Preschool–Grade 6

The Lord Is My Shepherd (Psalm 23)

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: God cares for me. The LORD is my shepherd, and He takes care of me like a good shepherd takes care of his sheep.
Bible passage: Psalm 23. Read it before class, and read 1 Samuel 16:11 and John 10:11 too.
Memory verse: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." *Psalm 23:1 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, a yardstick or broom handle for a "staff," 6 paper strips, a marker, tape, 6 sheets of paper, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 6 paper strips (see part 4). On the 6 sheets of paper, draw one simple picture each: a sheep, grass and water, a path, two dark hills, a cup, and a house. Put bookmarks in your Bible at Psalm 23 and John 10:11.

1. Opening game: Follow the Shepherd (5 minutes)

You are the shepherd. Hold the "staff." The kids are your sheep. Walk around the room, and the sheep follow you wherever you go. Call out what the sheep do: "Eat the green grass!" (pretend to eat), "Drink the water!" (pretend to drink), "Lie down and rest!" (lie down), "Follow me!" (follow again). Then let a few kids take turns being the shepherd. Say: "Sheep need a shepherd to lead them and take care of them. Today we will learn a song from the Bible that says God is our shepherd."

2. Bible story: The Shepherd Song (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Psalm 23, so the kids can see it comes from God's Word. Say: "A **psalm** is a song to God. This psalm was written by David." When David was a boy, he was the youngest in his family, and he took care of his father's sheep (1 Samuel 16:11). He kept them safe, even from a lion and a bear (1 Samuel 17:34–35). David knew all about shepherds! So he wrote about God as his shepherd. Read each verse from your Bible, then explain it:

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." *(Psalm 23:1)* God takes care of me like a shepherd. **I shall not want** means "I will have everything I need."

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." *(23:2)* **Pastures** are fields of grass for sheep to eat. **Still waters** are calm, quiet water that is safe to drink. God gives me food, water and rest.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." *(23:3)* **Restoreth my soul** means God makes me feel new and strong again inside. **Paths of righteousness** means the right way to live. God shows me the right way to go.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." *(23:4)* **Yea** means "yes." A **valley** is a low place between hills, and **the shadow of death** means a very dark, scary place. Even there, David was not afraid, because God was with him. **Thou** means "you." A shepherd used a **rod** (a short, strong stick) to keep his sheep safe and a **staff** (a long walking stick) to guide them. **Comfort** means they help me feel safe. When I am scared or sad, God is with me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." *(23:5)* **Preparest a table** means God gets a meal ready for me. **In the presence of mine enemies** means right in front of people who are against me. To **anoint** means to pour oil on someone's head. In Bible times, that was a kind way to welcome and honor a guest (Luke 7:46). **My cup runneth over** means my cup is so full that it spills over the top! God gives me more than enough.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." *(23:6)* **Surely** means "for sure." **Mercy** means God is kind to me even when I don't deserve it. **Dwell** means live. God's goodness stays with me every day, and I can be with God forever.

Then say: "Many years later, Jesus said, '**I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep**' (John 10:11). Jesus is the LORD, God who came to earth as a man. He loves His sheep so much that He gave His life for them."

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Who wrote Psalm 23? *(David, who took care of his father's sheep, 1 Samuel 16:11)*
2. Who is my shepherd? *(The LORD, Psalm 23:1)*
3. What does "I shall not want" mean? *(I will have everything I need, 23:1)*
4. Where does the shepherd lead his sheep? *(To green pastures and still waters, 23:2)*
5. Why was David not afraid, even in the dark valley? *(Because God was with him, 23:4)*

4. Memory verse: Shepherd Strips (5 minutes)

Tape the 6 strips up in order: *The LORD / is my / shepherd; / I shall / not want. / Psalm 23:1.* Explain the words again: **I shall not want** means "I will have everything I need." Read the verse together. Point up on "The LORD," point to yourself on "my," and hold your hands out on "I shall not want." Then take one strip away and read it again. Keep taking strips away, one each time, until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The LORD is our shepherd, and He cares for you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). He is the good shepherd who gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: when you feel scared or sad, say, "The LORD is my shepherd." Remember that He is with you.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Psalm 23 word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/psalm-23-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/psalm-23-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/psalm-23-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/psalm-23-worksheet), the coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/psalm-23), or **The Shepherd's Path:** lay the 6 picture sheets on the floor in a line, in order, like stepping stones. The kids walk the path one at a time like sheep. At each picture they stop and say what it means: the sheep ("I shall not want"), the grass and water ("green pastures, still waters"), the path ("He leads me the right way"), the dark hills ("God is with me"), the cup ("my cup runneth over"), the house ("I will dwell in the house of the LORD"). The rest of the class says, "The LORD is my shepherd!" when each child reaches the house.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for being our shepherd. Thank You for giving us what we need, for leading us the right way and for being with us when we are scared. Thank You for loving us and giving Your life for us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Told gently on purpose: this lesson explains "the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4) as a very dark, scary place. If a child asks about someone who died, answer simply and kindly: God is with us even in the saddest times, and the psalm ends, "I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (23:6). Encourage the child to talk with their parents.
If a child asks when David wrote it: the Bible says this is a psalm of David, but it does not say how old he was when he wrote it.

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