

The GOOD SHEPHERD

A STUDY OF PSALM 23

BIBLE STUDY LEADER GUIDE



The **GOOD SHEPHERD**

A STUDY OF PSALM 23

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to one of your most important jobs – FUGE Camps Bible Study Leader!! You have an incredible opportunity to help shape the lives of hundreds of students by pointing them to Christ! You will stand before students and share the truths of Scripture all summer! While you have a huge responsibility, this summer will be one of the most rewarding experiences you have ever had. Thank you for accepting this calling on your life!

This Bible Study Leader Guide provides you a detailed plan for teaching Bible study. The lessons in this Guide are based on guided discovery, creative learning. You are expected to follow this plan and not lecture your group or do your own study. While this is written in script form, you do not have to memorize it. You will prepare teaching outlines from this plan.

The best way to prepare to teach before the summer is to study the Scripture and use the lessons as your personal Bible study. As you interact with Scripture and the material in the Guide, take notes and answer the questions for yourself. Learn from the lessons before you attempt to teach them. If you teach a small group of students or young adults at your church or school, consider teaching these lessons before you get to camp. Allow the Holy Spirit to teach you through this study and then allow Him to use you to teach your students.

The tag line for FUGE Camps is, ‘Life-Changing Camps.’ Bible study is the foundational part of the experience and the life-change. Prepare yourself and pray for your students. Then, sit back and watch God do His work. The goal is for God to work in the lives of students during Bible study.

Each day provides a teaching plan and commentary on the Scripture passage. The outline for each day is as follows:

OVERVIEW

This provides a daily overview with a life question, Scripture passages and key verse.



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GATHER THESE SUPPLIES

This is the list of supplies you need each day.

PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME

These are preparations to make before the session.

MOTIVATION

The motivation section includes learning activities designed to introduce the concept for the day and to create interest in the following Bible study material.

EXAMINATION

The Scripture study includes learning activities to encounter the meaning and truth of each Bible passage, and it's broken down into teachable sections. This section contains a key verse activity to help students memorize these verses.

APPLICATION

The application section allows you as the leader a time to sum up the lesson in a personal way, and it allows the students to put into words what they have learned.

COMMENTARY

This section provides commentary to provide background and helpful information on the Scripture passages.

You will use this guide to prepare your Bible study outlines for each day. You will need to prepare these **BEFORE** you come to camp. The Bible Study Letter will give directions on preparing the outlines. There will also be an instructional video.

We hope you have the time of your life, and we will be praying for you throughout the summer!

FUGE Camps Coordinators



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OPENING NIGHT: THE GOOD SHEPHERD

OVERVIEW

God chose David as king of Israel.

Sheep are creatures that lack a sense of direction, leaving them defenseless and vulnerable without a shepherd. Unable to care for themselves, they can be quite stubborn. Sound familiar? 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. He provides not only for our physical needs but also offers peace, restoration, presence, and an abundant life now and for eternity. We will dive into Psalm 23 and the life of David, a shepherd who later became king of Israel and the author of this psalm.

Scriptures: Psalm 23:1; 1 Samuel 16:11-13

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

Life Question: What does it mean for God to be your shepherd?

GATHER THESE SUPPLIES:

- Pipe cleaners
- Tape
- Small ball
- Colored dot stickers (red, green, blue, yellow)
- Camp Guides
- Student question cards
- Pens
- Key Verse, Missions (2), and Timeline Posters
- Bibles
- Opening Night checklist
- Attendance grid (on phone)

PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME:

- Make four shepherd’s hooks using 2 pipe cleaners for each.
- Hang posters around the classroom.
- Pray for students.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Once you arrive at your meeting space, call roll to account for every student who has been assigned to your group. Introduce yourself and share a brief portion of your story. Allow time for students to introduce themselves by sharing their name, church group, and hometown.

Name Game

Learning the names of your students should be a priority. Be conscious of time, and do not allow this game to take too long.

Group Juggle

Instruct students to stand in a circle. Toss a ball to a student and say, “Here you go, (insert name).” The receiving student will say, “Thanks, (insert your name). Here you go, (insert name)” as he or she passes the ball to that person. Continue doing this until all students have caught and thrown the ball. The last person will toss it back to you. Instruct students to place their arms and hands behind their backs as soon as they have had the ball. Also tell them to remember to whom they threw the ball. If you have time, do this again in the same order as before or introduce a second object.

As students play the name game, walk around the circle and stick either a red, green, blue, or yellow sticker dot on the right shoulder of each student. Be sure to let them know what you are doing before you start. Tell them the dots are for the next activity.

MOTIVATION

Ask four students to play the part of a shepherd. Assign each one of the four colors. Give each shepherd one of the shepherd’s hooks that you created out of pipe cleaners.

Instruct students to move around the room and make sheep sounds when you say “go.” The four shepherds are to find their flocks and herd them to their pasture (an area they choose in the room). Caution students not to be rowdy or resistant.

Once all sheep in their flock have been gathered, they are to play a game of “Shepherd Says” within their groups. This is the basic “Simon Says” game with a shepherd twist. For example: Shepherd says jump twice. **Note:** Four groups doing this activity at the

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same time will create some chaos with competing voices. This will be part of the debrief.

Call time after three minutes and debrief:

- **How did the shepherd know who was to be part of his flock?**
- **Why was it hard to hear your shepherd's voice to know what to do?**
- **Did anyone follow a shepherd's command who was not their shepherd?**
- **How does this activity relate to Jesus' activity in our lives?**

Say: **"This week, our theme is 'The Good Shepherd.' We will be reading and discussing Psalm 23 and portions of David's life from 1 and 2 Samuel. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Just as sheep are marked to know what flock they are a part of, we are marked and chosen as Jesus' followers. Jesus calls and leads His sheep. We must choose to listen and follow."**

Distribute a Camp Guide and pen to each student. Instruct students to write their name and church name on the back cover. Tell them you will collect these each day and then allow them to take their Camp Guide with them on Closing Morning.

EXAMINATION

Point to the Key Verse Poster and recite it aloud together: **"The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need" (Psalm 23:1).**

Distribute a key verse bracelet to each student and instruct them to place it on their wrist and wear it throughout the camp session and when they get home.

Say: **"In order to take the Lord as our Shepherd, we must ask: Who is the Lord? What is His character? Does He have adequate credentials to be my Shepherd, my Manager, my Owner?"**

Instruct students to turn to page 7 in their Camp Guides to the "Who is God?" section. Look for a list of characteristics of God that are also characteristics of a shepherd and take a moment to follow the instructions there.



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Below are characteristics of God that just happen to also be characteristics of a shepherd. Star a couple of the ones that you can identify with for how you have seen the Lord work in your life.

- Loves unconditionally
- Provides constant care
- Offers provision and sustenance
- Knows intimately
- Leads and guides
- Protects
- Seeks the lost
- Heals and comforts
- Willing to sacrifice

Ask: “What does it mean for the Lord to be your shepherd?”

Say: “The second part of Psalm 23:1 tells us that God has the capacity to provide everything we need. At times, we may need to wait for those provisions. At other times, we experience lack. But God moves to care for those who belong to Him in His own timing. This does not guarantee a life free of hardship, but rather one of spiritual contentment. With God as our Shepherd, we have what we need to fulfill His purposes for our lives.”

Instruct students to go to page 7 in their Camp Guides to answer the question in the “All I Need” section.

- **In your own words, what does it mean for you to “have what I need”?**

As we discussed earlier, sheep are marked to designate which flock they are part of and so their shepherd can tell from a distance.

Discuss: What are some of the marks of someone whose shepherd is God?

Say: “This week we will look at how God was the Good Shepherd for David. Let’s do a quick, brief review of the story of the Israelites.”



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Share: The Israelites were God’s chosen people. They were descendants of Abraham, living in the land of Israel when famine hit. They went to Egypt to escape the famine, but they ended up being enslaved there. God freed them from captivity and returned them to the land He had promised them. They were led by God, but they wanted a king like neighboring nations, so God gave them Saul. Because of Saul’s sinfulness, God removed His anointing from him and anointed a new king: David.

Refer to the Timeline Poster and say: **“This is a timeline of David’s life. We are starting at the beginning.”**

Instruct students to turn to **1 Samuel 16** in their Bibles. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud **verses 11-13**:

11 Samuel asked him, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” he answered, “but right now he’s tending the sheep.” Samuel told Jesse, “Send for him. We won’t sit down to eat until he gets here.” **12** So Jesse sent for him. He had beautiful eyes and a healthy, handsome appearance. Then the LORD said, “Anoint him, for he is the one.” **13** So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully on David from that day forward. Then Samuel set out and went to Ramah.

Instruct students to turn to pages 6-7 in their Camp Guides to the section entitled, “Timeline of David’s Life.” Lead them to write the words “Anointed King” on the first mark on the timeline. As they do this, move the poster piece to the first mark on the poster.

Say: **“The Lord instructed the prophet Samuel to anoint David as king. He was overlooked by others who saw him as youngest and not strongest, not the one to be king. But God sees more than the outward appearance. He sees the heart. God had other plans for David’s life. The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on David from that day forward!”**

Share: Just like God was a Good Shepherd to David, He is for those of us who follow Him today, too. This week, we will take a closer look at how the Lord is our Good Shepherd through Psalm 23 and how He was the Good Shepherd in David’s life.

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MISSION EMPHASIS

Draw attention to the Mission Posters and share the IMB and NAMB emphasis for the week.

International Mission Board (IMB) – Jordan

The International Mission Board teams up with local churches to share God's love with people all across North Africa and the Middle East (NAME). These places are packed with amazing history. It's where Jesus' story began! This summer, you get to be part of bringing hope to kids and families who live there.

We're focusing on a country that has become a safe place for people who had to leave their homes because of war. It's a place where God is doing some amazing things! Teens just like you are helping share the hope of Jesus with people from different backgrounds.

Your mission workers are helping families hear about Jesus in all kinds of ways. Many people are hearing the good news of Jesus Christ every day.

Here's the cool part: YOU get to be part of it. Your prayers, mission offering, and everything you learn this summer helps you join in on what God is doing in this amazing place.

North American Mission Board (NAMB) – South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

"We lead the country in everything you don't want to lead the country in."

If people know anything about South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Matt Hadden says it's probably that.

"We have 80% unemployment, the average lifespan of an adult male is 50 years, and the teen suicide rate is 300% higher than the national average," he says. "Several years ago, we had 26 teenagers take their lives in a three-month period. If that happened anywhere else in the country, it would be national news."

Matt is a missionary with Send Relief, Southern Baptists' compassion ministry arm. He and his wife, Amanda, along with their four kids, run the Čhaŋkú Wašté Ranch on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, home to the Oglala Lakota people.

"Čhaŋkú Wašté means 'Good Road,'" he says, "and there's a reason we call it that. The Oglala are essentially an unreached people group right here in the center of our country, and there's so much brokenness here. Most people on the reservation, kids especially, have been through traumatic experiences or are living in crisis mode. And so, we are absolutely an evangelistic ministry, but our approach is through compassion ministry."



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Much of what the Haddens do at Čhaŋkú Wašté is built around an eight-week-long summer kids' camp. "We do a really big, glorified VBS," Matt says. "It's a safe place for kids to learn and celebrate who God made them to be. They learn Bible stories, they play games, they do arts and crafts, and really, we just all have a lot of fun."

When you give to the FUGE Missions Offering, you're helping provide basketballs, Bibles, crayons, and anything else missionaries like the Haddens might need to share Christ in an unreached place.

