

The Lord Is My Shepherd

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
(Psalm 23:1-2)

The Lord is our Shepherd, and we are like His sheep when we follow Him. The more we understand the nature of sheep and the role of the shepherd, the better we can understand why the Lord is called our Shepherd. A shepherd cares for his sheep day and night, and the Lord takes care of us at all times. A shepherd finds food and water for his sheep, and the Lord gives us everything that will lead us to heaven. Sheep need protection from fierce animals, and we need protection from evil.



READ: The Lord Is My Shepherd by the Rev. Patrick A. Rose

“The teaching that the Lord is our Shepherd is a powerful and comforting one. The relationship between the sheep and their shepherd involves a sense of trust and security.... The shepherd takes care of things the sheep are unaware of, and things that the sheep could not take care of by themselves. So, too, with us. There are myriads of things in the Lord’s hands, things He does for us, things we are unaware of and things that are beyond our own power.”

READ: The Lord’s Rod and Staff by the Rev. Stephen D. Cole

This family talk explains what the Lord’s rod and staff are in our lives, and how He uses them to comfort us.

PROJECT: Diorama for the Twenty-Third Psalm (for ages 8 and up)

Make a representation of the Twenty-Third Psalm, making sheep and a shepherd out of pipe cleaners, wool or cotton batting, and fabric. *Note:* The sheep and shepherd figures may also be used to illustrate the story of the shepherd searching for lost sheep and the Lord at the door of the sheepfold.

PROJECT: The Lord Is My Shepherd Shoebox Diorama (for ages 4-7)

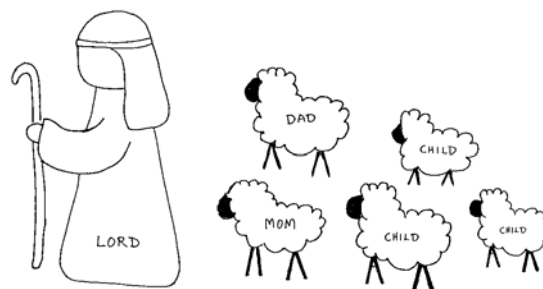
Young children may enjoy making their own little dioramas to display as a reminder of the Lord’s unceasing care.

ACTIVITY: Make a Twenty-Third Psalm Book (for ages 8 and up)

Illustrate the literal meaning of the psalm or its application to life.

PROJECT: Following the Lord (ages 2-8)

Make a sheep for each member of the family and a figure representing the Lord as our shepherd. The family of sheep can be made into magnets for the refrigerator or felt pieces for flannel board play.



PROJECT: Ribbon Bookmark (*ages 12 and up*)

Embroider a satin ribbon with the words: “The Lord is my Shepherd” and pictures of a shepherd’s staff and a little lamb.

COLORING PAGE: The Lord Is My Shepherd by Eudora Walsh

ACTIVITY: Read Quotes from the Word about the Lord As Our Shepherd

PROJECT: Make a Stuffed Lamb Toy (*teens and adults for young children*)

This is a wonderful gift to make for young children. Some New Church congregations make lambs and give them to little ones as a gift at Christmas or New Church Day. The pattern and instructions are provided for those who might want to start this tradition in their own congregations or make this gift for a “little lamb” of their own.

COLORING PAGE: Shepherd and Sheep by Josephine Ellis

SING: “The Lord Is My Shepherd”

SING: “Little Lamb, Who Made Thee?” by William Blake and the Rev. W. B. Caldwell

The Twenty-third Psalm

He who leads and teaches is called a “shepherd”
and those who are led and taught are called the “flock.”
(see *Arcana Coelestia* 343)

The Lord is a gentle Shepherd, leading us in ways that leave us in freedom to make good or bad choices in life. He knows that at times we may feel like lost sheep, uncertain of our way. Perhaps we are reluctant to do what we know is right or can’t see our way clearly. Whether guiding us beside still waters or through the valleys of life, the Lord loves us and carries us close to Him.

How can we help children learn and understand this beautiful psalm?
Try one or more of these creative methods:

READ: “The Twenty-third Psalm” by the Rev. David R. Simons

A brief overview of the story of David, how he was a shepherd in his youth and how he came to write the Psalms, particularly the 23rd Psalm in which he calls the Lord his shepherd.

