

Template 2: Main Lesson, Activity and Discussion Questions | Ages 5 to 11, Read Aloud Lesson, Scripture Centered, Apologetics Rich, Christ Centered

WEEK 28 | SUNDAY, JULY 12, 2026

David the Shepherd King

Primary Scripture: Psalm 23

BIBLE TIMELINE PLACEMENT

Last week David defeated Goliath and became Israel's champion. Before David is crowned king, he looks back on his whole life and writes this song about the One who has shepherded him the entire way. This sets up what it means to follow a King who is also a Shepherd, all the way to Jesus.

BIG IDEA

The LORD is David's shepherd, and He wants to be your shepherd too, all the way to Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

1 OPENING BIBLE FOUNDATION

Before we begin, let's remember something wonderful. The Bible is not just one book. It is sixty six books, written by more than forty different people, across a very long time, in different places, facing different situations. And yet every single page tells one true story, God's story. God Himself is the true Author behind every human writer, and every part of that story points forward to Jesus. Today we are going to read words written by a shepherd boy who became a king, and even his song points us straight to Jesus.

2 MEMORY VERSE

Our memory verse this week comes from Psalm 23:1.

MEMORY VERSE
Psalm 23:1
<i>The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.</i>

That means because the LORD takes care of David completely, David does not have to be afraid he will be left without what he needs. Let's say it together. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. One more time, so it settles into our hearts. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. We are going to come back to this verse several times today, because it is the heartbeat of the whole lesson.

3 SETTING THE SCENE

Last week we watched a shepherd boy named David walk onto a battlefield with nothing but a sling and five smooth stones, and watch God win a battle no army could win. David did not stay a shepherd boy forever. God had already chosen him to become Israel's next king. But before David ever puts on a crown, he sits down and writes one of the most beloved songs in the whole Bible. It is called a psalm, which simply means a song written to God. In this song, David is not thinking about armies or crowns. He is thinking about sheep, because that is where his story began, and he is thinking about the One who has taken care of him this entire time.

4 MAIN LESSON NARRATIVE

Imagine sitting on a hillside outside a little town called Bethlehem. The grass is soft under you. The sky is turning gold because the sun is setting. Somewhere nearby, sheep are settling down for the night, and you can hear them breathing and shifting in the quiet. This is where David grew up, long before he was a king, long before he ever faced a giant. David spent years and years alone in fields just like this one, watching sheep.

Do you remember what happened last week? David walked out onto a battlefield as a young shepherd boy, and God used him to defeat Goliath, a giant no soldier in Israel dared to fight. David was not a soldier. He was a shepherd. But God had already chosen him, and God was already preparing him, because God had a much bigger plan for David than anyone could see yet.

Now David is older. He has faced the giant. Everyone in Israel knows his name. One day soon he will wear a crown. But before any of that fully happens, David sits down and writes a song. Not a song about armies, or crowns, or victories. A song about sheep, and about the One who has taken care of him his whole life. We call this kind of song a psalm, which simply means a song written to God. This one is Psalm 23, and it might be the most loved chapter in the entire Bible.

Now, someone might wonder, how do we even know David really wrote this, or that any of it happened the way the Bible says? That is not a bad question to ask. God does not ask us to turn off our minds. Many of David's songs are labeled right in Scripture as belonging to David, and the rest of the Bible, including Jesus Himself, treats David's life as true history, not made up stories. The God who never lies has given us a Word we can trust completely.

Our memory verse this week comes right from the very first line David wrote. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. Let's say that together. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. That means because the LORD takes care of David completely, David does not have to be afraid he will be left without what he needs.

Here is something important to understand before we go any further. In David's world, being a shepherd was one of the hardest jobs there was. A shepherd woke up before the sun and led the sheep out to find grass and water. A shepherd stayed awake late into the night, watching for wolves and lions in the darkness. David himself once told King Saul that he had already killed a lion and a bear with his bare hands, just to protect his father's sheep. A shepherd carried two tools everywhere he went. A rod, a

short sturdy club, used to fight off any animal that threatened the flock. And a staff, a long stick with a curved hook on the end, used to guide the sheep and gently pull them back if they wandered too close to danger.

And here is the part David wants us to understand. Sheep cannot take care of themselves. They cannot outrun a wolf. They cannot find their own way home in the dark. They need a shepherd, or they will not survive. David knew that better than almost anyone alive, because he had spent his whole boyhood being that shepherd for real sheep. So when David says the LORD is my shepherd, he is not just using a pretty picture. He is saying, I know exactly what a good shepherd does, because it used to be my job, and now I know that God does all of that, and more, for me.

Let's listen to what David says next. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. Close your eyes for just a second and imagine that. Soft grass under you. Still water, calm enough that you could see your own reflection in it. No rushing. No danger. Just rest. That is what David is picturing when he thinks about how God takes care of him. Not just food for his body, but rest and peace for his very soul, the deep part of him that gets tired and worried sometimes, just like yours does.