Pray that Matt and Amanda will be fully supplied so they can meet needs and see God change lives in South Dakota. Giving to this project will go a long way towards making that happen.

To learn exactly what your offering dollars can do in places like South Dakota and how missionaries all over the U.S. and Canada are meeting needs and seeing God change lives, go to namb.net/lifeway-camps.

MFuge Local Missions

Every year a portion of the mission offering received at camp goes back to the local community through MFuge grants. Local ministries that we partner with can apply for the grant to continue ministry throughout the year. It is amazing to see how the Lord uses these ministries throughout the year.

Say: "**Later in the week during worship, we will collect a mission offering. This money will be taken up in your church group.**"

Challenge students to give to the offering. Make them aware of which night the offering will be collected in worship. Share the name of your mission mobilizer and the location of the mission table.

Student Question Cards

Pass out question cards and instruct students to complete them. Collect them, and later in the evening make notes from the cards. These will be collected at paper party on Opening Night to be given to group leaders so they will know better how to pray for and minister to their students at camp.

EVANGELISM TRAINING (MTET-MFuge Only)

Walk MFuge students through the Ministry Track Evangelism Training (MTET) plan.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Communicate announcements and camp rules given to you by your leadership staff. Collect Camp Guides from students. As time allows work on site prep (MFuge only).

PRAYER

Pray over students by asking the Lord to give them a great week and for Him to move and stir their hearts. Dismiss them to church group rally.

COMMENTARY

Psalm 23

I. Introduction

“The Shadow of Death”

After the funeral service of his first wife, the late Donald Grey Barnhouse, distinguished pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, was thinking about how he could convey to his young children the loss of their mother. As he tried to conjure up words of comfort, the shadow of a large van passed over their car as they were driving down the highway. Instantly, Barnhouse thought of the words needed for the moment. “Children,” he asked, “would you rather be run over by a truck, or by its shadow?” The children quickly answered, “Well, of course, Dad, we’d much rather be run over by its shadow! The shadow cannot hurt us.”

Then Barnhouse, the master illustrator, replied, “The truck of death ran over the Lord Jesus two thousand years ago so that only its shadow now passes over us. That is all that has happened to your mother. Only the shadow of death has passed over her. She is unharmed in heaven.”

This is the comforting message of Psalm 23, unquestionably the most-loved song from the inspired pen of David. If there is one psalm that has encouraged more hearts, it is this beautiful masterpiece, probably the best-known passage of the entire Old Testament. As one historian said of this towering psalm: “It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the hearts of the sick, of captives in dungeons, of widows in their pinching grief, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illuminated; it has visited the prisoner and broken his chains, and, like Peter’s angel, led him forth in imagination, and sung him back to his home again. It has made the dying Christian slave freer than his master.”

Such is the powerful peace that has filled the troubled souls of believers down through the centuries. None who have feasted at the banquet table of this beautiful psalm go away hungry. The great Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon called it “the pearl of psalms.” Alexander MacLaren, the noted Scottish expositor, said, “It has dried many tears and supplied the mold into which many hearts have poured their peaceful faith.” James Montgomery Boice extols it, noting, “Millions of people have memorized this psalm, even those who have learned few other portions. Ministers have used it to comfort

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people who are going through severe trials, suffering illness, or dying. For some, the words of this psalm have been the last they have uttered in life.” This psalm is, indeed, a masterpiece of inspired praise, testifying to the abundant grace and goodness of God to his people.

Here is a testimony by David, the author, of the Lord’s faithfulness as he looked back on his life. David wrote out of his own experience as he had spent his early years caring for sheep. The image of a shepherd with his flock was engraved upon his mind to represent his relationship with God. Likewise, David had known what it was to travel and be a weary guest who had enjoyed the care of a loving host. This also pictured his relationship with God. So, in this psalm David pulled together both images to convey the abundant provision of God for all believers in need of His peace and protection.

II. Commentary

The Good Shepherd and Gracious Host

MAIN IDEA

David describes the Lord’s loving care for His own people as a shepherd’s devotion for his flock and a host’s provisions for his guests.

A: the Good Shepherd (23:1-4)

SUPPORTING IDEA: The psalmist represents his relationship to God as a sheep to his shepherd, not lacking any rest, guidance, or safety.

23:1a. David began this psalm by introducing the first metaphor that describes the relationship between the Lord and His people with the tender analogy of a shepherd and his flock. During his youth David had been a shepherd watching his father’s flock (1 Sam. 16:11; 19; 17:15), so he was very familiar with this picture. Transferring the image to God, he declared, The LORD is my shepherd. The word *my* emphasizes how deeply personal and close was his individual relationship with God. Everything in the next four verses flows out of this shepherd motif.

What is so amazing is that in ancient Israel, a shepherd’s work was considered the lowest of all work. A shepherd would actually live with his sheep twenty-four hours a day with unwavering devotion, day and night, both in fair weather and bad, to nurture, guide, and protect his sheep. The shepherd would assume full responsibility for the needs and safety of his flock, even risking his own life for their protection. This is what God has chosen to be to His people (cp. Pss. 28:9; 74:1; 77:20; 78:52; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3). He is their everything, their constant protector.

23:1b. Because of the greatness of God and His constant, loving care over His flock, David concluded, I shall not be in want. Left to themselves, sheep lack everything, being totally helpless and defenseless animals who cannot care for themselves. But under the shepherd’s care, all their needs are abundantly met. So it was for David, as well as for all believers who are under the watchcare of Him who is all-sufficient, inexhaustible, and unchanging. All God’s sheep, precious to Him, shall not be in want. They will lack nothing that is good and necessary for enjoying life to the fullest.

23:2. Continuing the shepherd’s theme, David boasted, He makes me lie down in green pastures. Sheep are fearful animals, easily panicked and, when scared, will not lie down to rest. Only the shepherd can provide the calm assurance to make them lie down in green pastures or grassy meadows. This speaks of the peace and true satisfaction that only God can provide His sheep.

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What is more, David said, he leads me beside quiet waters. Literally, this refers to waters that have been stilled, further expanding this peaceful scene. Weary and worn sheep need a long, refreshing drink from the rapid stream. But being instinctively afraid of running water, the shepherd must pick up a few large stones and dam up a place, causing the rushing stream to slow its current and create quiet waters. Then the flock may drink with no fear. God gives true, abiding peace to believers who abide in Him and drink of His grace.

23:3a. Moreover, this good shepherd restores my soul. This statement is subject to different interpretations. It may picture the straying sheep being brought back to the fold (cp. Isa. 49:5; Ps. 60:1). In Hebrew vernacular these words can mean “brings to repentance” or “brings to conversion” (cp. Hos. 14:1–3; Joel 2:12). Psalm 19:7 uses this same wording to picture the spiritual renewal or revival of a believer. But since the word for soul (Heb. *nephesh*) is accurately translated “life,” this may mean that the Lord restores the psalmist to physical health. Either interpretation is certainly true.

23:3b-c. Furthermore, David wrote, the Lord guides me in paths of righteousness. Unlike other animals, sheep lack a sense of direction and can become easily lost, even in the most familiar environment. They easily go astray as they are prone to wandering. The shepherd must continually guide them to paths of righteousness, or “the right path,” if they are to be moved from field to field without falling into deep crevices or off ragged cliffs.

Likewise, God by His Word and Spirit guides His flock effectively in the right way. All this God does for His name’s sake, meaning for the honor of His own glory, which is the highest of all His motives. Even when believers sin, God is committed to leading them back to the right path.

23:4a-b. Taking this image a step further, David portrayed the shepherd as being able to protect his sheep in their moments of greatest danger. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, David stated, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. The shepherd would lead his flock from one grazing place to another, a move which would often involve passing through a narrow valley between high jagged cliffs, often filled with potential dangers such as wild animals. The sun would be obstructed from shining into the valley, creating darkness or a shadow. Such a shadow in the valley would often become a place of death for wandering sheep, hence a “shadow of death.”

Yet even in such danger, the Lord was present to guard and guide His flock, dispelling all fear of evil as He led them into paths of righteousness (v. 3).

23:4c. Keeping with this shepherd imagery, David declared, Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. The shepherd’s rod was usually an oak club about two feet long. It was used to defend the flock against wild animals such as lions or bears, as well as for counting, guiding, and protecting his sheep. And the shepherd’s staff was his crook. Bent or hooked at one end, it was used to pry sheep loose from thickets, to push branches aside, to pull fallen sheep out of holes, to lead them along narrow paths, and to drive off snakes.

Such tools were sources of comfort for fearful sheep and for David. He lived his life often surrounded by multiple dangers, yet God’s Word and loving hand were the most effective means of guiding and guarding His faithful servant, David.

B: the Gracious Host (23:5-6)

SUPPORTING IDEA: The psalmist represents his relationship to God as a guest to a gracious host, not lacking any provision, goodness, or eternal blessing.

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23:5a. David shifted metaphors from the shepherd/flock motif to the host imagery. As a gracious host would attend to the needs of his guests, so David said to God, You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Though surrounded by many enemies who sought to harm him, David recognized that God was with him for his good, supplying his needs as a host would care for a guest. Again, the same central theme of this psalm is reinforced. Even under the most adverse circumstances, in the face of threatening enemies, David would lack nothing (cp. v. 1).

23:5b. It was the custom of a loving host to provide oil for the head of his honored guest to refresh him after his travels. Thus, David added, You anoint my head with oil, speaking of the Lord's ministry to revive his heart, especially when surrounded by many foes who threatened him. The presence of God invigorated him, renewing him for all the demands of life.

23:5c. Further, David testified, my cup overflows, referring to the constant supply of drink provided by an attentive host. His cup was always more than filled to the brim, overflowing with the most satisfying drink imaginable. This pictures the abundant supply of divine grace in David's life which was more than sufficient to strengthen and sustain him in the most dangerous circumstances. God is an infinite source of all that believers need to live victoriously in difficult situations.

23:6. Finally, David concluded, Surely goodness (Heb. *tob*, that which is pleasant, beautiful, i.e., God's presence and grace) and love will follow me all the days of my life, even when he found himself in life-threatening situations. Through thick and thin, in every extremity of life, God's blessings were chasing David. Thus, on a triumphant note David wrote, I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Even death would serve David's greater good, which would usher him into God's immediate presence where he would enjoy the goodness and love of God forever, or literally "throughout the years." Nothing can separate the believer from the love of God, not even death (cp. Rom. 8:38-39).

MAIN IDEA REVIEW

David describes the Lord's loving care for His own people as a shepherd's devotion for his flock and a host's provisions for his guests.

III. Conclusion Goodness and Love

The late Harry Ironside, noted preacher at Moody Memorial Church in downtown Chicago, told the story of a troubled woman who once came to him fearful that she was being followed by two men. Whenever she left her apartment, the two men would trail her, or so she thought. Whenever she stepped on the trolley, the two men were at her side. What was she to do?

Ironside quickly sized up that these two men were imaginary figures, figments of her imagination. Wishing to comfort her, he replied, "There's nothing to worry about. Those two men are David's servants, sent to help you." Ironside turned to Psalm 23:6 and showed her in the Bible, "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life." He assured her, "Those two men are named Goodness and Love and their job is to help you."

"Oh," she said, content with the explanation, never to worry again. Would to God that all believers could be so simple in their faith, believing that the goodness and mercy of God are always present to bless them. Since our Good Shepherd and gracious host is always near to care for us, may our hearts be at peace.

