

The GOOD SHEPHERD

A STUDY OF PSALM 23

2026 AFTER CAMP
BIBLE STUDY
DISCUSSION GUIDE



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After Camp Bible Study Discussion Guide

Day 1 – The Good Shepherd

Scripture: Psalm 23:1; Exodus 3:1-22; 13:17-18,21-22; Ezekiel 34:11-16

Key Verse: “The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need” (Psalm 23:1).

In a large group, play the After Camp Devo 1 YouVersion® Video. Then, divide into smaller discussion groups, preferably no more than 8-10.

Call on a student to read aloud **Psalm 23:1**.

Say: “**When David wrote this verse, he captured a truth that stretched all the way back to the earliest days of the nation of Israel: God has always been a Shepherd who leads His people. He is the Good Shepherd.**”

Invite students to open their Bibles and follow along as two students read aloud **Exodus 3:1-22**, each taking 11 verses.

Discuss these questions:

- **Where was Moses at the beginning of this chapter and what was he doing?** (*He was in Midian, tending sheep for his father-in-law.*)
- **Based on what you know and learned at camp about sheep, how might this be a fitting training ground for the tasks that God was about to call Moses to?** (*Sheep lack a sense of direction; they tend to wander; they need care and protection; they are stubborn; they know their shepherd’s voice.*)
- **How did God appear to Moses?** (*He was in a bush that was on fire but not being consumed.*)
- **How did God address Moses?** (*He called him by name, not just one time but twice.*)
- **What does this say about God’s character?** (*He knows our names; He is a personal God.*)
- **What was Moses’ response?** (*Moses approached the bush and engaged God.*)

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- **What might have resulted if Moses had chosen to ignore God's calling his name or the task he was being given?** (*He would have missed out on so many opportunities to lead and make a difference in the lives of the Israelites.*)
- **How did God reveal Himself?** (*He is I AM, the God of Moses' ancestors.*)
- **What assignment did God give Moses?** (*Go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.*)

Say: **"Moses had excuses and many reasons not to accept the assignment God laid out for him. Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation? But he ultimately surrendered and followed God's calling to lead the Israelites on their journey from slavery to freedom. God promised to be with him along the way for guidance and direction."**

Ask: **"What do you think Moses was feeling at this time?"** (*scared, nervous, doubting, confused, etc.*)

Lead students to open their Bibles as one volunteer reads **Exodus 13:17-18** and another reads **13:21-22**.

Discuss:

- **Where were the Israelites at the time of this passage?** (*They were in the desert.*)
- **How was God's presence with the people?** (*He was in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.*)
- **How do you think you would have responded to these two physical representations of God?**

Share: God's presence was with His people as He guided them through the unknown. He went *ahead* of them. The path wasn't the easiest; God led them the long way around the Philistines to avoid war and spare them from fear and failure. And the path was through a desert.

Share: Throughout the Israelite journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, God repeatedly led His people, guided them, and protected them as a shepherd cares for sheep. Sheep are creatures that lack a sense of direction, leaving them defenseless



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and vulnerable without a shepherd. Just as a shepherd protects and guides his sheep, rescuing them when they stray and meeting their needs, we have a Good Shepherd who does the same for us.

Ask: **“God is not physically present with us, so how does He guide and direct us today?”** (*We can hear Him through Scripture reading, prayer, wise counsel of other believers, and the prompting of the Holy Spirit.*)

Say: **“We must be in a personal relationship with God in order to know His voice and to know His will for our lives. Be sure to carve out time to spend with Him daily. It will make a huge difference in your life.”**

Ask students to consider their relationship status with God. Is it non-existent, distant, growing, or intimate?

Call on a different student to read aloud **Ezekiel 34:11-16**.

Discuss:

- **What actions does God say He will personally take for His flock in this passage?** (*He will search, rescue, shepherd, tend, seek, bandage, and strengthen.*)
- **What different conditions of sheep are mentioned?** (*They are lost, stray, injured, and weak.*)
- **What promises does God make about where the sheep will be led and cared for?** (*It will be a good, rich pasture for grazing.*)
- **What contrast do you see in verse 16 between how God treats the weak and the strong?** (*He will have compassion on the weak and meet their needs.*)
- **How does this passage help us better understand Jesus’ description of Himself as the Good Shepherd?**

Ask students to reflect on this question: **“Which description in verse 16 do you most relate to right now — lost, wandering, injured, or weak? Why?”**

Allow a couple students to share. Consider sharing a time when you found yourself in one of these situations and how the Lord provided.



