

# Psalm 23

Psalm 23 is a beautiful prayer of comfort in times of confusion or danger. Each verse offers a new understanding of how God cares for His children. Working together to memorize Psalm 23 is a meaningful family faith sharing activity. Children as young as four or five should be able to memorize much of it and school-aged children will find a new sense of accomplishment from completing the task.

Here are some techniques to use to practice memorizing:

1. Repeat a verse while marching or making hand motions. Find out how to sign some of the words in the verse.
2. Turn the verse into a song. It even helps to sing the verse in one note like a chant or repeat it with a rhythm like a rap. To make it simple, divide up the verse and add in some handclaps or finger snaps.
3. Draw a picture to illustrate the verse or write what the verse means to you.
4. Repeat the verse whenever you see each other during the day.
5. As a family, sit in a circle and pass the verse around. One family member says the first word, the person sitting next says the second and so on. This activity is harder than it seems so you might want to have a signal that younger children can use to indicate they want help with their word.
6. Tell your child you will give them three helping words when they get stuck reciting the verse. The next time they only get two helping words, and then only one.
7. Let your older children teach their younger siblings. They might have more insight than you think.
8. Add a new verse for each lesson, but remember to include the verses that come before when reciting the new verse. It helps to use familiar verses to give a running start. It's okay to spend more time on some verses than others. Don't move on until the current verses are familiar.
9. Connect the words to the meaning of the passage and use the verse when it applies.
10. Remember to use more grace than law. It is tempting to give rewards for accomplishing each verse but a better motivation is the time spent working together. Celebrate each victory as a family and when learning a verse is hard, give encouragement and help.

## **The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

Ideas to share:

God is our good provider, but it is also true that when we are living in our faith, we want less and are content more. The faith God gives us helps us to trust Him and to think about what Jesus has done for us and how we can share that love with others. When we know that God cares for us, we spend less time looking at what others have, or what is new, and wishing we had that thing, too.

Questions for discussion:

1. Feeling content means we don't want something we do not need. What is the difference between wanting something and needing it?
2. When do you feel content? What helps you feel that way?
3. What does a shepherd do for his sheep? What does God do for you?

Pray together:

Dear Jesus, thank You for the many ways You keep us safe. Fill our hearts with faith so we can rest and be content in You. Amen

## **He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.**

Ideas to share:

We may not like the pastures we are in. We might think this pasture is too small, and it doesn't let us do what we want to do. Just like our parents and teachers know how to keep us safe, Jesus our shepherd knows how to keep us safe and content.

Questions for discussion:

1. What do you wish you could do right now?
2. What are some new things you have done, lately?
3. Our lives are like "still waters" now. What do you like about having more quiet time?

Pray together:

Dear Jesus, thank You for helping our leaders to make decisions that keep us safe. Help me to be content in my current pasture. Amen.

## **He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

Ideas to share:

We cough and sneeze when our bodies are sick. We worry and are afraid when our souls are sick. Jesus restores our souls when He fills our hearts with faith and trust. When we follow His direction, and the instructions we get from our leaders, our souls become healthier because we feel peace. When we read God's word or pray together, it is like a Band-Aid on our hearts. A Band-Aid protects the wound from germs and makes us feel better. When we feel better, our souls feel restored.

Questions for discussion:

1. How do you feel when you fall and get a cut? How does a Band-Aid change the way you feel?
2. How do you help someone else when they are worried, hurt or afraid?

Pray together:

Dear Jesus, when I remember that You rose from the dead, my soul is restored. Your love for me covers my worry and fears and makes me feel strong. Amen

## **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

Ideas to share:

Some day we will all die. We are human beings who do not live forever. That day is probably a long way away. While we want to be safe, we do not need to worry about dying. Because Jesus died and rose again, we know we will live with Him in heaven someday. This truth brings us comfort. Our world has dangerous situations like busy streets and sicknesses. When God shows us the right things to do and helps us to follow the rules, it is one way that He keeps us safe. We are comforted to know that God loves us no matter what is happening in our world.

Questions for discussion:

1. Even though we do not like rules, how do they give us comfort?
2. What would your life be like if you had no rules?

Pray together:

Dear God, Thank You for Your love and protection. We know that bad things in the world cannot take us away from You. You love us and protect us. Amen

**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**

Ideas to share:

Sometimes when our friends are mean to us, we think of them as enemies. But, real enemies want to hurt us, not just make us angry. When I make bad choices, I become my own enemy because what I do might hurt me. God gives us what we need; keeps us safe; and offers forgiveness when we hurt other people or hurt ourselves. The second part of this verse talks about anointing. Shepherds used to put oil on the heads of sheep to protect them from insects. This oil reminds me of masks that some people wear to keep from getting sick. What a wonderful God we have that He thinks of everything we need to be safe, content, and comforted.

Questions for discussion:

1. If you don't follow safety rules, how might you be your own enemy?
2. Think about how your family members love each other. If a cup can have too much water or milk, can we have too much love?

Pray together:

Dear Jesus, everywhere we look, we see ways in which you are taking care of us. Stop us from hurting each other and hurting ourselves. Fill our hearts with so much of Your love that we feel we must share it with others. Amen

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall  
dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

Ideas to share:

Our world tells us that it is good to have lots of things like toys, books, and video games. When this verse talks about goodness, it also talks about mercy and God's house. When we worship God, either in church or at home, we remember God's goodness and mercy. Just like we talked about in the first verse, when we are thankful for what God has given us, and we are trusting in Him, we feel content. We know that God loves us. We know that God keeps us safe. We know that God forgives our sins. We know that Jesus died and rose again so we could all go to heaven. These are the best things to know and believe.

Questions for discussion:

1. What is your favorite Bible verse from Psalm 23? What do you like about it?
2. Pick a verse and use it in a prayer or draw a picture to go with it.
3. Think of a family member or someone else that you love that you have not seen in a while. Call them and share Psalm 23 with them.

Pray together:

Dear Jesus, You have given us so much, a family, food, a safe home, faith, and the promise of heaven. Thank you for being with us during this mixed up time. We love you. Amen.