

June 2025 – The Lord is my shepherd

Please note Bible stories and themes may occasionally differ from this overview.

During June we explore in detail a song believed to be written by David – Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my shepherd'. This psalm paints a beautiful picture of tranquillity, and so we spend time thinking about the outworking of **peace** in our lives while reflecting on God as our shepherd and how we can bring God's **peace** into the world. We consider how God **gently** leads and guides us. We find out that even in our darkest moments of life, God is **faithful** and remains with us and comforts us. And finally we acknowledge God's **goodness**, as he provides for us and blesses us.

Session 1 7/8 June

Session Aim: To focus on God's provision
Bible Ref: Psalm 23:1

Today's fruit

God, as our shepherd, cares and provides for us; he gives us **peace** and asks that we help bring peace to his world.

God is with me

This short verse introduces us to what is now a very well-known psalm. It sets the scene of tranquillity, as David describes being cared and provided for by God, his shepherd.

As many of the Psalms were, this one is accredited to King David. While there are various themes which his psalms revolve around, this one speaks into the comfort and provision of God in David's life. We know that David would have spent many hours in his childhood protecting a flock of sheep, keeping them safe and ensuring they had the nourishment they needed. This brings context to our understanding of why David may have referred to God as his shepherd.

Reflecting on David's whole life, it is evident that God provided for him, even when David did wrong or things became almost unbearable. David was able to continue as he relied on God to give him all that he needed.

Just as David describes God caring for him like a shepherd, we know that can be the same for us too. And because we know God's peace in our hearts, we can share God's peace too by God's Holy Spirit helping us. We can bring peace to other people, because God's power can work in us.

Think about

Last week we talked about the book of Psalms, with a focus on *Psalm 23*. What can you remember about Psalm 23?

Have you ever seen a field full of sheep? Who do you think looks after them? We read that King David felt like God was his shepherd. What do you think he meant? Why might he have described God as a shepherd?

Have you ever cared for an animal? What did you have to do? How did it feel to look after the animal? How might the animal have felt when you looked after it?

Can you think of times when God has been with you?

Psalm 23 seems very peaceful. We know that one way God cares for us is through peace, but how can we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, show peace to others? Are there any situations at home or school where you could help bring peace?

Let's thank God for the Holy Spirit and ask for God to show us where we can bring peace into the world.

Sunday 8 June: Pentecost Sunday

After Jesus left, a very special gift was sent to the disciples in the form of the Holy Spirit, who would remain with them and with all followers of Jesus for ever! At Pentecost we celebrate the birth of the Church and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Session 2

14/15 June

Session Aim: To explore what it means to be beside calm waters

Bible Ref: Psalm 23:2-3

Today's fruit

God guides us to what we need and leads us in the right direction with **gentleness**.

God will guide

The psalm continues the analogy of the shepherd and the sheep, with God leading David to green fields beside quiet waters. God is guiding him in the direction of what he needs – towards nourishment, fulfilment and rest.

We know from reading Scripture that David battled through many trials and personal difficulties. From reading David's words about lying in a meadow, the song leads us to believe he may have been feeling peaceful at that time and thanking God that he was able to feel and show peace in his life. When we have God's Holy Spirit in us, we can show peace too.

David knew that God was caring for him, and he knew and understood the comfort that came from knowing that.

Think about

Can you imagine yourself in a green meadow beside a gentle little stream of water? What do you think it might feel like to be there? What sounds might you hear? What else might you be able to see or touch or smell? If you wanted to feel peaceful, where would you go? What would you do?

What do you think peace feels like? Can you describe it, or show it with actions?

Can you remember what any of the fruit of the Spirit are? How might we be able to know God's peace in our lives? How might we be able to share God's peace with others?

Are there times when we have to be gentle? Has anyone ever asked you to be gentle? How can you be gentle when you're taking care of something or someone?

Did you know that this week is Refugee Week and World Refugee Day? Have you heard the word 'refugee' before? What have you heard or learnt about it?

Let's pray for those people who have had to leave their homes. Let's ask God's Holy Spirit to help us show gentleness to everyone.

20 June: World Refugee Day

16-22 June: Refugee Week

People from all religions and none want to help take care of refugees. Often refugees are worried and scared when they leave their home. They're looking for somewhere safe and peaceful like we read in our Bible verses.

Having a spirit of gentleness with everyone we meet is important, but it can be particularly impactful for those seeking refuge or asylum, as often they will have experienced some very traumatic events. By modelling gentleness and humility, we can help refugees and people seeking asylum find 'rest for their souls'.