Then David says something very important. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. That is a big phrase, so let's slow down and think about that. Righteousness simply means doing what is right in God's eyes. David is saying God leads him down good and right paths. But notice why. Not because David earned it by being extra good. For His name's sake, David says. That means God does this because of who God is, His own goodness and faithfulness, not because David deserved a reward. This matters so much, because some people think God only takes care of us if we are good enough first. That is not what this psalm says at all. God is good, so God takes care of His people. That is where our story begins, not our own goodness.

Now the psalm takes a turn, and it becomes one of the most honest moments in the whole Bible. David writes, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Did you notice something? David does not say God will make sure he never walks through hard, scary, dark places. He says even though he walks through them, he does not have to be afraid, because God is with him the whole way through. That is such an important difference. Having God as your shepherd does not mean bad things will never happen. It means you are never facing those things alone.

Let's say our memory verse again, because this is exactly what it helps us remember. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. Even in the valley, even in the dark and scary places, David is not left wanting, because his shepherd is right there with him.

David even says, Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. Remember those two shepherd's tools we talked about? The rod that fights off danger, and the staff that gently guides and rescues. David is not scared of those tools. He finds comfort in them, because he knows exactly what they are for. They mean his shepherd is close, ready to protect him and to guide him home.

Then the picture changes one more time, and it becomes almost surprising. David writes, You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Picture

that for a second. A table full of good food, set up right in front of people who wanted to hurt David. Oil poured on his head, which in David's time was a sign of honor and welcome, like being treated as a guest of highest honor. A cup so full it spills over the edges. Even with danger close by, God's care for David does not pause. It does not hide. It overflows.

David finishes his song with confident hope. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Mercy means God being kind to us even when we do not deserve it. And that word follow is actually a strong word here. It does not mean goodness and mercy are far behind, barely keeping up. It means they are chasing after David, on purpose, every single day of his life. David is so sure of this, he says he will live in God's house forever.

Here is where we begin to see our need for Jesus, and this is the most beautiful part of the whole lesson. David, the shepherd boy, grew up to actually become Israel's king. A shepherd who became a shepherd king. But even David, sitting on Israel's throne, still needed the LORD to be his shepherd. David could never fully protect his people forever. David could never defeat death itself. David eventually grew old, and David eventually died, just like every other king before or after him.

But hundreds of years later, someone else stood up in front of a crowd and said something astonishing. I am the good shepherd, He said. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. That is Jesus. Jesus is the greater Son of David, the true Shepherd King that Psalm 23 was pointing toward the whole time. Jesus did not just walk beside His sheep through the valley of the shadow of death, the way David pictured it. Jesus actually walked through death itself. He lived a perfect life, never once sinning, then He was crucified on a cross, taking the punishment for our sin, and three days later He rose back to life, defeating death completely, so death would never again have the final word over anyone who belongs to Him.

Psalm 23 itself does not show us Father, Son, and Holy Spirit acting separately, but the whole Bible helps us see the full picture. God is one God in three Persons. God the Father sent Jesus the Son to become our Good Shepherd, exactly like this psalm pictures, and everyone who belongs to Jesus hears His voice and follows Him. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, always together, always at work, caring for God's people.

So what does this mean for you, this week? It means when you are scared of something, maybe the dark, maybe a hard day at school, maybe a friendship that feels shaky, you can remember you have a shepherd who is with you in it, not just watching from far away. It means you do not have to earn God's care by being perfect first. Jesus already gave His life for His sheep. If you have never told Jesus you want Him to be your shepherd, you can talk to Him right now, right where you are sitting. You do not need special words. You can simply say, Jesus, thank You for being my shepherd, please help me trust You this week. He hears you every single time.

Let's say our memory verse one final time, because now it means even more than when we started. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. Not because we are good enough. Because our Shepherd is good enough, and He already gave His life for His sheep.

David wrote this song looking back on a shepherd's life that pointed forward to a king. We get to read it looking back at a King who calls Himself our Shepherd. That is the beautiful part. The story always

points to Jesus.

5 WHY WE CAN TRUST GOD'S WORD

David's psalms are recorded and confirmed throughout the rest of Scripture, and Jesus Himself treated David's writings as true and trustworthy. When the Bible tells us David wrote this song about God as his shepherd, we can trust that fully. If you ever have a question about whether something in the Bible really happened, that is a good question to ask, and it is always welcome here.

6 WHAT THIS SHOWS US ABOUT JESUS

Psalm 23 shows us that every person needs a shepherd, someone to provide, guide, protect, and walk with us even through the hardest, darkest moments. David could write beautifully about that need, and could even shepherd Israel as king for a time, but David could not conquer death. Centuries later, Jesus stood up and said, I am the good shepherd. Jesus lived a perfect life, never sinning once, then died on the cross to take the punishment for our sin, and rose again on the third day, defeating death forever. Anyone who trusts Him is forgiven and receives brand new life, following the Good Shepherd all the way home.

7 GOD REVEALED AS TRINITY

Psalm 23 itself does not show Father, Son, and Spirit acting separately, but the whole Bible helps us see the full picture. God is one God in three Persons. God the Father sent Jesus the Son to become our Good Shepherd, exactly like this psalm pictures, and everyone who belongs to Jesus hears His voice and follows Him. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, always together, always at work, caring for God's people.