ACTIVITY: The Rainbow Method of Learning the Twenty-Third Psalm

Use the colors of the rainbow to help you learn the sequence of this psalm.

ACTIVITY: Experiencing the Twenty-Third Psalm

Ways to use the five senses in helping children learn how the Lord cares for them.



READ: “Talking to Your Child About the Twenty-Third Psalm”

A wonderful introduction for preschool children by the Rev. B. David Holm, this simple explanation relates the meaning of each verse of the Psalm.

COLORING PAGE: The 23rd Psalm

POSTER: The Twenty-third Psalm *(for all ages)*

Print and display this lovely poster with an illustrative color border.

SHEPHERDS IN THE WORD

“Shepherds” in the Word symbolize those who teach the good of life
and lead to it, which is done by means of truths.
(Apocalypse Explained 419:17)

Shepherds are frequently mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, and these stories generally show us how the Lord takes care of us.

READ: “The Good Shepherd” by an unknown author

A brief talk for young children about how the Lord is our Shepherd.

ACTIVITY: Who Was It?

Can you name some of the people in the Word who cared for sheep?

- Was it Esau or Jacob who cared for his father’s flocks and herds?
- What shepherdess did Jacob meet at a well?
- Which king of Israel was once a shepherd boy?

FOR DISCUSSION: The Responsibilities of a Shepherd

What do the following stories tell us about a shepherd’s responsibilities?

1 Samuel 17:34,35 (David cares for his father’s sheep)

Luke 2 (the shepherds watching their flock at night)

Luke 15:3-6 (The Lost Lamb)

PROJECT: A Shepherd and His Sheep *(ages 7-10)*

Use oil pastels or wax crayons to make a picture of shepherd, then use a sponge (cut into the shape of a lamb) to make little lambs around him.

READ: “Shepherding Our Children” by the Rev. Prescott A. Rogers

“In a supreme way there is only one Shepherd, the Lord.... But the Lord is also an example to all of us.... As parents...we have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to do just what ‘shepherds’ are meant to do for our children, the ‘sheep.’”

COLORING PAGE: Like a Shepherd by Lisa S. Buss

COLORING PAGE: Shepherd with Lamb by Jacquie S. Bostock

I AM THE DOOR

**“I am the good shepherd;
and I know My sheep, and am known by My own....”**
(John 10:14)

The Lord is called the way and the door because He alone leads us to heaven and opens the door (see *Apocalypse Revealed* 176). As the Good Shepherd, we can think of the Lord inviting us into His sheepfold and protecting us from harm as we follow Him.

PROJECT: Sheepfold Collage *(for ages 3-6)*

The sheepfold is a protected place for the sheep to gather at night. The shepherd counts the sheep when they enter the sheepfold to make sure that all the sheep are safely within. Make a picture showing the Lord standing at the door of the sheepfold.

ACTIVITY: The Open Door *(for teens and adults)*

The Lord has given us many truths to guide us through the doorway to heaven. Here are several suggestions for making a conscious effort to look to the truths of His Word, such as writing truths that are especially applicable in your life on paper “stones” and then carefully taping them to a doorway in your home.

SPIRITUAL TASK: Lost Sheep *(for teens and adults)*

SING: “Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Us”

JOURNAL PAGE: Other Sheep *(for teens and adults)*

Just as the sun sends light and warmth to all of creation, the Lord reaches out to all people. In John 10, He speaks of bringing other sheep which “are not of this fold”. This journal activity can help us reflect on ways that we can help Him by reaching out to people whose lives we touch.

SING: You Are Our Watchful Shepherd, Lord

SEARCHING FOR LOST SHEEP

**“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them,
does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost
until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”**
(Luke 15:4,5)

The Lord reaches out to everyone. In Ezekiel 34, the Lord tells us that He will search for His scattered sheep. In Luke 15:7, the Lord speaks of the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. In the gospel of John, we are told that the Lord will bring sheep who are not of the fold (10:16). The Lord’s Providence is for *all* people.

READ: “The Little Lost Lamb” a story for preschoolers by Wendinne Buss

An illustrated story about a shepherd boy who loses a treasured lamb, and then finds it again, with connections to the parable of the lost sheep from the gospels.

READ: “The Flock of the Good Shepherd” sermon by the Rev. Daniel Heinrichs

An in-depth look at the internal meaning of the 23rd Psalm as it relates to individuals and to communities who seek to follow the Lord.