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1 Samuel 16:11-13

Selecting a New King (16:6-13)

SUPPORTING IDEA: The young David is selected from among all Jesse's sons to be the new king of Israel because David had the right kind of heart.

16:6-10. When Jesse and his sons arrived at the sacrifice, Samuel was ready to anoint the new king of Israel, the man after the Lord's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). But Samuel did not know the intent of God's heart, and he made a fundamental mistake. Samuel looked only skin deep. Samuel's mistake leads us to consider that faithful leaders must have the right kind of heart.

The first of Jesse's sons to be considered was Eliab. He must have been tall and handsome. Samuel was impressed and was sure this was the LORD'S anointed. But he was wrong. God was not concerned with height or appearance. What God said to Samuel is one of the most important statements in all of Scripture.

It is a fundamental truth of the Bible that God's ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8-9). God does not value or judge the same things that man does. Man is shallow and often fickle. He judges by what he can see, the outward appearance. The Hebrew text literally says man looks at "the eyes" (16:7). Man cannot see the thoughts, emotions, and intents of another. Only God has the ability to observe and judge these things because the LORD looks at the heart. God desires His servants to have the right kind of heart.

One by one Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But none of them had the right kind of heart. The Lord rejected each one. This was certainly perplexing since the Lord had clearly stated that He had chosen one of Jesse's sons to be king (16:1). But Samuel knew that God's word to him was true, so there had to be another son.

16:11-12. Samuel asked Jesse, Are these all the sons you have? No, there was one who was tending the sheep. The NIV labels him the youngest, but the Hebrew text literally says "the smallest" (16:11). The NIV's translation is certainly legitimate because the Hebrew language does express the idea of the youngest in this way. But many scholars have also noted the irony in the contrast between David's stature and that of his brothers and Saul as well (16:7; Bergen, 179). They were tall; he was not.

The Lord's anointed was sent for. When he arrived, Samuel took note of his features. He was ruddy (either sun-tanned or having red-tinted hair) with a fine appearance and handsome features (16:12). David's physical characteristics were nice, but since God had already told Samuel how He judged (16:7), they were irrelevant. Instead, God looked at David's heart. David had a desire to search after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). Immediately, the Lord told Samuel to arise and anoint David. Jesse's youngest son was the one.

16:13. Samuel took the horn of oil and poured its contents on David's head in the presence of his brothers. It is not certain whether anyone else witnessed the anointing. Anointing was the symbolic act used to set apart priests, kings, altars, and even the tabernacle and the ark. It signified that the individual or thing was consecrated for God's use.

This consecration was further confirmed with the gift of God's Spirit upon David in power (16:13). This represents a sudden change because the Hebrew text states that the Spirit "rushed" upon him. When Saul was anointed the Spirit also "rushed" upon him (1 Sam. 10:10). But the difference here is that the Spirit stayed with David from that day on. This would make David's anointing superior to Saul's (Bergen, 180). From that day on the political landscape of Israel would be changed forever.

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DAY 1: THE GOOD PEACE

OVERVIEW

God was with David in his battle against Goliath.

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 a world of hurry, pressure, and performance, the Good Shepherd offers us peace and rest. When David faced Goliath, he had peace knowing that God had delivered him before and He would again.

Scriptures: Psalm 23:2; 1 Samuel 17:33-37; Psalm 144

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

Life Question: In what areas of your life do you need rest and peace?

GATHER THESE SUPPLIES:

- Key Verse, Timeline, Headings Posters (provided)
- Tape
- Four copies of these questions (provided):
 - What are things that keep people up at night?
 - What helps you sleep well at night?
 - What are other ways that you can rest besides sleep?
- One copy of these statements (provided):
 1. Surrender your burdens, striving, fears, and control to Jesus.
 2. Talk to God honestly about your worries, doubts, and desires.
 3. Put your trust in God instead of circumstances—knowing God is in control.
 4. Spend time daily in Scripture.
 5. Obey and follow His way.
 6. Share your journey with trusted believers.
 7. Accept that peace isn't the absence of trouble.
- Pens
- Memory game cards (provided)
- Sticky notes

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- Large piece of paper
- Stick, ball, rock, water bottle
- Extra Bibles
- Camp Guides

PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME:

- Hang the Key Verse Poster on a focal wall.
- Cut the God's Faithfulness heading from the Headings Poster and hang near the Key Verse Poster.
- Cut apart the seven statements above.

MOTIVATION

Give students one more minute to complete their Quiet Time.

Wily Coyote

Lead students to stand in a circle, facing into the middle with their eyes closed. Select one or two players to be "shepherds" and one or two players to be the "wily coyotes" (depending on the size of your group) by tapping them on the shoulder: shepherds get one tap; coyotes get two taps. Once this is done, instruct students to open their eyes.

Give these instructions: **"If you were tapped once, you are a shepherd whose goal is to 'protect' students in the circle from the predators by making eye contact and sticking out your tongue. Only shepherds are to stick out their tongue. If you were tapped twice, you are a coyote and will 'capture' others in the circle without being noticed by subtly making eye contact with your peers by winking at them. If you were not tapped twice, you should not wink at anyone. When 'caught' by the coyote, students are to sit down. When 'saved' by the shepherd, students will close their eyes, safe from the coyotes. The students who are 'caught' can still be 'saved' by the shepherd."** Start the game. Call time at one minute. The goal would be for the shepherds to save everyone.

Lead students to sit on the floor. Debrief the game by asking both the shepherd(s) and coyote(s) how they felt in their roles and by asking the other students to share observations and/or feelings. Ask for someone to relate this game to life and our faith journey.



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Say: **“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 this activity, the coyotes were in pursuit. They were out to get the sheep. The shepherd was there as their protection. Today, we will see how God, as Our Good Shepherd, offers us peace and rest in a world of hurry, pressure, and performance.”**

Physical Peace

Ask: **“How do you find peace in the midst of chaos and life?”** (*Call a friend, tell a parent, move to a quiet space, listen to music, etc.*)

Say: **“Let’s take a moment to practice physical peace.”** Lead students through the Square Breathing Technique:

- Use your finger to draw a square on your leg while doing this breathing technique.
- As you draw one side breathe in for four seconds, then draw the next side and breathe out for four seconds.
- Repeat until you have drawn the whole square or until you feel more relaxed.

Say: **“If you want to try this again later, there is a box outline in your Camp Guide in the “Physical Peace” section on page 15.”**

Continue: **“There are many ways that we can seek and find physical peace, but today, we take this a step further to see how we can experience true peace through Christ, a lasting, inner state regardless of life’s challenges. Philippians 4:7 says, ‘And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.’”**

Say a short prayer, asking God to move and speak through His Word today.

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EXAMINATION

Peace Through Provision

Refer to the Key Verse Poster and lead students to recite the verse in unison: **“He lets me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters” (Psalm 23:2).**

Say: **“Let’s break this verse into its two parts.”** Reread verse 23:2a.

Form four groups by numbering students 1-4. Instruct students to get in groups with others with their same number and give each group the following questions to discuss:

- **What are things that keep people up at night?** (*worry, stress, anxiety, too much caffeine, health issues, etc.*)
- **What helps you sleep well at night?** (*night light, sound machine, stuffed animal, sibling, no television or cell phone, melatonin, etc.*)
- **What are other ways that you can rest besides sleep?**

Ask a couple of students to share from the discussion.

Say: **“Just as we need certain things to be able to sleep, sheep cannot lie down and rest until their shepherd has made them feel safe by getting rid of pests and the risk of predators, easing friction in the flock, and providing them food to eat.”**

Say: **“In John 14:27 Jesus says, ‘Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don’t let your heart be troubled or fearful.’”**

Hand out each of the steps outlined below to a student and invite them to read them aloud, one at a time. Say: **“True peace can only be found through belief in and surrender to Jesus. We cannot achieve it on our own. Let’s look at practical steps to take to spend more time with Jesus and focus on Him and the peace He brings.”**

1. **Surrender your burdens, striving, fears, and control to Jesus.**
2. **Talk to God honestly about your worries, doubts, and desires.**
3. **Put your trust in God instead of circumstances—knowing God is in control.**
4. **Spend time daily in Scripture.**



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5. Obey and follow His way.
6. Share your journey with trusted believers.
7. Accept that peace isn't the absence of trouble.

After they have shared all seven, point students to their Camp Guides to the list on page 15 in the “Practical Peace” section. Instruct them to place a star beside one or two steps that they will agree to take in the days ahead.

Reference the sidebar.

Sidebar: Shalom

Hebrew word meaning peace, characterized by wholeness and completeness beyond the absence of conflict.

Say: “In Psalm 23:2b, the green pastures represent lush, fertile areas with plenty of food for the flock. In the same way, God provides for us. We have sustaining peace, not from the “pasture,” but from the one who provides the pasture. We can live in safety and peace by trusting the Good Shepherd who knows all our needs.”

Follow the Leader

Say: “Let’s now look at the second part of this verse.” Reread verse 23:2b: “He leads me beside quiet waters.”

Lead students to stand up and split them in half. Ask each side to choose a leader to move to the front. When you say “go,” the two leaders will make motions that those on their side are to follow. The two leaders can start slow and get faster. Call time before students are bored or leaders run out of ideas.

Ask: “What did it take for you to follow your leader?” (*watch, be willing, focus*) “How did the other activity in the room impact your ability to follow?”

Say: “The shepherd knows where the pure, clean, safe drinking water is located, and he leads his sheep there. As he does, sometimes the sheep will stop along the path and try to satisfy themselves with muddy water which can lead to illness in the sheep. The shepherd keeps his sheep away from the wrong source of water. In the same way, the Good Shepherd leads us to water that satisfies and is

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best for us. But we sometimes attempt to find our own sources of satisfaction which leads to unfulfillment. The Good Shepherd leads us to ‘water’ that satisfies and ultimately is for our good.”

Say: “Close your eyes and picture green pastures and still waters. What does your peaceful place look like? Now, turn to page 16 to the “Pastures and Waters” section in your Camp Guides and draw or design a picture that represents your vision. Then, inside or around your picture, write words or verses that describe the peace God gives.”

Peace Through Remembrance

Memory

Lead students to get back into their groups from earlier and give each group a set of Memory game cards. Instruct them to place the cards face down on the floor in a square shape. Tell them they are about to play the childhood game called “Memory.” Then, lead them to one at a time flip over two cards to match them.

Once groups have completed the game, ask: “**What did you have to do in order to find cards that match?**” (*watch closely, pay attention, remember where cards were located so you could go back to them as needed*) Say: “**Today, we will take a look at how David found peace by remembering God’s past faithfulness.**”

Say: “**Let me share what was happening leading up to our Scripture passage. The Philistines were headed to attack the Israelites. Goliath stepped forward. He was nine feet tall. He shouted to the Israelites to choose one of their men to step forward to fight him. When all the Israelite men saw Goliath, they retreated from him terrified. Goliath was defying Israel and the armies of the Living God. Then, David steps up and volunteers to fight him.**”

Point to the Timeline Poster. Move the “Fights and Defeats Goliath” to the second mark on the timeline. Lead students to turn in their Camp Guides to pages 6-7 to “Timeline of David’s Life” section and write “Fights and Defeats Goliath” on the second mark there.

Call on a student to read aloud **1 Samuel 17:33-37**:

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33 But Saul replied, “You can’t go fight this Philistine. You’re just a youth, and he’s been a warrior since he was young.” **34** David answered Saul, “Your servant has been tending his father’s sheep. Whenever a lion or a bear came and carried off a lamb from the flock, **35** I went after it, struck it down, and rescued the lamb from its mouth. If it reared up against me, I would grab it by its fur, strike it down, and kill it. **36** Your servant has killed lions and bears; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.” **37** Then David said, “The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and may the LORD be with you.”