8 LIFE APPLICATION

This week, when you feel afraid, whether of the dark, a hard test, or a shaky friendship, remember your Shepherd is with you, not just watching from a distance. When you are tempted to think you have to earn God's love by being perfect, remember God cares for His sheep for His own name's sake, not because they deserved it. When life feels like a valley, you do not have to pretend it is not scary. You can simply remember Whose voice you are listening for.

9 DEFENDING THE TRUTH

What if a friend says believing God is like a shepherd is just a nice old fashioned idea, not something that actually matters today?

Sheep still need someone to lead, feed, and protect them, and so do we. The comfort is not in the picture of a shepherd, it is in the God who actually is one.

Scripture to remember, John 10:11. I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

How to say it kindly. You could say something like, I get why that sounds old fashioned, but it still matters to me because it means I am never facing hard things by myself.

10 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Core Questions for All Ages

What does it mean that the LORD is David's shepherd?

It means God takes care of David completely, providing, guiding, and protecting him, just like a real shepherd cares for sheep.

What are the two tools a shepherd carried, and what were they for?

A rod, to fight off danger, and a staff, to guide sheep and rescue them when they wander.

Does Psalm 23 promise that hard, scary things will never happen to us?

No. It promises we will never face those hard things alone, because God is with us through them.

Why does David say God guides him in right paths for His name's sake, not because David earned it?

Because God's care comes from who God is, His own goodness, not from us being good enough to deserve it.

Optional Deeper Questions

Who in the Bible later calls Himself the Good Shepherd, and what did He do that David could never do?

Jesus, in John 10. Jesus did not just walk with His sheep through the valley of death, He walked through death itself and rose again.

Why do you think David remembered being a shepherd even after he became a powerful king?

Answers will vary. It shows David never forgot he still needed God to care for him, no matter how important he became.

What is one hard or scary thing you are facing this week that you can bring to your Shepherd?

Personal reflection, no single right answer. Encourage honest sharing.

How does knowing goodness and mercy are chasing after you, not just following far behind, change how you feel about this week?

Personal reflection. Encourage children to express hope and comfort.

11 HANDS ON ACTIVITY

Activity Name

Follow the Shepherd

Purpose

Help children physically experience trusting a guide they cannot fully see, connecting to trusting the Good Shepherd.

Supplies

A blindfold or scarf for eyes, optional. An open classroom space. No other supplies needed.

Time Needed

8 to 10 minutes.

Preparation Before Class

Clear a safe, open path in the room, free of obstacles that could cause injury.

Step by Step Instructions

Pair up children, or do it as a whole group with one leader. One child closes their eyes or wears a blindfold, becoming the sheep. A partner becomes the shepherd, using only their voice to guide the sheep safely across the room, calling out gentle directions like two steps forward or turn slightly right. Switch roles so every child experiences being led. Gather back together to debrief.

Scripture Connection

Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and follow Him, John 10:27.

Debrief Questions

What was it like trusting a voice you could not see? Was it easier to trust a shepherd who your teammate knows well? How is that like trusting Jesus even when we cannot see Him?

How to Adapt for Younger Children

Skip the blindfold. Simply have younger children close their eyes and hold a partner's hand while walking slowly.

How to Adapt for Older Children

Add gentle obstacles, soft items on the floor, for the shepherd to guide the sheep around, and time each pair.

12 OPTIONAL REVIEW GAME

Game Name

Shepherd Says

Purpose

Reinforce the memory verse and lesson vocabulary in a fun, low supply way.

Supplies

None needed.

How to Play

Play like Simon Says, except the leader says Shepherd Says before a command. Between commands, ask a quick review question from the lesson. If a child answers correctly, everyone does a fun shepherd themed action together, like pretending to gently guide sheep.

Review Questions and Answers

What is our memory verse? The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. What are a shepherd's two tools? Rod and staff. Who called Himself the Good Shepherd? Jesus. What did the shepherd's staff do? Guided the sheep and pulled them back from danger.

13 TEACHER CLOSING

Today we learned that David, a shepherd boy who became a king, wrote one of the most beloved songs in the whole Bible about the LORD as his shepherd. We learned that God cares for His people not because we earn it, but because of who God is. And we learned that Jesus, David's greater Son, is the Good Shepherd who did not just walk with us through hard and scary places, but walked through death itself so we could live forever with Him. Jesus loves every single child in this room, exactly as you are, right now. If you want to trust Jesus as your Shepherd today, or if you simply want to talk to Him honestly about something hard you are facing, you can do that anytime, right where you are sitting. Let's say our memory verse one more time together. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. Let's pray. Dear Jesus, thank You for being our Good Shepherd. Thank You for taking care of us even in scary and hard moments. Help us trust You this week, and help us remember we are never facing anything alone. In Jesus' name, amen.

14 TAKEAWAY TRUTH

The LORD is my shepherd, and because of Jesus, I am never alone.