SING: “The Little Lost Lamb” by Lori Odhner

ACTIVITY: Hand Motions for Little Lost Lamb Song (*for ages 3-9*)

ACTIVITY: The Lost Sheep Game (*for ages 2-6*)

Let children take turns hiding a toy lamb (or paper lamb) somewhere in the room. Another child takes a turn as the shepherd, leaving the rest of the sheep (the other children) while he looks for the lost lamb. When the “shepherd” finds the lost lamb, he rejoices with all the “sheep.”

COLORING PAGE: The Shepherd Gathers His Sheep

PROJECT: Lamb Mask (*for ages 2-5*)

SING: “The Good Shepherd” by Lori S. Odhner

PROJECT: Picture the Shepherd Rescuing His Sheep (*for ages 9-14*)

Just as a shepherd saves his sheep from a fierce animal, so the Lord rescued all people when He came on earth. Make a picture of Samson or David protecting a sheep from a lion or bear, or from hunger or thirst.

COLORING PAGE: He Will Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd

THE LORD’S DIVINE PROVIDENCE

The Lord “leads a person as silently as an imperceptible stream or favoring current bears a vessel along” (*Divine Providence* 186).

The Lord leads us throughout our lives, but always leaves us in freedom to follow or not.

READ: “How the Lord Can Lead Us” by the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

“We all want the Lord to lead us. After all, that is why we are here, isn’t it? But...we often feel a strong pull to manage our own affairs.... [W]hat happens if we do get what we want? Is planning and achieving a set of goals the purpose of life, or is there more than that?”

READ: “The Divine Providence” by the Rev. Douglas Taylor

“How is the Lord involved in our world? How does He provide what is needed? These are important questions for us to consider. After all, how can we cooperate with the Lord unless we know how He operates?”

SING: “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”

ACTIVITY: Play Follow the Leader (for ages 4-6)

We should look to the Lord as our Shepherd and be willing to follow wherever He leads us. Let everyone take turns being the leader and the followers. But remind leaders to be good “shepherds” and be careful where they lead their flock.

SING: “Lead Us, and Guide Us, Lord”

ACTIVITY: Maze or Labyrinth? (for ages 10-15)

Make a maze to show what life is like when we lead ourselves and a labyrinth to reflect how the Lord leads us.

GAME: Stream of Providence (for ages 5-10)

The Lord is our Shepherd, leading us toward His heavenly sheepfold. When we look to Him as our Shepherd and to His Word as a rod and staff, then our lives may seem to be going along peacefully, in the “stream of Providence.” At other times, we may experience stormy seas or a forest maze. By looking to the Lord and applying His Word to our lives, we can find peace once again.



SPIRITUAL TASK: Lost Sheep (for teens and adults)

SPIRITUAL TASK: Free Choice (for teens and adults)

Providence and Human Prudence

If you wish to be led by the Divine Providence, use prudence as a servant.
(see *Divine Providence* 210:2)

The Lord gives us freedom to choose between following Him or following ourselves. He provides the truths of His Word and the support of the angels to help us make good choices, but we are free to reject what is spiritual as we go about our lives.

READ: “The Order of Divine Providence” by the Rev. Frederick L. Schnarr

This article gives an overview of how the Lord’s providence works and explains the five major laws by which the Lord governs creation.

SPIRITUAL TASK: Free Choice (for teens and adults)

ACTIVITY: Closing the Gate on Negative Thoughts (ages 10-up)

Seeing Divine Providence by Looking Back

It is granted that a person can see Divine Providence
in the back and not in the face.
(Divine Providence 187)

READ: “Why Does God Have to Act Mysteriously?” by the Rev. Donald L. Rose

“Why should there be the hidden or mysterious ingredient in the ways of God? One answer often repeated by theologian Emanuel Swedenborg is “for the sake of freedom.”

FOR REFLECTION: The Lord’s Providence in Your Life *(for older teens and adults)*

Think about ways that the Lord has cared for you in the past. Talk with your children about the Lord’s Divine Providence in your life. This will help them (and you) know that we can trust His Providence for the future as well.

FOR REFLECTION: Being Good Shepherds for Those in Our Care

The Lord is the Shepherd for us all, teaching us His Divine truths and leading us to the good of life. As parents, teachers, and mentors, He asks us to also be good shepherds for the children entrusted to our care, teaching and leading them to know and love Him.