Discuss this passage by asking the following questions. Point students to the “Peace through Remembrance” section on pages 17-18 in the Camp Guide to write answers to these questions.

- **What did Saul say to David when he volunteered?** (*too young, no experience*)
- **When Saul discourages David from fighting Goliath, what does David remember?** (*the Lord rescued him from the lion and bear*)
- **What does remembering bring to David?** (*peace and confidence*)

Say: “The Hebrew word for ‘remember’ is *zakar*. It appears approximately 325 times in the Old Testament. This involves bringing something to mind and acting upon it, not just recalling information.”

Sidebar: Zakar

**Hebrew word for remember that appears 325 times in the Old Testament
Involves bringing something to mind and acting upon it, not just recalling
information**

Ask students to find a partner and respond to these questions:

- **What’s something small or big that went right for you in the weeks leading up to camp?**
- **How did you see the Lord’s hand in it?**

Give each student a sticky note. Invite them to write one faithfulness moment on it (no names). As they finish, lead them to take their note and stick it to the wall under the heading entitled “God’s Faithfulness.” Give these examples: smooth transition with a move; help with a big test or assignment; a new friendship. Read some out loud and celebrate together.

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Say: **“When we remember God’s faithfulness and who He is, this should bring peace and confidence to take the next steps He desires of us. Sometimes situations may not end like we want or we have to wait, but God is always faithful. We can trust Him with our future knowing He was faithful in our past.”**

Share: We end our reading here, but we cannot stop here. David stepped forward with a slingshot and stone and defeated Goliath. As a result, the Israelites, who were terrified of the Philistines, rallied and ran after them, defeating them and winning the victory.

Battles

Instruct students to turn to page 18 in their Camp Guides to the “Battles” section.

Ask: **“What battles are you facing?”**

Say: **“On the outline of Goliath, list your ‘Goliaths’—those things that feel bigger than you.”** (Ex: anxiety, loneliness, fear of failure, school pressure, conflict, etc.)

Instruct students to get back into their four groups. Give each group one of these items: stick, ball, rock, water bottle. Share these instructions: As a group, you must strategize how you would fend off a lion or bear using your item. Give them a couple of minutes. Then, ask each group to share briefly.

Next, ask groups to strategize how they can fight the battles that they listed in their Camp Guides. After a couple of minutes, ask them to share briefly.

Peace in the Battle

Lead students to go to the “Peace in the Battle” section of their Camp Guides on page 19 to Psalm 144. Walk them through the instructions below that are also found in their guides. Do this one at a time, and after time to respond to each, give them the highlighted words.

- **In verses 1-2, circle the words that describe who God is in our battles.**
- **In verses 3-4, underline words that describe our nature.**
- **In verses 5-11, draw a box around the actions that God takes in the battle.**

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• In verses 12-15, place a checkmark on the blessings from walking with God into the battle.

In the passage below, the responses for students to make in their Camp Guides are marked in colors in case you need to help them with this exercise.

- 1 Blessed be the LORD, my rock who trains my hands for battle and my fingers for warfare.
- 2 He is my faithful love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer. He is my shield, and I take refuge in him; he subdues my people under me.
- 3 LORD, what is a human that you care for him, a son of man that you think of him?
- 4 A human is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.
- 5 LORD, part your heavens and come down. Touch the mountains, and they will smoke.
- 6 Flash your lightning and scatter the foe; shoot your arrows and rout them.
- 7 Reach down from on high; rescue me from deep water, and set me free from the grasp of foreigners
- 8 whose mouths speak lies, whose right hands are deceptive.
- 9 God, I will sing a new song to you; I will play on a ten-stringed harp for you—
- 10 the one who gives victory to kings, who frees his servant David from the deadly sword.
- 11 Set me free and rescue me from foreigners whose mouths speak lies, whose right hands are deceptive.
- 12 Then our sons will be like plants nurtured in their youth, our daughters, like corner pillars that are carved in the palace style.
- 13 Our storehouses will be full, supplying all kinds of produce; our flocks will increase by thousands and tens of thousands in our open fields.
- 14 Our cattle will be well fed. There will be no breach in the walls, no going into captivity, and no cry of lament in our public squares.
- 15 Happy are the people with such blessings. Happy are the people whose God is the LORD. Psalm 144



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Ask: **“What is one thing you learned in reading and marking this passage that can help you in your personal battles?”** Allow for responses. Lead students to go back to the Goliath outline where they listed their battles and jot this down there.

Say: **“David had peace going into battle because of God’s faithfulness and this led to the battle being won and glory being given to God. This led to the Israelites trusting God in their battle with the Philistines, and they ultimately defeated them.”**

APPLICATION

Peace Every Day

Say: **“Today’s lesson is about God leading and providing, not us doing life on our own. When we allow Him to do this, we will experience peace and rest.”**

Lead students to turn to page 20 in their Camp Guides to section “Peace Every Day” to answer the questions there. Then, say the line, “As I face life...”, and instruct students to recite the three “God is” statements in unison.

Where do you feel God’s peace the most?

How can you find that “space” with God in your everyday life?

As I face life on a daily basis, both the good and the bad, I can remember and have peace knowing that:

**God is with me.
God is leading me.
God is fighting for me.**

PRAYER

Instruct students to turn to page 20 to the “Prayer” section to fill in the blanks of the prayer found there as a wrap up to the session.

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“God, thank You for being my Shepherd and giving me peace in _____ . Help me trust You when I face _____. Remind me that You are bigger than _____, and that I don’t face anything alone. I choose to trust You today. Amen.”

COMMENTARY

A: Securing the Victory for God (17:33-58)

SUPPORTING IDEA: By trusting in the Lord, David brings down Goliath with a stone from his trusty shepherd’s sling.

17:33-37. The contrast between Saul’s way of thinking and David’s is clear in the way Saul responded to David’s offer to fight Goliath. Saul first rejected David’s offer (17:33). It is clear that Saul was considering the outward appearance. He was unable to fight Goliath because David was still a boy and Goliath was a giant. Besides, Goliath had been a soldier from his youth. David, however, looked like a shepherd.

But David rejected this line of reasoning. He protested that he had had sufficient experience in battling the bear and the lion (17:34). David was aggressive in going after these ferocious animals. Since Goliath defied the Lord God, he was no more than an animal (17:36). David was certain that just as the Lord had delivered him from the paws of the lion and the bear, He would also deliver him from the hand of this Philistine. David wanted Saul to look at the heart, a heart filled with trust in a God who would deliver him in battle. Saul seemed to acquiesce and offered a blessing to David (17:17).

17:38-40. Still it would appear that Saul did not understand David’s offer to fight. He tried to make David into something he was not by outfitting him with the equipment of a soldier. Saul dressed David in his own tunic and found a coat of armor and bronze helmet for him. David fastened on a sword and tried to walk around. The scene must have been humorous. Here was David, a small boy, dressed in the same type of armor worn by the giant Goliath. Saul actually believed that David needed these things in order to fight the Philistine. This was how it was done; this was how all the kings and soldiers fought!

But David knew that Saul’s armor would be a detriment to him. He was not used to them (17:39). Instead, David picked up his familiar staff and chose five smooth stones from the wadi. He took his sling and approached Goliath. David had a different way of looking at things. Since David trusted in God to deliver him, David trusted in God’s strategy. God would have David do battle with the weapons he already had, a shepherd’s staff and a sling. God would use David’s own heart to win the battle! David trusted that

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the Spirit of God would be with him as he stood before the enemy and that God's Spirit would win the battle (Zech. 4:6). Christian leaders need to learn to trust God when facing difficult enemies. This means trusting God's strategy as well as trusting that God will give us the weapons we need to win.

17:41-47. Note that the initial confrontation between David and Goliath consisted of words. When David came within his eyesight, Goliath noted that David was only a boy, ruddy and handsome. This infuriated Goliath, and he let loose with an insult and a curse. Such insults and curses were typical features in ancient Near Eastern warfare (Walton, 308-9). They were designed to demoralize and intimidate the opponent (cp. 2 Kgs. 18:17-36).

Winning a battle against such a poorly armed opponent would not be such an impressive accomplishment, so Goliath despised David (17:42). Goliath insulted David's shepherd's staff by calling it a stick. He also cursed David by his gods (17:43). This latter curse was theologically significant. As Bergen points out (p. 195), the readers of this text would know "that by cursing this son of Abraham, Goliath was bringing down the Lord's curse on himself (cf. Gen. 12:3)." Goliath then boasted that he would kill David, humiliate his corpse, and deny him an honorable burial. Individuals who dishonor God are quick to bring threats against God's people. Since they do not possess the truth, they employ intimidation to win. But believers and Christian leaders must recognize that such threats are empty and powerless.

David responded to Goliath's threats by speaking the truth. David was not disturbed by Goliath's insults. He launched a verbal counterattack of his own. But there is one fundamental difference. David offered no idle or proud threats. He was not alone in the battle, because the Lord would fight with David against the Philistine giant. David completely trusted the battle to God.

There is much in David's reply that commends itself to the Christian leader. First, David had no delusions about the strength of his enemy. He acknowledged that Goliath came against him with sword and spear and javelin (17:45). But David's weapon was far superior. He came in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel. Against such no human weapons can stand! Goliath had insulted the God of Israel, and David wanted him to know that he would not get away with it. Bergen points out that the penalty for blaspheming was stoning (Lev. 24:16; cp. Bergen, 195). This may have influenced David's choice of the sling and stone.

Second, David realized that the skill of the human combatants is of little consequence in this confrontation. Goliath, the giant, could not stand against the Lord of all creation. David informed this mighty Philistine that the Lord would hand him over to him that day!

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Because the Lord would fight for him, David knew that he would be able to strike his enemy down and cut off his head (17:46).

Third, David knew that the Lord would not only be able to win this battle; He would also win the war. David may have been suspicious that the Philistines would not acquiesce to Goliath's call for a decision by champion battle (17:9). Still, it did not matter. Goliath boasted that he would dishonor David's corpse (17:44). David knew that the result of this battle would bring Goliath's insult on the entire Philistine army—their carcasses would become fodder for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth.

Fourth, David was aware that the purpose of the battle was broader in scope than Goliath realized. Goliath's goal was to subjugate the Israelites in servitude. But David recognized that God's honor was at stake. Goliath had insulted God and His chosen covenant people. This battle and war was to set the record straight. At its conclusion, the whole world would know that there is a God in Israel. The Hebrew verb *yāda* ("to know") carries the idea of personal experiential knowledge. David argued that everyone would know in their hearts this Almighty God.

Finally, David recognized that God's strategy is perfect. Human prowess with sword and spear is irrelevant and often unnecessary. Think about it! A small boy armed with a staff and a slingshot should be no match for a gigantic, seasoned warrior equipped with the latest and best armament. But God's ways are not our ways. The Christian leader who seeks after the Lord's own heart must acknowledge this (Zech. 4:6). The battle is the Lord's, and He would give all of the Philistines—not just Goliath—into the hands of David and the Israelites.

17:48-54. The words stopped and the conflict moved quickly. Two champions faced each other, the giant and the young man. The giant walked toward David, but David went on the attack and ran quickly to meet Goliath. Choosing a stone from his bag, David slung it and hit Goliath on the forehead. The impact was strong enough to sink the stone into the Philistine's brow, and he fell facedown on the ground.