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Ask: “**How does knowing that God is your Good Shepherd make you feel?**”

Say: “**David echoes the sentiment of Ezekiel 34 centuries later in Psalm 23. The Shepherd who guided Israel through the wilderness and fire is the same One who provides and leads each of us. Because the Lord goes before us — protecting, providing, and preparing — we truly have what we need.**”

Distribute a pen and notecard to each student. Ask each of the questions below, one at a time. Lead students to answer the first two on one side of the card and the other two on the other side.

- **How might your identity or sense of worth change if you truly believed God knows you intimately?**
- **What God-sized task might God be leading you to take on? How will you respond?**
- **Where might God be leading you on a path that feels longer or harder than expected?**
- **How have you seen His “pillar of cloud” or “pillar of fire” — His guiding presence — in your own life?**

Challenge your students to be open to God’s moving and direction in their own lives. Encourage them not to delay, but to faithfully obey when He moves.

Lead your small group in prayer. You may use the prompt below, pray your own prayer, or you may want to ask another student.

Prompt: Lord, You are my Good Shepherd. Thank You for going before us — for leading even when we don’t understand the path. Teach us to trust Your presence, Your guidance, and Your provision each day. Amen.



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Day 2 – The Good Peace

Scripture: Psalm 23:2; Exodus 14:21-31; Matthew 11:28-30

Key Verse: “He lets me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters”
(Psalm 23:2).

In a large group, play the After Camp Devo 2 YouVersion® Video. Then, divide into smaller discussion groups, preferably no more than 8-10.

Ask a student to read aloud **Psalm 23:2**.

Say: “**The imagery in this verse is gentle — green pastures, quiet waters, peace, rest, and provision. It’s a picture of God leading us into places where our souls can breathe again. But sometimes God’s ‘quiet waters’ don’t look quiet at all.**”

Lead students to turn to **Exodus 14:21-31**. Invite one or two students to read these verses aloud.

Discuss:

- **What specific action did Moses take before the sea parted?** (*He stretched out his hand.*)
- **According to the passage, who actually drove the sea back and made the dry ground?** (*the LORD*)
- **How long did the wind blow to divide the sea?** (*all night*)
- **What did the Egyptians decide to do when they saw Israel crossing?** (*They pursued them.*)
- **What realization did the Egyptians come to in verse 25?** (*The LORD was fighting against them.*)
- **What happened when Moses stretched out his hand again?** (*The waters rushed back and killed all of the Egyptian army.*)



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- **Why do you think God chose to deliver Israel through the sea rather than around it?** (*He wanted to display His power and glory and strengthen the Israelites' faith.*)
- **What does verse 31 say was the result of this miracle in the hearts of the Israelites?** (*They feared God.*)

Share: In Exodus 14, the Israelites stood trapped between a roaring sea and an approaching army. They were terrified and wished that they had never left Egypt. They would have preferred to serve the Egyptians than die in the wilderness. Nothing about the moment looked peaceful or safe. God led them forward and made a way. The Israelites literally walked through the Red Sea on dry ground as the Egyptians were in pursuit. And, if that was not enough, God threw the Egyptians into confusion, and the waters came back and covered the entire Egyptian army.

Say: **“The Israelites had gone right through the middle of this seemingly impossible situation and were saved from the Egyptians. As a result, the people saw and recognized God’s authority, power, and holiness. They believed in Him and Moses, and they experienced peace about leaving Egypt. Looking closer at this passage, we see where God was with the Israelites in the pillar of fire and cloud that we talked about in our first devotion.”**

Say: **“A wall of water is hardly what we imagine when we think of ‘quiet waters.’ But the same God who leads us beside still waters also leads us through chaotic ones. In both scenes, God is the One guiding His people. In both scenes, He provides safety where there should be danger, rest where there should be fear, and a path where there should be no path at all.”**

Ask a student to read aloud **Psalm 23:2** again.

Share: Psalm 23 reminds us of God’s heart and His desire for peace for His people. Shepherds bring peace to their flocks through consistent care, protecting them from predators, and guiding them to safe pastures. A shepherd’s calming presence, voice, and touch can also alleviate fear and anxiety among the sheep. In the story we just read, we saw how God’s presence and guidance through Moses brought peace to a chaotic and scary situation. In a world of hurry, pressure, and performance, the Good Shepherd offers us peace and rest.



