself, so also we need God's protection. In verses 5-6, David shows the shepherd giving the sheep blessing. Not only does God provide for our needs, but He promises us life of eternal blessing with Him forever in Heaven. During this life, we experience goodness and mercy, and one day we will be in His presence forever.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

# LOOK

In order to understand this Psalm, it is important to recognize the relationship between shepherds and sheep. Sheep are utterly dependent on the shepherd. While a shepherd can live without his sheep, the sheep can't live without the shepherd. This is a great analogy for our relationship with God. He does not need us, but He takes care of us. On the other hand, we are hopeless without Him. We need God to provide, guide, protect, and bless us.

God provides us with our everyday needs just like a shepherd feeds his sheep. Matthew 6:25-34 tells us that God provides the food and clothes we need for each day. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus instructs us to ask Jesus for our daily bread (Luke 11:3). As believers, we do not need to worry about our needs since God will provide. God is also our guide. He instructs us in the paths of righteousness and shows us the right way to go. Sheep are not very smart, and without a shepherd they would get lost and be in danger. The same way, without the Lord's guidance we could not know right from wrong or what we should do. The Lord is our faithful shepherd who leads us in the good, righteous path. God is also our protector. Sheep are powerless to defend themselves against predators,

## LOOK (Continued)

but a good shepherd will defend his sheep. The same way, the Lord keeps us safe from the things that would be harmful to us. This does not mean that we will never face danger or pain, but it does mean that the Lord will take care of us and protect us. Finally, God blesses us. We are not just sheep that He takes care of in order to make a living. We are precious to Him. He is not like a shepherd who works for the money, but a shepherd who does what He does because He loves the sheep! Because He loves us, we will enjoy blessings in this life and eternity in His presence forever in the next.

The great news about the Lord being our Shepherd is that He is the best possible shepherd. Human shepherds can't always provide, guide, protect, or bless their sheep. Sometimes there is no food or water available, or the danger is too great for them. We never have to worry about that with God. He is able to do all these things and nothing can stop Him from being our Shepherd and faithfully taking care of His sheep. As a result, we do not have to worry because God will take care of us.

## TOOK

Review the lesson by asking the students for the four ways God is like a shepherd (He provides, guides, protects, and blesses). Remind them that because they have the best shepherd, they do not have to worry about anything.

**Pray:** Thank the Lord for being our faithful Shepherd. Praise Him for His provision, guidance, protection, and blessing.

**Parent Question:** How is God like a shepherd?

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on Psalm 23 by David Guzik

### Psalm 23 - The LORD Is My Shepherd and My Host

*Like many others, this beloved Psalm bears the simple title, A Psalm of David. Most account it to be a Psalm of David's maturity, but with vivid remembrance of his youth as a shepherd. Spurgeon wrote, "I like to recall the fact that this Psalm was written by David, probably when he was a king. He had been a shepherd, and he was not ashamed of his former occupation."*

*"It has charmed more griefs to rest than all the philosophy of the world. It has remanded to their dungeon more felon thoughts, more black doubts, more thieving sorrows, than there are sands on the sea-shore. It has comforted the noble host of the poor. It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the heart of the sick, of captives in dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illuminated; it has visited the prisoner, and broken his chains, and, like Peter's angel, led him forth in imagination, and sung him back to his home again. It has made the dying Christian slave freer than his master, and consoled those whom, dying, he left behind mourning, not so much that he was gone, as because they were left behind, and could not go too." (Beecher, cited in Spurgeon)*

*"Millions of people have memorized this psalm, even those who have learned few other Scripture portions. Ministers have used it to comfort people who are going through severe personal trials, suffering illness, or dying. For some, the words of this psalm have been the last they have ever uttered in life." (Boice)*

A. The LORD as Shepherd sustains.

1. (1) A declaration and its immediate result.

The LORD is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

a. **The LORD is my shepherd:** David thought about God, the God of Israel; as he thought about his relationship with God, he made the analogy of a Shepherd and his sheep. God was like a **shepherd** to David, and David was like a sheep to God.

i. In one sense, this was not unusual. There are other references to this analogy between the deity and his followers in ancient Middle Eastern cultures. "In all Eastern thought, and very definitely in Biblical literature, a king is a shepherd." (Morgan)

ii. It is also a familiar idea throughout the Bible, that the LORD is a Shepherd to His people. The idea begins as early as the Book of Genesis, where Moses called the LORD *the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel* (Genesis 49:24).

- In Psalm 28:9 David invited the LORD to shepherd the people of Israel, and to *bear them up forever*. Psalm 80:1 also looks to the LORD as the Shepherd of Israel, who would lead Joseph like a flock.
- Ecclesiastes 12:11 speaks of the words of the wise, which *are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd*.

