**May 9th, 2021: Elementary Sunday School
PSALM 23 lesson 1: god loves me**

***In this lesson, the kids will learn how God always knows what we need, and will always be there to provide for us.***

**AS KIDS ARRIVE: PERFECT PLACE ACTIVITY:** Have paper and colored crayons or markers available on the table when the children arrive. Have them first look up Psalm 23:1-3 in their Bibles, and then draw a picture of a place these verses may be describing. Let the kids know that they will be saving their pictures, so they should do a good job. Display the pictures on the wall, and let the kids share how their drawing relates to the verses.

**OPENING PRAYER AND PRAISE AND MEMORY WORK: THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD ACTIVITY:**

This series is an excellent time for the children to memorize Psalm 23. This week, concentrate on verses 1-3.
**"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." NIV (1984)**

**PREPARATION:** Before class print one copy of each picture card. Children can memorize the Psalm all at once, or in three parts. For example, you can cover one card each Sunday over a three week period. After three weeks, the kids will know the whole Psalm.

**WHAT YOU WILL DO:** Have the children read Psalm 23 from their Bibles several times. Then, using the picture cards, point to each picture as indicated below while the children recite the verses from memory together.

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| PICTURE CARD 1: | PICTURE CARD 2: | PICTURE CARD 3: |
| 1: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. | 7: Even though I walk through the valley | 13: You prepare a table before me |
| 2: He makes me lie down in green pastures, | 8: of the shadow of death, | 14: in the presence of my enemies. |
| 3: He leads me beside quiet waters, | 9: I will fear no evil,  | 15: You anoint my head with oil; |
| 4: He restores my soul | 10: For you are with me | 16: my cup overflows. |
| 5: He guides me in paths of righteousness | 11: your rod and your staff, | 17: Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, |
| 6: for His name’s sake. | 12: they comfort me | 18: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, forever. |

**ALTERNATE MEMORY WORK:"I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep and my sheep know me." John 10:14 NIV**Divide the kids up into two groups. Have the two groups on opposite sides of the room. Taking turns have each group recite the verse. As soon as the first group finishes the second group should begin reciting the verse. Go back and forth reciting the verse several times.

**SCRIPTURE READING AND DISCUSSION**

**Introduction:** Psalm 23 was written by King David as a joyful acknowledgement of what the Lord God meant to him. David was a shepherd when he was young and probably a good one. So, he knew that a good shepherd must take care of the flock by keeping them together, properly counting them, and ensuring no sheep strayed or wandered into harm. Good shepherds provide green pastures and drinking water for their sheep. David called God his Good Shepherd, because he knew God loved him and wanted to take good care of him. In this three lesson series, we will see that when we follow Jesus with all our heart, He will be our Good Shepherd, keeping us safe and sound.

**Read Psalm 23:1-3** Have several children read these verses.

**Discussion Questions:**1. What does a shepherd do? *(Takes care of a flock of sheep, takes them to places to eat and drink, keeps them safe, etc.)*2. Why did David call the Lord his shepherd? *(God provided for David and kept him safe, etc.)*3. In verse 1, David says, "I shall not be in want." What do you think this means? *(God will give David everything he needs, just as a shepherd provides everything his sheep need.)*4. Does a good shepherd let his sheep lie down in bare, dry pastures? *(No, he makes them lie down in green lush pastures.)*5. How can a drink of cool calm water restore your soul?*(Jesus is the living water, and when we drink from Him our thirst for a spiritual life with God will be satisfied.)*6. What kind of paths should we travel to glorify Jesus? *(Paths of righteousness.)*7. If you were a little lamb in a big flock under the care of a good shepherd, how would you feel? Why? *(Safe, loved, well fed, clean, happy, welcome.)*

**CLASS EXERCISE: LIE IN GREEN PASTURES GAME (Materials: playing or trading cards, green construction paper)**

***Teams race to be the first Good Shepherds to make their sheep lie down in green pastures. (Psalm 23:2)***

**WHAT YOU WILL DO:** Form two teams of equal number of children on each team. If you have an odd number of children one teacher helper can stand in. Lay the green sheets of construction paper on the floor side by side to form two rows, each row having the same number of sheets, as there are members in the team. Then have each team member stand in front of one sheet that is along his or her row.

Give the first child in each team half a deck of cards. The object is to drop cards (sheep), and have them land on the green construction paper (pasture). The first child on each team tries to do this with as many of the 26 cards in his or her stack as needed to win.

If the card lands on the paper, the second child on the team in line picks it up and tries to drop it on his or her sheet of paper. Then, the third child in line does the same with any cards that land on the second player's piece of paper. Each child can only pick up cards that land on the previous player's piece of paper. Any cards that do not land on the paper are left lying there. Once the last child in line is successful in getting four cards to land on his or her sheet of paper, that team wins. All children on the team keep on dropping qualifying cards until the game is over.

There is a trick to dropping the cards. If you hold them vertically and let them go, they will fall almost anywhere. But, if held horizontally between the thumb and forefinger, and let go simultaneously, they will float almost directly down from where dropped and onto the paper. Practice a few times so you can show the class. At the start of the game, you may want to let the kids do it their own way, but don't wait too long to show them the trick. Then the race is on.

**WHAT YOU WILL SAY:** (Before giving the instructions for the game) "According to Psalm 23: 2, the Good Shepherd makes his sheep lie down in green pastures. Not in dry, brown, dusty places, but lush, cool, green pastures. The shepherd takes his time to find only the best places for his sheep, and doing so is not always easy. In this game, we will pretend that these cards are sheep, and we are the good shepherds. We will be making these sheep lie down on the green sheets of paper that will represent green pastures. It looks easy, but it isn't. But if we want to be good shepherds, we'll work at it until the job is done."

**APPLICATION:** If time permits, have the children brainstorm and write on the board what things they would need if they were sheep, for example food, water, protection, love, a place to sleep, etc. Then compare these things to what we need as people.

David's God and our Lord Jesus Christ are the same Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd took care of David just as he is taking care of us now. Jesus is our quiet living water that restores our soul and the Good Shepherd who gives us everything we need, so we shall not be in want. Blessings will always be plentiful when we follow the Lord Jesus down paths of righteousness.

**What we learned:** This week your child began a three part lesson series about Psalm 23 to discover how much God loves us all. Today, the kids learned how God always knows what we need, and will always be there to provide for us. (Scripture used: Psalm 23:1-3)

**Memory Verse:** "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Psalm 23:1-3 NIV (1984) In order to memorize all of Psalm 23, we are breaking it down into three segments. This week your child can memorize the first three verses. Practice by reading these verses several times during the next week and then saying them from memory. If your child already knows Psalm 23, then he or she can memorize the alternate verse below. Alternate Memory Verse: "I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep and my sheep know me." John 10:14 NIV

**Suggested Parent/Child Activity:** If possible, find a farm or children's zoo where you and your child can interact with a few sheep or lambs. Notice how the sheep and lambs act in their surroundings. Talk about how we are also like sheep and need a Good Shepherd to guide and watch over us. Discuss why are we compared to sheep in the Bible.

**Daily Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank You for caring for me, and for watching over me all the time. You are the Good Shepherd who gives me everything I need. As I listen to your Word, and follow Jesus down the path of righteousness, I know my blessings will be complete. Amen.