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Direct students to turn to **Matthew 11:28-30**. Call on a student to read it aloud.

- **Whom does Jesus invite to come to Him in verse 28?** (*He invites all who are weary and burdened.*)
- **What does Jesus promise to give those who come to Him?** (*rest*)
- **How does Jesus describe himself in verse 29?** (*lowly and humble in heart*)
- **How does giving your burdens and struggles to Jesus bring peace?**
- **How do you go about surrendering these things to Him?** (prayer, trusting Him)

Say: **“We can live in safety and peace by trusting the Good Shepherd who knows all our needs.”**

Distribute a pen and notecard or sheet of paper to each student. Ask each of the questions below, one at a time. Lead students to answer the first two on one side of the card and the other two on the other side.

- **What “Red Sea moments” has God brought you or a family member or friend through in the past?**
- **In what areas of your life do you need peace?**
- **What might it look like to trust that God can lead you through what feels impassable?**
- **How is God offering rest — even if your “quiet waters” don’t look the way you expected?**

Give this challenge: Life is busy. We live with lots of mental noise — technology, social media, and pressures to name a few. Over the next week, set aside five minutes per day with no phone, no device, and no distractions. Read Scripture, pray, or sit in silence and experience God’s peace.

Lead your small group in prayer. You may use the prompt below, pray your own prayer, or you may want to ask another student.

Prompt: Lord, thank You for being the Good Shepherd who leads me to peace. Help me to trust You, not only in calm places, but also in the moments that feel overwhelming or impossible. Lead me through my Red Seas, and quiet my heart as I follow You.



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Day 3 – The Good Restoration

Scripture: Psalm 23:3; Exodus 32:1-6; 34:6-7

Key Verse: “He renews my life; he leads me along the right paths for his name’s sake”

(Psalm 23:3).

In a large group, play the After Camp Devo 3 YouVersion® video. Then, divide into smaller discussion groups, preferably no more than 8-10.

Ask a student to read aloud **Psalm 23:3**.

Say: “**This verse paints a picture of a God who restores, redeems, and renews. The Good Shepherd brings wandering hearts back home and leads them onto the right path again.**”

Invite students to turn to **Exodus 32**.

While they find this passage, say: “**In today’s story of the Israelites, we see God’s people wandering off the path entirely. In Exodus 19, the Israelites make it to the Sinai Wilderness, and it was there that Moses went up the mountain to be with God. He did this several times, and it was during the second trip that Moses was given the Ten Commandments. This stay was much longer than the first. In fact, it was 40 days. And as a result, the Israelites panicked, lost patience, and turned to something they could see and control.**”

Call on a student to read aloud **Exodus 32:1-6**.

Discuss:

- **Why do you think the people became impatient waiting for Moses?** (*They thought he wasn’t coming back.*)
- **What did the people want in place of Moses?** (*They wanted new gods to lead them.*)

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- **What does this passage reveal about the Israelites' spiritual maturity at this point?** (*They were insecure in their faith.*)
- **How did Aaron honor their request?** (*He collected gold jewelry and made a golden calf.*)

Share: Keep in mind the Israelites had seen God move powerfully, parting seas, defeating enemies, and providing food, but they forgot who He was the moment fear and uncertainty arose. It was a tragic moment. The Lord referred to the people in Exodus 32:9 as stiff-necked people. They were stubborn, arrogant, and rebellious. He told Moses that He would destroy them. But, Moses reminded Him of the covenant He made with Abraham, and God relented. Moses went down the mountain, rebuked the people, and went to the Lord on their behalf, asking Him to forgive their sins. Let's take a look at God's response to Moses when he begged Him to relent.

Ask a student to read **Exodus 34:6-7**. As this person reads, invite students to call out the words God used to describe Himself. (*compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, faithfully loving, forgiving, just*)

Ask: **"How does it make you feel knowing these characteristics and the truth that God forgives our iniquity, rebellion, and sin?"**

Say: **"Moses begged God to forgive their sins and to accept them as His own possession, and that is what God did! He didn't abandon them. He didn't erase His promise or end His relationship with them. He confronted their sin, yes — but then He restored them, renewed His covenant, and continued to lead them toward the land He had promised."**

Invite a student to read aloud **Psalms 23:3** again.