- Isaiah 40:11 tells us that the LORD *will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm. Micah 7:14 invites the LORD to Shepherd Your people with Your staff...As in days of old.*
- Zechariah 13:7 speaks of the Messiah as the Shepherd who will be struck, and the sheep scattered (quoted in Matthew 26:31).
- In John 10:11 and 10:14 Jesus clearly spoke of Himself as the good shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep and who can say, *"I know My sheep, and am known by My own."* Hebrews 13:20 speaks of Jesus as *that great Shepherd of the sheep, and 1 Peter 2:25 calls Jesus the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls and 1 Peter 5:4 calls Jesus the Chief Shepherd.*
- The idea of Jesus as the Good Shepherd was precious to early Christians. One of the more common motifs in catacomb paintings is Jesus as a shepherd, with a lamb carried across His shoulders.

iii. It's remarkable that the LORD would call Himself our shepherd. "In Israel, as in other ancient societies, a shepherd's work was considered the lowest of all works. If a family needed a shepherd, it was always the youngest son, like David, who got this unpleasant assignment....Jehovah has chosen to be our shepherd, David says. The great God of the universe has stooped to take just such care of you and me." (Boice)

iv. "Saith Rabbi Joseph Bar Hamna, there is not a more contemptible office than that of a shepherd...But God disdaineth not to feed his flock, to guide, to govern, to defend them, to handle and heal them, to tend and take care of them." (Trapp)

v. David knew this metaphor in a unique way, having been a shepherd himself. "David uses the most comprehensive and intimate metaphor yet encountered in the Psalms, preferring usually the more distant 'king' or 'deliverer', or the impersonal 'rock', 'shield', *etc.*; whereas the shepherd lives with his flock and is everything to it: guide, physician and protector." (Kidner)

b. **The LORD is my shepherd:** David knew this in a personal sense. He could say, **"my shepherd."** It wasn't just that the LORD was a shepherd for others in theoretical sense; He was a real, personal **shepherd** for David himself.

i. "A sheep is an object of property, not a wild animal; its owner sets great store by it, and frequently it is bought with a great price. It is well to know, as certainly as David did, that we belong to the Lord. There is a noble tone of confidence about this sentence. There is no 'if' nor 'but,' *nor even 'I hope so;'* but he says, *'The Lord is my shepherd.'*" (Spurgeon)

ii. "The sweetest word of the whole is that monosyllable, 'My.' He does not say, *'The Lord is the shepherd of the world at large, and leadeth forth the multitude as his flock,'* but *'The Lord is my shepherd;'* if he be a Shepherd to no one else, he is a Shepherd to me; he cares for me, watches over me, and preserves me." (Spurgeon)

iii. Overwhelmingly, the idea behind God's role as **shepherd** is a loving care and concern. *David found comfort and security in the thought that God cared for him like a shepherd cares for his sheep.*

iv. David felt that he *needed a shepherd. The heart of this Psalm doesn't connect with the self-sufficient. But those who acutely sense their need - the poor in spirit Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:2) - find great comfort in the idea that God can be a shepherd to them in a personal sense.*

v. Spurgeon said that before a man can truly say, **"the LORD is my shepherd"** he must first feel himself to be a sheep by nature, "for he cannot know that God is his Shepherd unless he feels in himself that he has the nature of a sheep." He must relate to a sheep in its foolishness, its dependency, and in the warped nature of its will.



vi. "A sheep, saith Aristotle, is a foolish and sluggish creature...aptest of anything to wander, though it feel no want, and unabled to return...a sheep can make no shift to save itself from tempests or inundation; there it stands and will perish, if not driven away by the shepherd." (Trapp)

c. **I shall not want:** For David, the fact of God's shepherd-like care was the end of dissatisfied need. He said, "**I shall not want**" both as a declaration and as a decision.

i. "**I shall not want**" means, "All my needs are supplied by the LORD, my shepherd."

ii. "**I shall not want**" means, "I decide to not desire more than what the LORD, my shepherd gives."

2. (2) How the Shepherd sustains.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

a. **He makes me to lie down:** The LORD as a shepherd knew how to make David rest when he needed it, just as a literal shepherd would care for his sheep. The implication is that the sheep doesn't always know what it needs and what is best for itself, and so needs the help from the shepherd.

i. "The loveliest image afforded by the natural world, is here represented to the imagination; that of a flock, feeding in verdant meadows, and reposing, in quietness, by the rivers of water, running gently through them." (Horne)

b. **To lie down in green pastures:** The shepherd also knew the good places to make his sheep rest. He faithfully guides the sheep to **green pastures**.

i. Philip Keller (in *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*) writes that sheep do not lie down easily, and will not unless four conditions are met. Because they are timid they will not lie down if they are afraid. Because they are social animals they will not lie down if there is friction among the sheep. If flies or parasites trouble them they will not lie down. Finally, if sheep are anxious about food or hungry they will not lie down. Rest comes because the shepherd has dealt with fear, friction, flies, and famine.

c. **He leads me beside the still waters:** The shepherd knows when the sheep needs **green pastures**, and knows when the sheep needs **the still waters**. The images are rich with the sense of comfort, care, and rest.