David ran to Goliath and stood over him (17:51). He took the Philistine's own sword from its scabbard and cut off Goliath's head. Young David, with no armor, no coat of mail, no shield, and no sword had defeated the Philistine hero. God gave David a stunning victory with a sling and a stone (17:50).

It must have taken only a moment for the impact of what had happened to sink in. When the Philistines saw what had happened to Goliath, they turned and ran. The Israelites followed in pursuit to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron (17:52). David's confident words had come true—their dead bodies were strewn along the road. The Israelites plundered the Philistine camp, and David received the giant's armor and sword.

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17:55-58. Bergen considers the presentation of David to Saul at this point important for two reasons (198-99). First, if by chance David succeeded in defeating Goliath, Saul needed to know the name of David's father in order to declare his house exempt from taxes (17:25). The proof of David's success was the head of Goliath in his hand. David had trusted God, and God had given him a magnificent victory.

Second, this passage shows again the growing difference between Saul and David. Since the Lord's Spirit was no longer with Saul, the king was growing more and more incompetent. Saul did not remember David (cp. 1 Sam. 16:21-22). But David was patient and civil (17:58).

Psalm 144

I. Introduction

In the spiritual conflict of any believer's life, his greatest defender and ally is the Lord Himself. Victory belongs to God, who is *with* him and *for* him. God stands with His people in every circumstance of life, in the valleys and on the mountaintops, in his battles and in his peace, in the storms and in the sunshine. What is more, God works *for* the believer, always working for his good. God is *for* him in whatever situation he finds himself. In fact, He stands with and fights for the believer when the enemies of God are against him.

Psalm 144 is a royal psalm in which David petitioned God for victory over threatening enemies. He called out to God who was for him and with him. This psalm bears a close similarity to Psalm 18 (esp., vv. 1-15), and if the historical background is the same, the enemies to which David referred here were Saul and his men (2 Sam. 22:1-18). It is also possible that this psalm was used in the training of Israel's army, much like Psalm 149. It should be remembered that warfare in ancient Israel was closely tied to the **worship** of God. Victory in battle was always a matter of worshiping God before the conflict, praising the Lord who alone gives victory.

II. COMMENTARY

A: David's Preparation and Protection (144:1-2)

144:1b. David acknowledges that God is his personal trainer who prepares him for **battle**. If David's arrows land in the enemy's side, it is because the Lord has trained him and enabled him to strike a direct blow. He finds in the Lord not only His protection in battle but also His preparation for battle. God is the One who maximizes his skills and enlarges his strength in battle. God is the One on whom David can depend. God is unconditionally committed to His servant, forever loyal to his promises.

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144:2. My fortress (*mesudah*) compares God to a high place of refuge and defense to which David must flee for protection. **My stronghold** (*misgab*) is protection in a high, safe place of retreat. Further, God is his **deliverer** from the attacks of the enemy. David trusts God to be the One who repels the fiery arrows of the enemy. A **shield** was held up by a soldier in the day of battle to deflect the incoming arrows of the enemy. God is a shield to David, turning away the deadly advances of the enemy. Whatever came against him had to come through God first.

B: David's Powerlessness (144:3-4)

144:3. What is man is intended in an autobiographical sense, as if to say, "God, who am I but a mere man, a mere creature, weak and weary? Who am I that you would look down and take notice of me?" Omnipotent God (vv. 1-2) is contrasted with weak David. How can you even **think** of me, he wonders, when I am so weak?

144:4. Man is like a breath, a vapor, that appears for a moment and then disappears (Jas. 4:14). His **days are** flickering, without stability, empty, and hollow **like a fleeting shadow**.

C: David's Petition (144:5-8)

144:5. David prays, **Part your heavens**, inviting God to **come down** and invade this war. David appeals to God to make His presence known and to rescue him from all the **evil** forces. **Mountains** represent the strongest and tallest of this world. **Touch** them, and they will be torched by your presence. This highly figurative language portrays God as the heavenly warrior who comes to fight on behalf of David against his enemies. He longs for God's presence to come as fire, bringing his smoldering **judgment**.

144:6. David calls for **lightning**, a symbol of God's blazing **judgment** that will strike David's enemies. He prays that God would burst on the scene like a lightning bolt, stretching across the skies, reaching downward to smite David's foes. He prays that God will **scatter** his adversaries. These lightning bolts are fiery, flaming **arrows** shot from God's bow, designed to score a direct hit, not only to scatter but to confuse his enemies.

144:7. Reach down your hand, David prays. That is, lay bare your mighty right arm and fight for us, O God. David prays that God will **rescue** and **deliver** him out of this stormy trial and day of battle. The great **waters** is a symbolic allusion to these **foreigners** or aliens who are as powerful as a flood.

144:8. The **mouths** of these **evil** foes speak great deceit, meaning slanderous lies against David. Their tongues are set on fire by **hell** itself. Their destructive lying and slanderous mouths are their most vicious weapons against David. What they say, they carry out with all the strength of their **right hands**. They back up their monstrous lies with destructive deeds.

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D: David's Proclamation (144:9-10)

144:9. While surrounded by his **evil** foes, David purposes, **I will sing a new song to you.** David will lift up his voice to God to offer a new song, or a fresh word of praise, expressing his renewed confidence in God's ultimate victory.

144:10. David sings this new praise to God **who gives victory to kings.** God, he believes, **delivers** those divinely anointed kings who put their trust in Him. This is precisely what David is doing.

E: David's Plea (144:11)

144:11. David prays that God will **rescue** him out of this threatening war against foreign powers. Clearly, David's trust is not in himself or in his own resources but in God alone. God is opposed to such people who are **full of lies** and carry out their **deceitful** schemes and conspiracies.

F: David's Prospects (144:12-15)

144:12. David declares, **Our sons** will be like **well-nurtured plants**, indicating maturity, productivity, fruitfulness. **Our daughters** will be like **pillars carved to adorn a palace**, picturing strength of character, health, beauty, and dignity. Here is pictured a prosperous, peaceful future, one with no military threat.

144:13-14. **Our barns will be filled** with a full harvest of crops, overflowing with abundant **provision.** **Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields**, a provision that comes from God. There will be **no cry of distress** in our streets but the blessing of peace.

144:15. **Blessed are the people** who are favored by God. They are abundantly provided with families, fields, and flocks. They are prosperous and so situated in the midst of God's blessing. **Blessed** is repeated twice for emphasis, indicating the double overflowing favor of God upon the psalmist. How favored by God are those who trust in Him.

III. Conclusion

The believer's strength and security are found in God. One title is not sufficient to describe His greatness. All six titles for God found in this psalm are needed by believers. God's names reveal Him to be our Rock, Trainer, Fortress, Stronghold, Deliverer, and Shield. God is *all* this to us—and more! In other words, God is our *everything!*

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DAY 2: THE GOOD RESTORATION

OVERVIEW

God restored David after his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah.

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. In a world of darkness and evil, we are prone to wander, in need of rescue. The Good Shepherd offers direction and spiritual restoration and renewal for us. David acknowledged his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, asked for forgiveness, and was restored.

Scriptures: Psalm 23:3; 2 Samuel 12:7-10,13-14; Psalm 51

Key Verse: “He renews my life; he leads me along the right paths for his name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3).

Life Question: What does spiritual restoration and renewal need to look like for you?

GATHER THESE SUPPLIES:

- Key Verse and Timeline Posters
- Mixed up Rubik’s Cube®
- Solved Rubik’s Cube
- 2 dirty pennies
- White Vinegar (1/2 cup)
- Salt (1 tablespoon)
- 2 clear plastic cups
- Four large sheets of paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Printed story book (provided)
- Red cellophane sheets
- Secret message cards (provided)
- Light blue pen
- Pens
- Camp Guides
- Bibles

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PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME:

- Hang the Key Verse Poster on a focal wall.
- Mix one-quarter cup of white vinegar with one teaspoon of salt in two clear plastic cups each.
- Write the phrase, The Good Shepherd is the only way to restoration, on the secret message cards using the light blue pen.

MOTIVATION

Give students a signal to wrap up Quiet Time.

Call for a volunteer who has never solved a Rubik's Cube and give him the one that is mixed up. Say: **"As you can see, the Rubik's Cube is mixed up. Your goal is to attempt to solve it and restore it back to its original state, where each side is a different color."** Give the first volunteer a minute to attempt to solve it. If he cannot, ask for another student to do the same. After no more than three tries, debrief by asking: **"What was difficult about this assignment? Why were you unable to solve it and restore it back to its original state?"** Display the other cube as the restored cube or allow a student who can solve it, to quickly work it. Share this interesting fact: According to Guinness World Records, the fastest time to solve a 3x3x3 rotating puzzle cube is 3.05 seconds, achieved by Xuanyi Geng in 2025.

[Source: <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/72863-fastest-time-to-solve-a-rubiks-cube>]

Say: **"The mixed up, unsolved Rubik's Cube represents each of us, when we are living in sin, not in our restored state. Life is out of order and chaotic. 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. In a world of darkness and evil, like sheep, we are prone to wonder, in need of rescue. The Good Shepherd offers direction and spiritual restoration for us."**

Share: The HGTV channel has many renovation shows where an outdated house is renovated or a completely dilapidated, abandoned one is rebuilt and restored. Perhaps you have seen videos of people who refurnish and restore old pieces of furniture or who mow, weed eat, clean up, and restore overgrown yards. These are examples of physical restoration.



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Display two old, dirty pennies. Then, take the pennies and drop one into each of the vinegar solutions. Say: **“The Lord wants to bring restoration to our life. Our sin makes us dirty like this dirty penny. Today, we will take a closer look at what it means to be spiritually restored and will observe the penny later in the session.”**

Say a short prayer, asking God to move and speak through His Word today.

EXAMINATION

Need for Restoration

Refer to the Key Verse Poster and lead students to recite the verse in unison: **“He renews my life; he leads me along the right paths for his name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3).**

Say: **“Let’s break this verse into its two parts.”** Reread verse 23:3a.

Share the story of the cast down sheep: A cast down sheep is a sheep that has turned over on its back and cannot get back up by itself. The sheep is on its back with legs flailing in the air, struggling to stand up without success. A sheep in this state will only last a few hours on a hot, sunny day and up to a few days on a cooler, rainy day before it dies. It also becomes exposed to predators in this state. A cast down sheep is helpless, close to death, and vulnerable to attack. The sheep’s only hope is to be rescued by its shepherd.

Say: **“Just like a sheep that is cast down, we can be stuck from our sinful choices in need of rescuing. We cannot do it on our own. Just like the shepherd, our Good Shepherd is the only one who can restore us from our sinful ways.”**

Point students to the “Need for Restoration” section on page 29 in their Camp Guides to answer the question there.

How have you felt stuck in your sin?

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Share a time you felt like you could not find a way out or a time of hopelessness.

Say: **“Let’s now look at the second part of this verse.”** Reread verse 23:3b.

Choose your Path

Say: **“We are about to participate in an activity where we have decisions to make on which path to take.** Point out imaginary lines on the floor to form four quadrants. Students in each quadrant form a group. Instruct each group to select a leader. Give each leader a set of story book and guide them to walk through the story with their group, allowing them to make decisions as noted as to the path to take.

You and your friends are hiking through **Whispering Woods**, a forest known for its **mysterious trails** and **hidden treasures**, in search of the Tree of Truth.

As the sun begins to set, you spot something unusual: A glowing path appears ahead.