Share: When a sheep wanders off or gets trapped, the shepherd brings them back to the flock. The shepherd also cares for their flock by nursing their injuries and illnesses and properly shearing them. Psalm 23:3 is a verse for the repentant, the tired, the confused, the easily distracted, and the wanderer. In a world of darkness and evil, we are prone to wander and stray, in need of rescue. The Good Shepherd offers complete restoration and renewal for us.



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Distribute a pen and notecard to each student. Ask each of the questions below, one at a time. Lead students to answer the first two on one side of the card and the other two on the other side.

- **What “golden calf” (something that gives you control, comfort, or identity that you have put before God) might God be inviting you to let go of?**
- **When is a time you have been impatient with God and His timing?**
- **Where do you need forgiveness, renewal, and restoration? Be specific.**
- **How can you keep from wandering in your faith walk in the future?**

Say: **“Have you turned to the Lord, repented of your sins, and surrendered your life to Him? If so, consider ‘next steps’ you need to take to grow in your faith (be in the Word daily, serve at church, go on a mission trip, lead a Christian club at school). If not, I would love to talk to you about making that decision today.”**

Lead your small group in prayer. You may use the prompt below, pray your own prayer, or you may want to ask another student.

Prompt: Lord, thank You for being the Good Shepherd who renews, redeems, and restores. Lead me along the right paths and help me to trust and follow You. When I drift or settle for substitutes, bring me back to Your path. Guide me in righteousness and renew my soul today.



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Day 4 – The Good Presence

Scripture: Psalm 23:4; Exodus 17:8-16

Key Verse: “Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

In a large group, play the After Camp Devo 3 YouVersion® video. Then, divide into smaller discussion groups, preferably no more than 8-10.

Ask a student to read aloud **Psalm 23:4**.

Say: “**This verse doesn’t pretend life is free of dark valleys, because it isn’t. But it promises that when we walk through them, God is with us. Let’s continue our look at the Israelites.**”

Instruct students to turn to **Exodus 17** in their Bibles.

Share: In Exodus 17, the Israelites were attacked by the Amalekites, a nomadic, hostile nation that was known for targeting vulnerable groups. At this point, they had been making their way through the desert for about a year and a half.

Ask: “**How do you think the Israelites were faring?**”

Say: “**They were tired and vulnerable from traveling. This battle wasn’t one the Israelites asked for or were prepared for. They weren’t trained soldiers. This was exactly the kind of “valley” where fear could take over.**”

Ask a student to read aloud **Exodus 17:8-16**.

Discuss:

- **Whom did Moses send to lead the battle against the Amalekites?** (*Joshua*)
- **What happened when Moses held up his hands?** (*Israel was winning the battle.*)

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- **What happened when Moses lowered his hands?** (*The Amalekites were winning.*)
- **Who helped Moses hold up his hands when he became tired?** (*Aaron and Hur*)
- **Why might God have allowed Moses to become tired instead of giving him endless strength?** (*He wanted them to see community and support is important; we can't do it alone; we need each other.*)
- **What was the final outcome of the battle?** (*victory for the Israelites*)

Share: Israel faced a real enemy, but fear did not win. God did not leave the Israelites alone. Joshua fought in the valley while Moses, Aaron, and Hur stood on the hill. Moses raised the staff of God, the same one that parted the Red Sea, high over the battlefield, bringing courage, direction, and hope. It was also a reminder that God was fighting for His people. When Moses' arms weakened, Aaron and Hur held them up. God gave Israel strength and victory. Throughout their wilderness wanderings, the Israelites experienced difficult trials, yet God's presence and guidance would protect and sustain them.

Share: The shepherd's presence is critical for the well-being and survival of a flock of sheep. They lead their sheep through the valley in order to get to the lush plateau. This is the well-watered route where the richest feed and best forage is to be found. However, it can also be full of danger like floods, rockslides, poisonous plants, and predators. The shepherd stays close to the sheep and is fully prepared to safeguard his flock. The sheep simply cannot go through the valley on their own. Just like the staff brought protection, safety, and victory for the Israelites, the rod and staff of the shepherd brought guidance, correction, protection and comfort. The Good Shepherd is ever with us.

Say: **"Isaiah 41:10: states, 'Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand.' His presence brings comfort, not fear. He provides guidance, through both the good and difficult times."**



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Distribute a pen and notecard to each student. Ask each of the questions below, one at a time. Lead students to answer the first two on one side of the card and the other two on the other side.