Session 3

21/22 Month

Session Aim: To remember that God is with us and cares for us

Bible Ref: Psalm 23:4

Today's fruit

Even in our darkest moments of life God is **faithful** and remains with us and comforts us.

Relying on God

When we experience difficulties and challenges in life, we don't need to be afraid, because God is with us. He guides, protects and cares for us.

After all the peacefulness and safety in Psalm 23, we now move on to relying on God when things become more difficult. A starkly different picture is painted as we think of a deep, dark valley and think about those times in our lives when we may have been anxious and afraid.

There may be some in your group who have experienced traumatic events, and there may also be some who haven't. As children grow, they begin to understand and be able to use emotional literacy, so the 'dark valley' may be a difficult concept to understand without real life context.

This psalm helps us to remember that God is with us in the good things in life, but he is also with us when we go through difficult things too. This is when it's important for us to rely on God and trust him.

The psalm explains that God's rod and shepherd staff will bring comfort. The rod is a sturdy stick, a weapon to protect the sheep from predators. Most staffs have one of two shapes at the top – an 'r' or a 'Y'. The curve of the first one would help shepherds rescue any sheep that had fallen between rocks or in a bush; the curve could go around their bodies and help pull them back to safety. The forked one could be used to hold down small animals such as snakes which might want to hurt the sheep. These shepherd tools symbolise God's protection, guidance and love for us.

Think about

What do you think the psalm means when it talks about a dark valley? How might a sheep feel when it's walking in a dark valley between the mountains? When might we experience those kinds of feelings?

Have you ever seen a shepherd's staff? Can you draw what shape they often are? In pictures, we often see shepherds holding a 'r'-shaped stick/staff. Sometimes it's more of a 'Y' shape. Do you know why?

Why do you think it says the staff 'comforts' the sheep? What might feel comforting about the shepherd's staff?

Is it easy to trust God? We know that when we rely on God, he is faithful, which means we can trust him to be with us and help us – it means God is trustworthy.

What do you think it means for us to be faithful to God? What might it mean for us to be faithful to other people?

Session 4

28/29 Month

Session Aim: To know that God will always love, welcome and walk with me
Bible Ref: Psalm 23:5-6

Today's fruit

We acknowledge God's **goodness**, as he provides for us and blesses us.

Being with God

God welcomes us and prepares everything that we need. We know that God is good, and we are safe knowing that whatever happens, we can be in God's presence for ever.

The psalm leaves the shepherd analogy and finishes by describing what it is like to be welcomed home by God – with respect, love, care and honour. It is filled with good things for us.

Having a table or meal prepared is a sign of welcome and respect. There's almost a sense of anticipation of the arrival.

Being anointed with oil is seen as something special. Some may recall seeing this happen in the coronation ceremony, or remember previous sessions exploring David being anointed by Samuel (April 2024). It is symbolic of many things including being chosen by God and receiving God's approval.

There's a reference to having more than we can hold – a 'cup overflowing' in some translations – another reminder of God's provision and care that we will have more than enough.

Verse six says that '[God's] goodness and love will be with me all my life' (*ICB*). There is no doubt that God's unconditional love will always be there for us.

The final element of the psalm describes being 'in the house of the Lord for ever'. Sometimes we refer to our church buildings as 'God's house'. This could be interpreted as remaining in God's presence every day throughout life.

Think about

Does anyone know any other words for 'welcome'? How about in different languages? How does it feel to be welcomed in somewhere? Were you welcomed in by anyone today? Does anyone welcome you at school? How does that make you feel? When you visit someone's house, what happens when they open the door? What might happen? How do you know if they are expecting you?

The last two verses from Psalm 23 talk about being welcomed by God. It says that God prepares a table, a meal, for us and our cup overflows ('You give me more than I can hold' (*ICB*)). I wonder what your favourite meal is?

In the time and culture when King David was writing the psalm, it would have been usual to show someone's importance by anointing them with oil. It is another reminder of God caring for his people. Have you ever seen this happen? In what other ways do we show people they are special?

Explore it

Leader's Notes

Have you ever spent a long time away from somewhere you really love spending time? How did it feel when you arrived back? If you could design your dream home, what would it be like? The end of the psalm says, 'I will live in the house of the Lord for ever.' What do you think it feels like to be close to God for ever?

Verse six says, 'God's goodness and love will be with [us].' What might that mean? Where might we see God's goodness? How can we show goodness to others? What does it look like for us to show goodness to others with the help of the Holy Spirit?