Do you . . .

- A) Follow the narrow, glowing path?**
- B) Stay on the wide, regular trail?**

Allow students to make a decision. You may need to take a vote. Majority rules.

If they choose A) Follow the narrow, glowing path:

You step onto the glowing path. The forest grows quieter. Suddenly, a creature leaps out—it’s a rabbit wearing glasses! He speaks: “You’re close to the **Tree of Truth**, but only the brave can reach it.”

He points two ways.

Do you go . . .

- C) Left, toward the sound of rushing water?**
- D) Right, toward the quiet hills?**

If they choose B) Stay on the wide, regular trail:

You keep walking, feeling a bit disappointed. But then—*snap!* A trap door opens beneath you! You land safely on a pile of moss in a hidden cave. Inside is a tunnel . . .



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and a sleeping bear. Oops, you chose the wrong path. Turn back and climb out. Try again!

If they choose C) Toward the water:

The sound leads you to a magical waterfall. Behind it, you find a **hidden door!** Inside is the **Tree of Truth**, glowing with light. A secret about your future is carved on the tree:
The narrow path always leads to life.

You win! You found the treasure of wisdom.

If they choose D) Toward the quiet hills:

You walk and walk . . . but the path disappears. Suddenly, you hear a hoot and an owl appears:

“You didn’t choose the right path today, but don’t give up. Try again!”

Ending:

The forest holds many secrets . . . maybe next time, you’ll uncover even more!

Ask each group to share. Congratulate those who found the Tree of Truth.

Say: **“That was a fun game about choosing paths. Psalm 23:3 tells us that the Good Shepherd leads us along paths of righteousness, but we must be willing and obedient to follow. We have a choice to make.”**

Read aloud **Matthew 7:13-14:**

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. **14** How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.”

Say: **“This verse tells us we have two choices: the wide path and the narrow path. The wide road that many choose, leads to destruction, while the narrow road leads to life.”** Ask rhetorically: **“Which path have you chosen?”**

Discuss: **Why should we want to choose the right path?** (*out of love, to be obedient, to give Him glory, because He created us*)



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Instruct students to turn to page 29 to the “Reflect on your Path” section in their Camp Guides.

On the path below, mark the following along the path:

- **“Rest stops” (moments when your soul was restored) — draw a stop sign and describe one of these moments.**
- **“Turns” (decisions or guidance you received) — draw a curve or turn in the path and share how this guidance changed your direction.**
- **“Rough terrain” (hard seasons) — draw a pile of rocks and print words that recount this season.**

At the end of the path, note your current position (facing a big decision, in a resting time, experiencing a hard season, etc.)

Path to Restoration

Give each group a large sheet of paper and markers. Instruct them to work together to draw a picture that is a representation of our theme, “The Good Shepherd.” After a few minutes, ask groups to display their artwork. Then, lead them to switch drawings with another group. Someone in the new group will tear the drawing into several big pieces and give those back to the original group. Provide tape and guide students to work together to put their artwork back together. Ask groups to display their work now. Ask students to debrief how this relates.

Say: **“The Lord is able to restore us, but we have consequences when we sin. This is represented in the fact that your drawings will never be back to their original state. Let’s look at David’s experience.”**

Point to the Timeline Poster. Move the “Repents and Is Forgiveness” to the fifth mark on the timeline. Lead students to turn in their Camp Guides to pages 6-7 to “Timeline of David’s Life” section and write “Repents and Is Forgiveness” on the fifth mark there.

Say: **“At this point, David was king, and God had given him so much. But he started living for himself and making bad choices. He was alone, isolated, and not**

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in battle like he should have been. As a result, he had made some big mistakes and strayed from God.”

Say: **“Before we read the passage, I want to share a story with you.”**

Share the sheep story in verses 1-6: A rich man had many sheep and cattle. A poor man had only one little ewe lamb that he had raised lovingly—it ate from his plate, drank from his cup, and was like a daughter to him. One day, a traveler came to the rich man, but instead of using one of his own animals to prepare a meal, the rich man took the poor man’s only lamb and served it to the visitor.

Ask: **“How do you feel about this story? What is your response to the rich man’s decision?”**

Say: **“This story is actually a story that Nathan, a prophet and advisor for David, told him in verses 1-6 of 2 Samuel 12. Like your response to this story, David is outraged by the injustice. He says the rich man deserves to die and must pay back four times the lamb because he showed no pity. The verses we are about to read are Nathan’s response where he calls out David.”**

Call on a student to read aloud **2 Samuel 12:7-10**.

7 Nathan replied to David, “You are the man! This is what the LORD God of Israel says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from Saul. 8 I gave your master’s house to you and your master’s wives into your arms, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah, and if that was not enough, I would have given you even more. 9 Why then have you despised the LORD’s command by doing what I consider evil? You struck down Uriah the Hethite with the sword and took his wife as your own wife—you murdered him with the Ammonite’s sword. 10 Now therefore, the sword will never leave your house because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hethite to be your own wife.’”

Discuss this passage by asking the following questions. Point students to the “Path to Restoration” section on page 30 in the Camp Guide to write answers to these questions.

Who is Nathan? (*prophet, friend and trusted advisor*)

Why did he go to David? (*The Lord sent him to David to confront him about his sin and hold him accountable.*)



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Refer students to the Sidebar: Mentor. Ask students to think about this: **Do you have a trusted friend, mentor, or advisor whom you can look to for support and guidance in life?** If yes, lead them to write their name in the blank and encourage students to do something nice for that person. If not, challenge them to seek out such a person. Remind students that we need each other, and we are not meant to go it alone.

Say: **“Let’s see where David realized his sin against God and responded.”** Call on a student to read **2 Samuel 12:13-14.**

13 David responded to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Then Nathan replied to David, “And the LORD has taken away your sin; you will not die. **14** However, because you treated the LORD with such contempt in this matter, the son born to you will die.”

Say: **“David admitted and turned from his sin, and the Lord forgave him. But there were still consequences.”** Ask: **“What were they?”** (*verse 10-the sword will never leave your house (strife and fighting); verse 14-the death of his son*) Say: **“Like David, we must acknowledge that we have sinned against God and then repent of it. I am going to give you time to do this in your Camp Guides. Keep in mind that everyone messes up. God invites us not to hide, but to come to Him. Confession is about freedom, not shame.”**

Instruct students to turn to page 31 to the “Confess Your Sins” section of their Camp Guides and complete the exercise there.

Take a few moments to quietly reflect. Ask God to gently show you anything in your life that’s not right with Him – words, actions, thoughts, things left undone. Be honest – He already knows. Write those in the box below.

Blessing of Restoration

Pass around the two cups with the pennies and point out how they were restored. Say: **“Just like the vinegar solution washed the dirty penny, through Jesus’ sacrifice, we can be made clean and righteous before the Lord.”**

Say: **“Hebrews 10:10 says our sins are washed away and we are made clean because Christ gave His own body as a gift to God. He did this once for all time.**

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Be sure to revisit the list you made in your Camp Guide, repent of your actions, and allow Jesus to cleanse you.”

Say: “Now, let’s pull the curtain back and see what David was feeling and thinking at this time because he wrote it in the form of Psalm 51 during the height of his reign as king of Israel, in response to the prophet Nathan's confrontation. In this psalm we get to see how David acknowledged his sin and asked for forgiveness, a clean heart, and renewed spirit from God, the only one who can forgive sins and make him clean.”

Lead students to the “Blessing of Restoration” section on page 32 in their Camp Guides to Psalm 51. Tell them to follow the instructions found there.

- In verses 1-12, circle the actions David is asking God to do and underline the confessions of David.
- In verses 13-15, draw a box around the actions David declares he will do as a result of his forgiveness and cleansing.

In the passage below, the responses for students to make in their Camp Guides are marked in colors in case you need to help them with this exercise.

1 Be gracious to me, God, according to your faithful love; according to your abundant compassion, blot out my rebellion. 2 Completely wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me. 4 Against you—you alone—I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. So you are right when you pass sentence; you are blameless when you judge. 5 Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me. 6 Surely you desire integrity in the inner self, and you teach me wisdom deep within. 7 Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. 9 Turn your face away from my sins and blot out all my guilt. 10 God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not banish me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore the joy of your salvation to me, and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit. 13 Then I will teach the rebellious your ways, and sinners will return to you. 14

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- ___ Bring my anxiety to Him.
- ___ Rest and stop trying to prove myself.
- ___ Show kindness to someone.
- ___ Be more grateful instead of complaining.
- ___ Use my time more purposefully.
- ___ Other: _____

PRAYER

Say: “To end the session, go to page 33 in the Camp Guides to the “Prayer” section and write a prayer.” Encourage them to refer to the earlier activity where they identified and confessed their sins and to also use the Psalm 51 passage.

COMMENTARY

2 Samuel 12:7-10,13-14

The Lord Rebukes David for His Sin (12:1-14)

SUPPORTING IDEA: The Lord sends Nathan the prophet to David to confront him with his sin. When David hears the prophet’s words, he repents of his sin and the Lord forgives him. Nevertheless, David is informed that as a result of his sin his son will die.

12:1-4. Though David had tried to conceal his sin with Bathsheba from people, he was unable to hide it from the Lord. And the all-knowing Lord, who oversees human actions with perfect justice, sent Nathan the prophet to confront the king with his sin.

Nathan did not directly condemn David for his sin. Instead, he let David condemn himself. The prophet played the role of an advocate for a person who was in need of justice. He told about two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man was a shepherd—like David—who owned a large number of sheep. The poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb, who was like a daughter to him. The rich man took the lamb that belonged to the poor man, killed it, and served it to a guest for dinner.

12:5-6. Before Nathan could finish the tale David interrupted him and pronounced judgment against the man. Burning with anger, David reacted first with his emotions—the man who did this deserves to die!—and then with his head. The rich man must pay for that lamb four times over—the penalty prescribed in the law of Moses for a lamb that was stolen and killed (Exod. 22:1).

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12:7-12. Nathan confronted David with his sin by equating him with the wicked man of the story: You are the man. Nathan then delivered a three-part oracle of judgment against David consisting of (1) a description of God’s gracious dealings with David in the past (vv. 7b-8); (2) a listing of David’s relevant sins (v. 9); and (3) a declaration of God’s resulting judgments (v. 10). All of these statements were designed to convince David of the seriousness of his sin and to drive him to repentance.

In the first part of the judgment oracle, the Lord reminded David of the blessings he had given the young man from Bethlehem. A lowly shepherd boy was anointed king over Israel. God had protected David, delivering him from the hand of Saul. David had received both material blessings—his master’s house—and sexual pleasures—his master’s wives, that is, Saul’s harem. Beyond all that, the Lord had made David ruler over the house of Israel and Judah, so that the anointed youth did indeed become king.

The second part of Nathan’s judgment dealt with David’s sins. The starting point for David’s wrongdoing was the fact that he had despised the word of the LORD. David knew what God had said about murder and adultery, yet he rejected God’s commands. The instrument used to murder Uriah was the sword of the Ammonites, but it was actually David who struck down Uriah the Hittite because he cooked up the scheme and issued the orders designed to get Uriah killed. All this was carried out so David could take Uriah’s wife to be his own.

The final part of God’s word through the prophet was a declaration of judgment against the king. Because of David’s sins against God, Uriah, and Bathsheba, David would pay a lifelong price. The sword of God’s judgment would never depart from David’s house. Indeed, soon after this violence and death wracked the royal family. Furthermore, the sexual sin that David had committed in secret would bring about a public calamity upon the king. God would give some of David’s own wives—members of his harem—to one who was close to David, and this person would lie with David’s wives in broad daylight before all Israel (see 16:21-22).