- **What “battle” are you facing right now that feels bigger than your strength?**
- **Where do you need to remember that God is not distant — He is standing over the situation with His power and presence?**
- **Who helps hold you up when you grow weary — and whose arms can you support?**
- **What does it look like to rely on God rather than only on your own strength?**

Lead your small group in prayer. You may use the prompt below, pray your own prayer, or you may want to ask another student.

Prompt:

Lord, thank You for being with me both in my highs and lows. When I face battles that overwhelm me, remind me of Your power and presence. Strengthen me, surround me with people who lift me up, and help me to find comfort knowing You are near.



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Day 5 – The Good Life

Scripture: Psalm 23:5-6; Joshua 3:14-17; 4:1-10; Lamentations 3:22-23

Key Verse: “Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD as long as I live” (Psalm 23:6).

In a large group, play the After Camp Devo 3 YouVersion® video. Then, divide into smaller discussion groups, preferably no more than 8-10.

Say: “**Today, we focus on the last two verses of Psalm 23 and the first 10 verses in Joshua 4, where the Israelites finally made their way into Canaan, the Promised Land. Both of these passages paint a dramatic picture of God’s faithfulness both during the journey and at its fulfillment.**”

Invite a student to read aloud **Psalm 23:5**.

Say: “**In this verse, like a gracious host, God prepares a table, providing provision, honor, and peace despite the presence of enemies. God sustains and strengthens His people even before the conflict is over. This is exactly what the people of Israel experienced before entering the Promised Land.**”

Call on a student to read aloud **Joshua 3:14-17** and another student to read aloud **Joshua 4:1-10**.

- **How did the water of the Jordan respond when the priests’ feet touched it?** (*The water stood still, rising up in a mass.*)
- **What did the priests do while the people crossed the river?** (*They stood in the middle of the Jordan on dry land.*)
- **How did the people cross the Jordan?** (*They crossed at Jericho on dry land.*)
- **What instructions did the Lord give Joshua after the people crossed the Jordan?** (*Twelve men, one from each tribe, were chosen to set up a memorial to God of 12 stones from the Jordan River.*)



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- **What does this passage show about how the people responded to God's commands?** (*They wanted a reminder for themselves and future generations of God's faithfulness.*)

Share: The Canaanites still inhabited the land, so battles were definitely ahead. Yet God prepared a way for His people to walk through the Jordan riverbed made dry by God's power, a miraculous provision in the face of nations who opposed them.

Ask a student to read aloud **Psalm 23:6**.

Say: **"David realized that God was not simply ahead of him, but behind him, pursuing, guarding, and surrounding his path. As we have been studying this week, the Israelites had been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. God had been with them, and He fulfilled His promise to them as they crossed the Jordan River into Canaan, a sign that the same Shepherd who led them out of Egypt was still leading them into promise."**

Say: **"The second part of verse 6 reads, 'I will dwell in the house of the LORD as long as I live.' This isn't just about heaven; it's about life lived in the presence of God, even in the middle of obstacles and transitions, as well as the really 'good' times."**

Read aloud **Lamentations 3:22-23**.

Say: **"Sheep that are satisfied and content with the care they receive from their shepherd feel at home with no desire to leave. For the shepherd, a great affection and devotion to his flock develops over time. He would never think of parting with his sheep. There is a deep commitment to his flock. They are his delight. So strong are the bonds between them that it is as if it were forever."**

Say: **"God loves us with a deep love, so much so that He sent His son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us and overcome death and the grave three days later. He delights in us. We can feel at home with Him, while on earth now and in heaven in the future. The Good Shepherd is good and merciful and promises abundant life now and His presence forever."**



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Distribute a pen and a sheet of paper to each student. Lead students to divide the paper into three sections: Look Back, Look Around, and Look Ahead. Ask each of the questions below, one at a time.

- **Look Back:** Where can you see God's goodness and mercy following you?
- **Look Around:** Where is He making a way for you right now, even if situations look impossible?
- **Look Ahead:** What promises has He spoken that you have not yet stepped into?

Encourage students to keep their paper as a reminder of the Good Shepherd's goodness and faithfulness.

Lead your small group in prayer. You may use the prompt below, pray your own prayer, or you may want to ask another student.

Prompt: Lord, thank You for Your goodness and mercy. Help me remember Your faithfulness in my own life. Give me courage to walk forward into the promises You have prepared for me. And teach me to dwell in Your presence, today and forever. Amen.