B. The LORD as Shepherd leads.

1. (3) Where the Shepherd leads and why.

He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

a. **He restores my soul:** The tender care of the shepherd described in the previous verse had its intended effect. David's soul was restored by the figurative *green pastures and still waters the shepherd brought him to*.

i. **Restores** may picture the rescue of a lost one. "It may picture the straying sheep brought back, as in Isaiah 49:5, or perhaps Psalm 60:1 (Hebrew 60:3), which use the same verb, whose intransitive sense is often

‘repent’ or ‘be converted’ (eg. Hosea 14:1f.; Joel 2:12).” (Kidner)

ii. “In Hebrew the words ‘restores my soul’ can mean ‘brings me to repentance’ (or conversion).” (Boice)

iii. “‘*He restoreth my soul.*’ *He restores it to its original purity, that was now grown foul and black with sin; for also, what good were it to have ‘green’ pastures and a black soul!*” (Baker, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **He leads me:** The shepherd was a *guide*. *The sheep didn’t need to know where the green pastures or still waters were; all he needed to know was where the shepherd was. The shepherd would guide the sheep to what he needed.*

c. **In the paths of righteousness:** The leadership of the shepherd did not only comfort and restore the sheep; he also guides him into **righteousness**. God’s guidance of David had a *moral aspect*.

i. “They are thenceforth led in ‘the path of righteousness’; in the way of holy obedience. Obstructions are removed; they are strengthened, to walk and run in the paths of God’s commandments.” (Horne)

d. **For His name’s sake:** The shepherd guides the sheep with an overarching view to the credit and glory of the shepherd’s own **name**.

i. **For His name’s sake:** “To display the glory of his grace, and not on account of any *merit* in me. God’s motives of conduct towards the children of men are derived from the perfections and goodness of his own nature.” (Clarke)

2. (4) The gift of the Shepherd’s presence.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;

For You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

a. **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death:** This is the first dark note in this beautiful Psalm. Previously David wrote of *green pastures and still waters and paths of righteousness*. Yet when following the LORD as shepherd, one may still **walk through the valley of the shadow of death**.

i. David used this powerful phrase to speak of some kind of dark, fearful experience. It is an imprecise phrase, yet its poetry makes perfect sense.

- It is a **valley**, not a mountaintop or broad meadow. A **valley** suggests being hedged in and surrounded.
- It is a valley of the shadow **of death**, facing what seemed to David as the ultimate defeat and evil.
- It is a valley of **the shadow** of death; not facing the substance of death itself, but **the shadow of death**, casting its dark, fearful outline across David’s path.

ii. Notably, David recognized that under the shepherd’s leading he may **walk through** the valley of the shadow of death. It isn’t his destination or dwelling place. Like the Preacher in Ecclesiastes, David might say that *all of life is lived under the shadow of death, and it is the conscious presence of the LORD as shepherd that makes it bearable*.



iii. This line is especially suggestive when we read this Psalm with an eye towards Jesus, the Great Shepherd. We understand that a shadow is not tangible, but is cast by something that is. One can rightly say that we face only **the shadow of death** because Jesus took the *full reality of death in our place*.

b. **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death:** This line from the Psalm – and the Psalm as a whole – has proven itself precious to many a dying saint through the ages. They have been comforted, strengthened, and warmed by the thought that the LORD would shepherd them **through the valley of the shadow of death**.

i. Near death, the saint still calmly walks – he does not need to quicken his pace in alarm or panic. Near death, the saint does not walk *in* the valley, but **through** the valley.

ii. “Death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains. Some one has said that when there is a shadow there must be light somewhere, and so there is. Death stands by the side of the highway in which we have to travel, and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across our path; let us then rejoice that there is a light beyond. Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man’s path-way even for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of a sword cannot kill; the shadow of death cannot destroy us.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “It has an inexpressibly delightful application to the dying; but it is for the living, too...The words are not in the future tense, and therefore are not reserved for a distant moment.” (Spurgeon)

c. **I will fear no evil:** Despite every dark association with the idea of **the valley of the shadow of death**, under the care of the LORD his shepherd, David could resolutely say this. Even in a fearful place, the presence of the shepherd banished the **fear** of evil.

i. We might say that the shepherd’s presence did not eliminate the *presence of evil*, but certainly the **fear of evil**.

