

Psalm 23 Lesson for Kids: A Free Christian Shepherd-and-Rest Plan

A complete Psalm 23 leader packet with valley context, shepherd-path activity, optional reflection, safeguarding, and a take-home card.

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 - Questions/discussion, optional quiet, inclusion, safeguarding/escalation, and companion boundary
 - Detachable timed run sheet and take-home Psalm card
 - Take-home family card and source ledger

HOW TO USE

Adult-led · Ages approximately 4–12 · Participation is optional

LISTEN · DRAW · MOVE · SPEAK · AAC · PASS

STOP ANY TIME

You do not have to keep going. We can stop, move, draw, keep eyes open, or sit with a trusted grown-up.

Our paraphrase, not Scripture text. Exact wording: World English Bible (public domain).

Leader snapshot

OBJECTIVE

Children may identify four Psalm 23 images, notice the movement from he to you are with me, and choose a response through drawing, movement, questions, or optional prayer.

NOTE

A shepherd-and-rest run sheet that follows the poem through pasture, path, valley, table, and presence.

Audience/mode: CG, CL · Time window: 30–45 minutes · Agenda total: 35 minutes

MATERIALS

- World English Bible or a licensed family Bible
- Four text-labelled scene cards: pasture, path, valley, and table
- Visual schedule, stop card, large-print Psalm card, and paper landscape
- Crayons, AAC or pointing choices, optional tactile cloth, and a neutral alternate scene
- A named trained adult and a quiet exit route
- Leader notes for rod, staff, valley, enemies, and ancient shepherd context

CHOICE AND STOP

STOP

You do not have to keep going. We can stop, move, draw, keep eyes open, or sit with a trusted grown-up.

ADAPT

You can listen while I read, draw, move, use AAC, ask a question, or pass. An adult can carry the prayer and the next step.

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Scripture and context

Reference-first paraphrase and context; use an approved Bible or licensed text for the full reading.

REFERENCE

Psalm 23:1-6

Paraphrase: The poem moves through provision, guidance, a dark valley, a table, and persistent presence with the shepherd.

Context: Read the whole poem before interpretation; the valley and hard images stay in view.

REFERENCE

John 10:11-18

Paraphrase: Jesus uses shepherd language for his self-giving care and knowledge of the flock.

Context: Use as a context bridge, not as a reason to promise that every danger disappears.

REFERENCE

Ezekiel 34:11-16

Paraphrase: God promises to seek, feed, and tend the flock in a prophetic setting marked by scattered sheep.

Context: The passage supports care and justice, not wealth or a trouble-free life.

REFERENCE

Luke 15:3-7

Paraphrase: Jesus tells a searching-shepherd story that highlights attention to one missing sheep.

Context: Keep the parable's setting and metaphor clear for the group.

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Agenda and leader words

Timed agenda total: 35 minutes. Spoken cues and alternatives stay together so the adult can adapt without dropping a step.

WELCOME AND CHOICE • 3 MIN

We will read a poem with restful and difficult images. You may listen, point, draw, move, use AAC, ask a question, or pass.

Name the quiet exit and trusted adult before showing the valley card.

READ PSALM 23 IN FULL • 6 MIN

This is a poem. We will notice its images and movement before we talk about what it may invite.

Use a permitted translation or reference-first retelling with the reference visible.

ARRANGE THE SHEPHERD PATH • 6 MIN

The poem includes both rest and a valley. Care is not pretending the valley is not there.

Use two images for younger children or a neutral landscape for anyone who passes the valley card.

TEACH THE IMAGES AND PRONOUNS • 7 MIN

The poem says he for much of the Psalm, then you are with me in the valley. The address becomes close without erasing danger.

Explain rod, staff, table, and ancient shepherd life with plain words.

ASK TEXT-GROUNDED QUESTIONS • 6 MIN

Use a fictional traveller. You can point, draw, move, use AAC, ask a question, or pass.

Do not ask children to identify their own valley or loss.

OFFER OPTIONAL REFLECTION OR PRAYER • 4 MIN

Choose one image, draw it, listen, move, or pass. You can keep your eyes open.

Offer a neutral image, quiet hands-busy activity, or a trusted-adult check-in.

CLOSE AND SEND THE PSALM CARD • 3 MIN

If valley language brings up a real concern, tell a trusted adult privately. A card cannot carry a safety concern by itself.

Hand the take-home card to the adult and let the child leave or return without explanation.

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Activities and response choices

Shepherd path and four images

Place pasture, path, valley, and table cards in a loose path. Children arrange, point, draw, or use a fictional traveller who needs water, rest, help, and welcome.