12:13-14. When confronted with his sin, David showed himself to be a man “after God’s heart” (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). Rather than deny his sin, he admitted that he had sinned against the LORD (see Psalm 51). And true to his word (Exod. 34:7), the Lord forgave the sinful king. No sin was too great for God to forgive. Then the Lord did something unexpected. He commuted David’s death sentence. Both murder and adultery were sins that required the death of the sinner (Gen. 9:6; Exod 21:12; Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22), yet in this case God chose to allow David to live. Why? Only because of divine grace. But David’s sin would bring about some immediate consequences: the son born to David and Bathsheba would die.

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PSALM 51

I. Introduction

Wet, Dry, but Not Clean

A college freshman went to the dorm laundry room with his dirty clothes bundled into an old sweatshirt. Embarrassed by how dirty his clothes were, he never opened the bundle but just pushed the clump of dirty clothes into the washing machine. When the machine stopped, he pushed the bundle into the dryer. Finally, he took the still-unopened bundle of clothes to his room—only to discover that they were not clean.

There is a moral to this story for Christian lives. God says, “Don’t keep your sins in a safe little bundle. Bring them out in the open one by one and confess them so they may be cleansed.” Confession of our sins to God is essential. What is **confession**? The word means “to say the same thing.” Confession is agreeing with God about our **sin**. It also involves **repentance**, or a turning away from the **sin** confessed, no longer embracing it.

Psalm 51 is one of the most graphic pictures of **confession** of **sin** found anywhere in the Bible. This psalm contains David’s humble prayer for **forgiveness** as he sought cleansing from God after a massive moral breakdown in his life. As the superscription of the psalm suggests, it was written after David’s **sin** of adultery with Bathsheba which was followed by the **sin** of murder against her husband Uriah (2 Sam. 11). Almost a year after this **sin**, God directed the prophet Nathan to confront David with his **sin**, and only then was David quick to repent.

This psalm contains David’s **confession** of **sin**, and it emphasizes the importance of true **repentance**. It provides insight into the nature of genuine confrontation of **sin** in a believer’s life. When a Christian sins, he must confess his **sin** immediately with deep contrition. Only then can he enjoy the **forgiveness** of God that leads to a restoration of his walk with the Lord. A study of this psalm reveals the characteristics of genuine **repentance**.

II. Commentary

True Confessions

MAIN IDEA

David confesses and repents of his **sin** against God, pleading for divine **forgiveness** and **mercy**.

A: A Cry for Forgiveness (51:1-2)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David begins by entreating God to forgive his **sin**, pleading for God to be compassionate.

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51:1a-b. David understood that **forgiveness** with God was based solely on divine **mercy, unfailing love, and compassion** (Heb. *rehem*, “the bowels,” i.e., sympathy), not human merit. The opening appeal, **Have mercy on me, O God**, was a request not for what he deserved—painful **discipline**—but for what he desperately needed—divine **grace**. David was aware of his need to have God’s **mercy according to his unfailing love** and **great** compassion. He appealed to God to act in accordance with his loving nature.

51:1b-2. This appeal for **forgiveness** is pictured in three ways. First, the phrase **Blot out my transgressions** means to wipe away David’s sinful acts of rebellion and willful deviation. As if David’s sins were accurately written by God in a book, he pleaded that his acts of sinful rebellion would be removed from record (cp. Exod. 32:32; Num. 5:23). Second, comparing himself to a foul garment stained with filth, David prayed, **Wash away all my iniquity**, as a person would wash dirty clothes. Third, he pleaded, **cleanse me from my sin**. This pictured the purification necessary for temple **worship** under the ceremonial **law**. This threefold request expressed David’s desire for complete **forgiveness** by the Lord.

B: A Confession of Sin (51:3-6)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David confesses the heinousness of his **sin** by acknowledging that he understands the seriousness of his wrongdoing.

51:3. Painfully aware of his **sin**, David acknowledged, **I know my transgressions**. His conscience pressed guilt from his **sin** to his mind, so much so that his **sin** was **always before** him, haunting his mind.

51:4. David recognized that his **sin** was against God, not just against others, including Bathsheba, Uriah, and the nation. He confessed, **Against you, you only, have I sinned**. David’s **sin** was treason against God, since David had **done what was evil in God’s sight**. Fully acknowledging his **sin**, David called it what it was—not weakness but wickedness, not an accident but an atrocity. He accepted God’s verdict, admitting that God was **proved right** when he spoke against David’s **sin and justified** when he judged him. No alibis or shifting of blame here. David offered no lame excuses to God, only a full **confession** of his own guilt that deserved divine justice.

51:5. Delving deeper into the source of this matter, David stated that his problem was a corrupt heart, saying, **Surely I was sinful at birth**. He entered this world a sinner in nature long before he became a sinner in actions. In fact, this internal corruption predated his **birth**, actually beginning nine months earlier when he was **conceived** in the

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womb. It was at conception that the Adamic **sin** nature was transmitted to him. The problem of what he did—**sin**—arose from what he was—a sinner.

51:6. David knew that he fell short of God’s desire for his life. His words **Surely you desire truth in the inner parts** indicate that David had been living a lie before God by attempting to cover up his **sin**. But he went on to say, **You teach me wisdom**. Wisdom should lead us to act honestly and openly with our **sin** against God. Only a fool would try to hide his **sin** before the Lord. This was a tragic role David had been playing.

C: A Call for Cleansing (51:7-9)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David asks that God remove the stains of his sins while bringing spiritual renewal.

51:7. This verse expresses another plea for pardon. **Cleanse me with hyssop** alludes to the image of a leper seeking cleansing. In such a case, hyssop would be dipped in blood and sprinkled seven times on the leper at the altar (cp. Lev. 14:6). Accordingly, David saw himself as a spiritual leper in need of divine cleansing. The removal of his **sin** would occur through the shed blood of the coming **Messiah**, Jesus Christ (cp. Heb. 9:22). Only then would he **be whiter than snow** (cp. Isa. 1:18).

51:8. David’s words **Let me hear joy and gladness** would be the result of the **forgiveness** he sought (cp. Ps. 32:1-2). **Let the bones you have crushed rejoice** indicates how crushed he was by Nathan’s indictment (cp. 2 Sam. 12:1-14). His whole body ached under the heavy burden of **sin**.

51:9. David asked God to **hide his face from his sins**, which were ever before him. In other words, “Forgive me so you will not look upon **my sins** any longer.” Returning to the accounting imagery, he prayed, **Blot out all my iniquity**. Only then could David be right with God.

D: A Commitment to Holiness (51:10-12)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David asks God to renew his steadfast spirit and restore the **joy** of his **salvation** while not punishing him according to his transgressions.

51:10. Having confessed his **sin** and received God’s **forgiveness**, David prayed for a pure heart so he would not fall back into **sin**. **Create in me a pure heart** is something that only God could do. Only God could **renew his heart** with a **steadfast spirit** of purity.

51:11. David’s words **Do not cast me from your presence** do not indicate that he feared he would lose his **salvation**. Rather, it was a plea that God would not remove his

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divine power from David's life. Thus, he asked God not to take his **Holy Spirit** from him. He feared being set aside in serving God, a severe **discipline** he deserved and would suffer if God did not accept his **confession**.

51:12. David pleaded with God to **restore** to him the **joy** of his **salvation**. Sin and **joy** cannot exist in the same heart at the same time. The two are mutually exclusive. Note that David did not request that his **salvation** be restored but the **joy** of his **salvation**. He wanted **a willing spirit** so he could obey God's Word and persevere in holiness.

E: A Consecration of Life (51:13-17)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David vows to teach sinners the ways of God while reaffirming his commitment to God.

51:13. Once forgiven, David promised God that he would **teach transgressors your ways**. He would communicate the **truth** that God would afflict them for their **sin**. This would also include the pardon they would receive when they confessed their **sin**. Psalm 32 is the fulfillment of this vow. As a result of such teaching, **sinners** would **turn back to** God by acknowledging and forsaking their **sin**.

51:14-15. David prayed, **Save me from bloodguilt, O God**. The enormity of his **sin** continued to burden David. He knew that he deserved the death penalty for his sins. This sobering reality caused him to seek **forgiveness**. Once pardoned, David declared, **My tongue will sing of your righteousness** to others who needed to seek the same **forgiveness**.

51:16-17. David knew that God did not desire only an animal **sacrifice** or **burnt offerings** from him for his **sin**. **The sacrifices** that God required were a **broken spirit** and a **contrite heart**. Humility before God and brokenness over **sin** are expressions of genuine **confession**, and David knew it.

F: A Concern for God's Glory (51:18-19)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David requests that God's blessings will rest upon **Jerusalem** and the sacrifices offered within the walls of the city.

51:18. David was aware of the close connection between his personal holiness as the king of Israel and the national blessings from God which the people would enjoy. Character does count. The sins of leaders affect other people as well as themselves. Thus, he prayed, **Make Zion prosper** by strengthening and protecting **the walls of Jerusalem** from foreign attack. Now that David had been renewed, he prayed that the nation would be renewed. First personal renewal, then corporate renewal.



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51:19. Only **then**, once forgiven, would David present righteous sacrifices to God with a right heart. Only **then** would **whole burnt offerings** and **bulls** be offered in order to **delight** God. The heart must be right before sacrifices can be right.

MAIN IDEA REVIEW

David confesses and repents of his **sin** against God, pleading for divine **forgiveness** and **mercy**.

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DAY 3: THE GOOD PRESENCE

OVERVIEW

God gave David peace during Saul's pursuits.

The shepherd's presence is critical for the well-being and survival of a flock of sheep. The Good Shepherd is ever with us. His presence brings comfort, not fear. He provides guidance, through both the good and difficult times. As David was on the run from Saul, who was trying to kill him, the Lord was with him.

Scriptures: Psalm 23:4; 1 Samuel 18:10-14; Psalm 57

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).

Life Question: How can you experience God's presence during challenging situations?

GATHER THESE SUPPLIES:

- Key Verse and Timeline Posters
- Large sheets of paper
- Small sheets of paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Pens
- Blindfold
- Phone on video mode
- Station direction cards (provided)
- Slips of paper
- Sticky notes
- Bright-colored cards
- Footprint cutouts (provided)
- Cross cutouts (provided)
- Camp Guides
- Bibles

PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME:

- Hang the Key Verse Poster on a focal wall.



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- Write this riddle on a piece of paper to hang on the wall: “I fear the light, I am the dark, I walk your stride yet leave no mark.”
- Set up the five stations in the Application section. (Directions and Scripture passages will be provided.)
 - Hang the heading “Celebration Wall” on the wall for station #3.
 - Hang the “Path of Prayer” on the wall for station #4.
 - Cut out footprints and crosses.

MOTIVATION

Begin the session with this Motivation section and then move students into Quiet Time.

Post and read the following riddle and ask students to solve it:

“I fear the light, I am the dark, I walk your stride yet leave no mark.”

If students are struggling, give them these further hints: **I come out in the sunlight; I follow you everywhere, but I am not alive; I change size as the sun moves; try to catch me and I vanish.**

Answer: **A shadow**

Say: **“In a similar way that a shadow is always close to what it touches, God’s presence is near to His people, even when we can’t see or feel Him.”**

5 Senses Game

Say: **“We are going to play a game called, ‘5 Senses.’”** Give each student a sheet of paper and a pen. Call out each of the statements below, one at a time, and lead students to make their lists on the sheet of paper.

