

WEEK SIX

## PSALM 23: YOU ARE MY SHEPHERD

### BIG IDEA

Psalm 23 tells us that

# GOD LOVES AND CARES

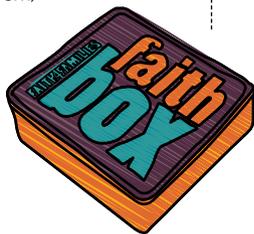
for us like a shepherd watches over his sheep

#### PREP: (Kids can help!)

- Make a small crown (cut a zigzagged edge on a strip of card/paper and staple it into a circle).
- Get a picnic or snack ready to share outside on a blanket.
- Find a big bowl for water and a cup.
- Gather together some things for an outdoor obstacle course (chairs, boxes or outdoor toys, a piece of wood to walk along, etc.)
- Get a blindfold (a tea towel or scarf will do).
- Find a 'shepherd's staff' (a broom will do).

#### WHAT GOES IN THE BOX?

- Five stones and a length of wool/string (around 20 cm)
- The small crown
- A musical instrument
- A pen
- Some chalk
- Insect repellent



#### OUT OF THE BOX

- Take out the five stones, the wool, and the crown, and show them to everyone.

Here are some clues about someone in the Bible whom we are going to talk about today.

- **Can anyone guess who it is?**
- **What do the clues remind you of?**

We are going to read a special song or psalm written by David.

Remember that David was a shepherd boy who looked after his father's sheep. He killed a HUGE giant called Goliath using five stones and a sling. He also became a wonderful king.

- **Do you know anything else about David?**

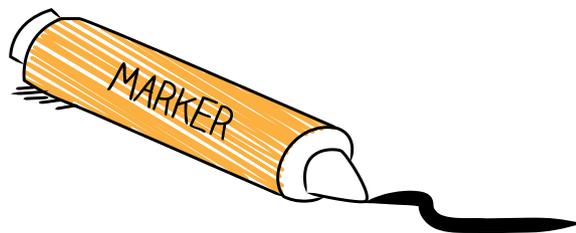
Sometimes David made some really bad choices, and they hurt him and other people. He needed to say sorry. But he went on to follow God with all his heart.

#### OUT OF THE BOX

- Bring out the musical instrument.

#### Why would this be in here?

Well David loved music. He played an instrument called a harp. He wrote many songs and sang them to God. In the songs he told God what he was thinking and feeling. One song he wrote was about how God was like a



shepherd to him, and he was like a sheep. It is Psalm 23, and it is one of the most famous songs in the Bible.

## READ

### A psalm of David

☞ The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.

He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.

He renews my strength.

He guides me along right paths, bringing honour to his name.

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies.

You honour me by anointing my head with oil.

My cup overflows with blessings.

Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever. ☞

*Psalm 23, New International Version*

## EXPLORE

We are going to see if we can work out what each line of the psalm is saying to us.

But first of all we need a shepherd.

- Put a tea towel on the head of a parent who then becomes the 'shepherd'.

## OUT OF THE BOX

- Take out the pen. The 'shepherd' draws a small cross on everyone's ear lobe to show who they belong to.

**READ verse 1 of Psalm 23** "The Lord is my shepherd. I have all that I need."

Send everyone to a mirror to see if they can work out what their ears say about who they belong to.

*(We belong to God. He is our shepherd and will take care of us.)*

- The shepherd leads everyone outside where they lie down on the grass.

**READ verse 2 of Psalm 23** "He lets me rest in green meadows."

**Why is a green meadow a good place for sheep?**  
*(a safe place to eat and rest)*

**Where do you like to rest? What do you do before you go to bed at night that helps you sleep?**

- Bring a large bowl of water outside.

**READ verse 3** "He leads me beside peaceful streams."

Sheep are nervous animals, and fast rushing water scares them. Their skinny legs mean they would fall over easily in rushing water and drown. Shepherds find peaceful calm water for their sheep, so they can drink and not be afraid.

- Let everyone dip their fingers into the still water.

The psalm says that peaceful water "renews my strength."

**How does it feel to wave your hand gently in the water?**

## WEEK SIX

Sometimes sheep get 'cast' – or stuck on their backs. A resting sheep might roll over a bit too far on its side and end up stuck on its back with its legs waving in the air. A 'cast' sheep is easy prey for predators, so a shepherd keeps watch and, if needed, lifts them back on their feet again. When we get stuck or cast down, God lifts us back on our feet too.

- **READ verse 4** “He guides me along right paths, bringing honour to his name.” God is our leader and guide. God shows us the right way to go. Let’s follow God’s ‘right path’ now.

### PLAY

- Put out your obstacles to create a narrow pathway with several twists and turns.

*Sometimes things get in our way – just like in this obstacle course. Shepherds always travelled a path first before they took their sheep to a new place, to check the path was okay. God always goes before us, too!*

- Choose a child and blindfold them. They must negotiate the course while the shepherd calls out directions (e.g. “Turn left then go straight ahead 3 steps”).