PROMPT:

Which image comes before and after the valley?

Point to an image or say its name.

Draw a path or move between two cards.

Listen to the adult context or pass.

Notice the change in address

Invite older readers to notice the shift from he to you are with me. Younger children may choose a card or listen to the adult's explanation.

PROMPT:

What changes when the poem says you are with me?

Point to he or you.

Draw a speech path or trace the words.

Listen or pass.

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Discussion, optional quiet, and safeguarding

DISCUSSION

- Which images does the Psalm use for care?
Point to pasture, water, path, valley presence, table, cup, or home.
- Where does the Psalm mention a valley?
Read verse 4, point to the card, or pass; the hard image stays part of the poem.
- What changes when the poem says you are with me?
The address becomes direct. A child need not report a private spiritual feeling.
- What could care look like for a fictional traveller?
Water, company, safe direction, food, a listening adult, or professional help may fit.
- What does Psalm 23 not promise?
It does not promise no grief, danger, enemies, or material need. It gives poetic trust and presence.

OPTIONAL QUIET

Choose one image, draw it, listen while an adult prays, move gently, keep your eyes open, or pass.

SAFETY · ADULT RESPONSE

Stop: You do not have to keep going. We can stop, move, draw, keep eyes open, or sit with a trusted grown-up.

Adapt: You can listen while I read, draw, move, use AAC, ask a question, or pass. An adult can carry the prayer and the next step.

Escalate: If distress persists, affects daily life, follows a frightening event, or includes danger, self-harm or suicidal thoughts, serious breathing trouble, or an unsafe disclosure, contact a pediatrician, qualified child mental-health professional, safeguarding lead, or local emergency service. In the United States, call or text 988; local services govern elsewhere. Do not investigate or promise secrecy.

Do not: Do not require a public answer, personal story, eyes-closed posture, or memorized response.

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VERTICAL TRIM · CUT

Detachable run sheet

TIMED AGENDA · TOTAL 35 MINUTES

- 0:00–0:03 Welcome and choice (3 min)
- 0:03–0:09 Read Psalm 23 in full (6 min)
- 0:09–0:15 Arrange the shepherd path (6 min)
- 0:15–0:22 Teach the images and pronouns (7 min)
- 0:22–0:28 Ask text-grounded questions (6 min)
- 0:28–0:32 Offer optional reflection or prayer (4 min)
- 0:32–0:35 Close and send the Psalm card (3 min)

SAFEGUARDING QUICK REFERENCE

Stop: You do not have to keep going. We can stop, move, draw, keep eyes open, or sit with a trusted grown-up.

Adapt: You can listen while I read, draw, move, use AAC, ask a question, or pass. An adult can carry the prayer and the next step.

Escalate: If distress persists, affects daily life, follows a frightening event, or includes danger, self-harm or suicidal thoughts, serious breathing trouble, or an unsafe disclosure, contact a pediatrician, qualified child mental-health professional, safeguarding lead, or local emergency service. In the United States, call or text 988; local services govern elsewhere. Do not investigate or promise secrecy.

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Take-home family card

Psalm 23: read the whole poem

1. Choose one image: pasture, path, valley, or table.
2. Draw, listen, move, ask a question, or pray: God, be with us as we receive care and tell the truth about hard places.
3. Read Psalm 23:1-6 with an adult; memorization is optional.
4. If something is unsafe, tell a trusted adult and use the right help.
5. This card is not a promise that trouble cannot happen.

LISTEN · DRAW · MOVE · SPEAK · AAC · PASS

SOURCE LEDGER

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 · World English Bible
Psalm 23:1–6 and the complete poem ·
Checked 2026-08-03
https://ebible.org/web/PSA023.htm | 2 · World English Bible
John 10 shepherd imagery for Christian
context · Checked 2026-08-03
https://ebible.org/web/JHN10.htm |
| 3 · World English Bible
Ezekiel 34 and God's care for scattered
sheep · Checked 2026-08-03
https://ebible.org/web/EZK34.htm | 4 · World English Bible
Luke 15 searching-shepherd parable context ·
Checked 2026-08-03
https://ebible.org/web/LUK15.htm |
| 5 · BibleProject
Secondary literary and canonical context
check for Psalm imagery · Checked
2026-08-03
https://bibleproject.com/guides/ | 6 · CAST UDL Guidelines 3.0
Multiple response modes, movement, AAC,
and optional participation · Checked
2026-08-03
https://udlguidelines.cast.org/ |
| 7 · UNICEF
Safeguarding response and referral boundaries · Checked 2026-08-03
https://www.unicef.org/documents/safeguarding-policy | |

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