d. **For You are with me:** This emphasizes that it is the *presence of the shepherd that eliminated the fear of evil for His sheep. No matter his present environment, David could look to the fact of God’s shepherd-like presence and know*, **“You are with me”** and **“I will fear no evil.”**

i. Significantly, it is at the dangerous moment pictured in the Psalm that the “He” of Psalm 23:1-3 changes to **“You.”** The LORD as Shepherd is now in the first person.

e. **Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me:** The **rod** and the **staff** were instruments used by a shepherd. The idea is of a sturdy walking stick, used to gently (as possible) guide the sheep and to protect from potential predators.

i. There is some debate among commentators as to if David had the idea of two separate instruments (the **rod** and the **staff**), or one instrument used two ways. The Hebrew word for **rod** (*shaybet*) here seems to simply mean “a stick” with a variety of applications. The Hebrew word for **staff** (*mishaynaw*) seems to speak of “a support” in the sense of a walking stick.

ii. Kidner notes: “The *rod* (a cudgel worn at the belt) and *staff* (to walk with, and to round up the flock) were the shepherd’s weapon and implement: the former for defence (*cf.* 1 Samuel 17:35), and the latter for control – since discipline is security.”

iii. Maclaren writes: “The rod and the staff seem to be two names for one instrument, which was used both to beat off predatory animals and to direct the sheep.”

iv. This instrument (or instruments) of guidance was a **comfort** to David. It helped him – even in **the valley of the shadow of death** – to know that God guided him, even through correction. It is a great **comfort** to know that God will correct us when needed.

C. The LORD as Host.

1. (5) Blessing in the presence of danger.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

a. **You prepare a table before me:** Without departing from the previous picture of *the valley of the shadow of death*, David envisioned the provision and goodness given by the LORD as a host, inviting David to a rich **table** prepared for him.

i. “Here the *second allegory* begins. A magnificent banquet is provided by a most liberal and benevolent host; who has not only the *bounty* to feed me, but power to protect me; and, though surrounded by *enemies*, I sit down to this table with confidence, knowing that I shall feast in perfect security.” (Clarke)

ii. David gives a beautiful picture: **table** suggests *bounty*; **prepare** suggests *foresight and care*; **before me** suggests *the personal connection*.

b. **In the presence of my enemies:** This is a striking phrase. The goodness and care suggested by the prepared **table** is set right in the midst of **the presence of my enemies**. The host’s care and concern doesn’t eliminate **the presence of my enemies**, but enables the experience of God’s goodness and bounty even in their midst.

i. “This is the condition of God’s servant – always conflict, but always a spread table.” (Maclaren)

ii. “When a soldier is in the presence of his enemies, if he eats at all he snatches a hasty meal, and away he hastens to the fight. But observe: ‘Thou *preparest a table*,’ just as a servant does when she unfolds the damask cloth and displays the ornaments of the feast on an ordinary peaceful occasion. Nothing is hurried, there is no confusion, no disturbance, the enemy is at the door and yet God prepares a table, and the Christian sits down and eats as if everything were in perfect peace.” (Spurgeon)

c. **You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over:** Despite the dangers about and the **presence** of **enemies**, David enjoyed the richness of his host’s goodness. He was refreshed by a **head** anointed **with oil**; his **cup** was over-filled.

i. “Beloved, I will ask you now a question. How would it be with you if God had filled your cup in proportion to your faith? How much would you have had in your cup?” (Spurgeon)

ii. “Those that have this happiness must carry their cup upright, and see that it overflows into their poor brethren’s emptier vessels.” (Trapp)

2. (6) Blessing for the future.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD

Forever.

a. **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:** The host's care brought the **goodness and mercy** of God to David, and he lived in the faithful expectation of it continuing **all the days of his life**.

i. "*Mercy* is the covenant-word rendered 'steadfast love' elsewhere...Together with *goodness* it suggests the steady kindness and support that one can count on in the family or between firm friends." (Kidner)

ii. "We are well escorted, with a Shepherd in front and these twin angels behind!" (Meyer)

iii. "These twin guardian angels will always be with me at my back and my beck. Just as when great princes go abroad they must not go unattended, so it is with the believer." (Spurgeon)

b. **And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever:** The Psalm ends with the calmest assurance that he would enjoy the presence of the LORD **forever** – both in his days on this earth and beyond.

i. "In the Old Testament world, to eat and drink at someone's table created a bond of mutual loyalty, and could be the culminated token of a covenant...So to be God's guest is to be more than a acquaintance, invited for a day. It is to live with Him." (Kidner)

ii. "While I am here I will be a child at home with my God; the whole world shall be his house to me; and when I ascend into the upper chamber I shall not change my company, nor even change the house; I shall only go to dwell in the upper storey of the house of the Lord for ever." (Spurgeon)