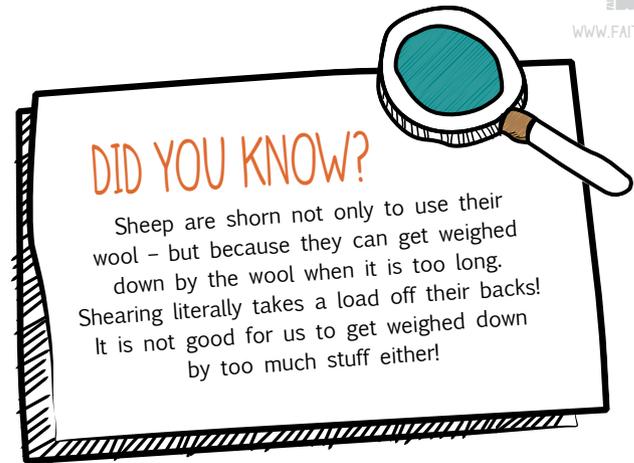
If the blindfolded child touches an obstacle, they must hold up their hands in a sign like a cross to signal they need the shepherd’s help.

The shepherd holds out his staff (the broom) for the ‘sheep’ to grab onto while he guides them around it.

The others make scary noises and call out distractions such as “Come this way – hurry up!” “It’s much more fun over here.” “Check out this new app!” “This is so cool! Buy this!”

Take turns! You may want to use your phone or watch to time who makes it fastest through the course.

- **READ verse 5** “Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Sheep are shorn not only to use their wool – but because they can get weighed down by the wool when it is too long. Shearing literally takes a load off their backs! It is not good for us to get weighed down by too much stuff either!

Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.” Sometimes the way is dark and scary, but the shepherd will help the sheep. He uses a staff, which is a long stick with a crook on one end, to catch the sheep if they fall or get stuck. He uses the rod as a club to scare away wild animals that might try to hurt the sheep.

### Questions:

- **How did you know the right path?**
- **How easy was it to hear the shepherd’s voice?**
- **What distracted you most?**
- **What kinds of things distract us every day from hearing God’s voice?**
- **READ verse 6** “You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honour me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.”
- Bring out the blanket and picnic/snack to share.

### OUT OF THE BOX

- Take out some insect repellent and as you spray it on everyone explain how the shepherd would put smelly oil on the sheep’s heads to keep the insects away.
- Ask the children to hold out a cup while a parent pours water from the large bowl into the cup until

“WHEN JESUS SAW THE CROWDS, HE HAD COMPASSION FOR THEM, BECAUSE THEY WERE HARASSED AND HELPLESS, LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD.”

- MATTHEW 9:36 -

it overflows!

**READ verse 7** “Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life”

This is a bit like a summary. Can you remember the different ways the shepherd showed goodness to the sheep? (*stayed with them, protected them, fed them, gave them fresh water, put oil on them, etc.*)

God is just like that with us. We too get scared, get upset with others, get annoyed, and worry about not having what we need, but God’s unfailing love stays with us all the time.

**READ verse 8** “and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.”

## OUT OF THE BOX

- Take out the chalk and draw a big cross on the concrete to remind you of God’s love for us.

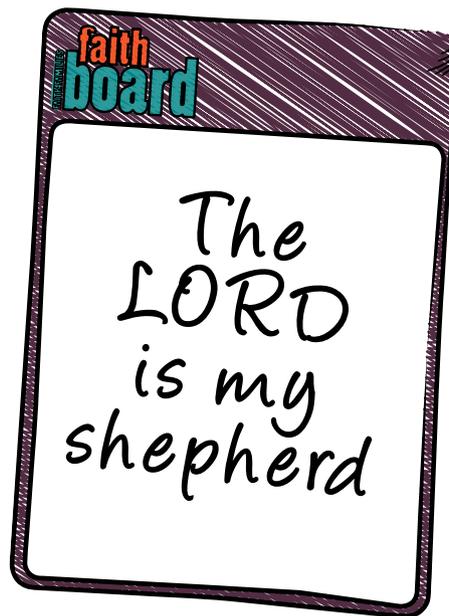
## PRAY

- Sit around the chalk cross and thank God for loving us like a shepherd.

Let everyone choose one thing God the Shepherd does for them, and say ‘thank you’ for it.

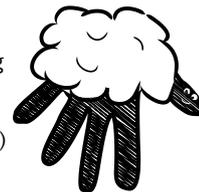
## LIVE

- Write “The Lord is my shepherd” on your driveway, and each time you go outside this week, try to remember a way that God is like a Good Shepherd.



## OTHER IDEAS

- Make grass hair creatures... and let them remind you how the Good Shepherd leads us to green meadows. A great site for instructions is <http://www.homemade-gifts-made-easy.com/grass-heads.html>
- Invite some friends over for an evening and set up a Burma Trail in the dark. Get a long piece of rope and tie it around the trees in an outside area (you may wish to go to a local park) at child-height for them to hold on to and follow. (If you do not want to stay up late enough for it to get dark, use blindfolds!)
- Make friendship bracelets as a reminder that God’s love is always there.
- Make handprint sheep by gluing cotton wool on to black card (see illustration.)



CHECK OUT WHAT YOU NEED FOR NEXT WEEK...