- **5 things you see**
- **4 things you touch**
- **3 things you hear**
- **2 things you smell**
- **1 thing you can taste**



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When you have allowed students to respond to all of these, give one student for each sense the opportunity to share.

Say: **“This game is about becoming more aware and present in the moment. We had to slow down, pay attention, and realize there’s more around us than we normally notice. Our five senses—sight, touch, sound, taste, and smell—are gifts from God that allow us not only to experience His creation but also to experience evidence of His presence in tangible, intimate ways.”**

Share: The shepherd’s presence is critical for the well-being and survival of a flock of sheep. The Good Shepherd is ever with us. His presence brings comfort, not fear. He provides guidance, through both the good and difficult times.

Say: **“Having a quiet time is a great way to practice the presence of God. We are going to move into the Quiet Time portion of our day now.”**

Give students 15 minutes to read and complete their Quiet Time. Afterward, ask a student to share something that he learned during this time. Say: **“Today, we will see as David was on the run from Saul, who was trying to kill him, the Lord was with him.”**

Say a short prayer, asking God to move and speak through His Word today.

EXAMINATION

Presence in the Valley

Refer to the Key Verse Poster, and lead students to recite the verse in unison: **“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).**

Say: **“Let’s break this verse into its two parts.”** Reread verse 23:4a.

Share: Shepherds lead their sheep through the valley to get to the lush plateau, and it's through the valley that they can experience the gentlest grades. This is also the well-watered route where the richest feed and best forage is to be found. While these



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are the best reasons for the trek through the valley, 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.

Say: **“Let’s take a moment to consider the word ‘fear’ in this verse.”** Give students each of the two scary or uncomfortable scenarios below and instruct them to choose which one they’d rather face by moving to the side of the room you designate to reflect their choice.

Would you rather:

- **Have spiders crawling on your face OR Have snakes slithering around your feet**
- **Speak in front of 500 people OR Jump from a 10-foot ledge**
- **Be home alone during a power outage OR Get lost in the woods at night**
- **Eat something gross OR Smell something gross**
- **Fail a big test OR Fail at your favorite activity**
- **Be embarrassed in front of your crush OR Be called on in class when you weren’t paying attention**
- **Babysit a one-year-old OR sit with an elderly person**
- **Tell someone about Jesus OR Eat a bug**

Say: **“Fear is a tactic of the devil, and it loses its power over us when we remember that God is always with us, in the good times (the mountains) and the not-so-good times (the valleys). We all face valleys such as disappointments, frustrations, dilemmas, and discouragements. We don’t have to face anything alone, because the One who created us walks beside us and never leaves us. Through these ‘valley’ times, we enter a more intimate walk with God.”**

Lead students to turn to the “Mountains and Valleys” section in their Camp Guides on page 43 and complete the activity found there.

What is at least one sweet moment that God has been part of in your life?

What is at least one low spot you have looked for God in or needed His help?



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Say: **“Remember, our God is with us in the mountains and valleys of life.”**

Give one to two students the option to share something they wrote in their book.

Say: **“Three times in the Bible, Jesus is referred to as ‘Immanuel,’ which means ‘God with us.’”** Instruct students to turn to page 43 in their Camp Guides to the “Sidebar: Immanuel.” Invite three students to each read aloud one of these three verses: **Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 8:8; Matthew 1:23.**

Sidebar: Immanuel—God with Us

***Immanuel* is a masculine Hebrew name meaning “God with us.” The name *Immanuel* appears in the Bible three times, twice in the Old Testament book of Isaiah (7:14 and 8:8), and once in the Gospel of Matthew (1:23).**

Say: **“Let’s reread the second part of verse 23:4: Your rod and your staff—they comfort me.”**

Refer to page 44 in the “Rod and Staff” section of their Camp Guides for an illustration of the shepherd’s rod and staff.

Point out the shepherd uses his rod for correction, inspection, and protection. Say: **“If a shepherd saw a sheep approaching danger, he would throw the rod through the air to send the wayward animal back to the flock. Like the rod, the Word of God, with its authority, truth, and guidance, can keep us from danger and confusion.”**

Point out the shepherd uses his staff to draw sheep close, to guide and direct them, and for connection and comfort. Say: **“A shepherd uses his staff to gently guide his sheep into a new path, or through some gate, or along a difficult route. The staff can be compared to the Holy Spirit, who lives within us, as believers, to bring conviction, counsel, and comfort.”**

Under each of the shepherd’s tools, answer the questions.

Rod: Where do you need correction or protection?

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Staff: Where do you need direction or what steps can you take to draw closer to the Lord?

Presence in Danger

Escape the Pursuit

Clear the room of any tripping hazards by pushing all items such as chairs, backpacks, Bibles, and so forth to the edges of the room. Ask for a volunteer to be blindfolded. Invite this student to come to the middle of the room. Give the student your cell phone in camera mode. Place the blindfold on the student. Tell this student that when you say go, he will stand in place but can rotate and snap photos. Instruct the other students to walk around the room (not run) trying to stay out of one of the pics. Allow this to go on for a short time and then stop it. Check the photos to see who was able to escape the pursuit.

Say: **“Just like in the activity where you were trying to escape the pursuit, we are going to read a story about David where Saul was pursuing him, and he was running from him. This happened several different times with David and Saul.”**

Point to the Timeline Poster. Move the “Runs from Saul” to the third mark on the timeline. Lead students to turn in their Camp Guides to pages 6-7 to “Timeline of David’s Life” section and write “Runs from Saul” on the second mark there.

Call on a student to read aloud **1 Samuel 18:10b-14**.

10b and he (Saul) began to rave inside the palace. David was playing the lyre as usual, but Saul was holding a spear, **11** and he threw it, thinking, “I’ll pin David to the wall.” But David got away from him twice. **12** Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had left Saul. **13** Therefore, Saul sent David away from him and made him commander over a thousand men. David led the troops **14** and continued to be successful in all his activities because the LORD was with him.

Ask: **“Why was Saul pursuing David?”** (*Saul was jealous of David’s popularity and success. He was also afraid because God was with David but not with him.*)

Say: **“Let’s talk about jealousy. It is a dangerous and powerful temptation. Jealousy is rooted in comparison and scarcity, but life in Christ is rooted in identity and abundance. There is no need to compete for attention, affirmation, or purpose. What God has for someone else doesn’t diminish what He has for you. The opposite**

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of jealousy is a funny word, *compersion*, which basically means joy for someone else.”

Sidebar: Compersion – the opposite of jealousy, meaning joy.

Lead students to turn to the “Jealousy or Joy” section on page 45 in their Camp Guides to complete that portion.

Jealous or Joy

Circle the statements below that are jealousy statements and star the ones that are positive encouragement and joy.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| “I wish I was as popular as ____.” | “I’m proud of you.” |
| “I can’t be happy for their success.” | “They always get what I want.” |
| “You inspire me.” | “Why not me?” |
| “They don’t deserve it.” | “I hope they mess up.” |
| “I celebrate other’s wins.” | “That’s not fair.” |
| “I feel left out.” | “God has a plan for me, too.” |

Point students to the “Sidebar: Lyre” on page 45 in their Camp Guides.

Sidebar: Lyre

A lyre is a portable, ancient stringed musical instrument in the Near East that looks like a small harp.

Say: “**At the beginning of this passage, we saw where David was playing the lyre for Saul.**” Ask: “**Why was David playing it for Saul?**”

Allow for answers and then share: Saul’s servants suggested finding a skilled musician to play the instrument, believing music had the power to calm and soothe, and David’s ability to do so brought Saul temporary relief and was a key event in his rise to prominence.

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Say: “Saul attempted to use every means to bring about the downfall of David. He tried to kill him twice and then put him in charge of a thousand men, perhaps as a way to get away from David or maybe even so David would be killed in battle. But verse 14 tells us that David had great success in everything he did. It is precisely because the LORD was with him.”

Presence Always

Say: “In 1 Samuel 24, we find another example where Saul was pursuing David and attempting to kill him. David was in a cave hiding from Saul’s pursuit. He wrote Psalm 57 in response to this encounter. Turn to page 46 in your Camp Guides to read this Psalm and follow the prompts found there.”

In verses 1-3 and 10-11 below, circle words that reflect how God was with David.

In verses 4-6, underline the dangers that David faced.

In verses 7-9, draw a box around David’s response to God’s presence.

1 Be **gracious** to me, God, be **gracious** to me, for I take **refuge** in you. I will seek **refuge** in the **shadow of your wings** until danger passes. 2 I call to God Most High, to God who **fulfills his purpose** for me. 3 He **reaches down** from heaven and **saves** me, challenging the one who tramples me. Selah God sends his **faithful love and truth**. 4 I am **surrounded by lions; I lie down among devouring lions**—people whose **teeth are spears and arrows**, whose **tongues are sharp swords**. 5 God, be exalted above the heavens; let your glory be over the whole earth. 6 They **prepared a net for my steps**; I was despondent. They **dug a pit ahead of me**, but they fell into it! Selah 7 My heart is **confident**, God, my heart is **confident**. I will **sing**; I will **sing praises**. 8 Wake up, my soul! Wake up, harp and lyre! I will wake up the dawn. 9 I will **praise** you, Lord, among the peoples; I will **sing praises** to you among the nations. 10 For your **faithful love** is as high as the heavens; your **faithfulness** reaches the clouds. 11 God, be exalted above the heavens; let your **glory** be over the whole earth. Psalm 57

Use the color coding above to help students with this exercise, if needed.



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Ask students to turn to the “God’s Presence” section on page 47 of their Camp Guides to do the assignment there.

Choose an ending to the scenario below and then write a personal story about it.

I felt God’s presence when I . . .

was afraid.

doubted.

saw the stars shining at night.

stood at the ocean’s edge.

messed up.

made a big decision.

Lead students to find a partner and share their story.

APPLICATION/PRAAYER

God Is with Me Stations

Assign each student a number between 1-5. Then, instruct them to go to the God Is with Me Station with their number.

After two minutes, lead student groups to rotate to the next station numerically. Continue this until students have been to all five stations. If groups are large, instruct one student to read the station directions aloud.

Station 1: God is with me in times of stress.

Supplies: slips of paper, pens

Directions:

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- Think of a time recently when you felt overwhelmed or anxious.
- Take a deep breath and slowly exhale. Repeat this two more times.
- Read this verse silently:

“Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

- Write or draw a worry you want to give to God on a slip of paper and place it on the floor.
- Say a short prayer: “God, I give this to You. Help me to trust You.”

Station 2: God is with me when I am lonely.

Supplies: Sticky notes

Directions:

- At times, we all feel lonely. Sit quietly for a moment. Imagine Jesus sitting beside you.
- Read this verse:
“For he himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you” (Hebrews 13:5b).
- On a sticky note, write a name of someone who might also feel lonely.
- Ask God to be with them, too, and to help them feel His presence. Place the sticky note on the wall.

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- Whisper: “Thank you, God, that I am never truly alone.”
-

Station 3: God is with me when I celebrate.

Supplies: Bright-colored cards

Directions:

- Think of something that happened this week—big or small—to celebrate.
 - Read this verse:
“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).
 - Draw your celebration on a bright-colored card.
 - Hang it up on the “Celebration Wall.”
 - Say silently: “Thank you, God, for the joy You bring!”
-

Station 4: God is with me in decision-making.

Supplies: footprint cutouts

Directions:

- Think of a choice you're facing or a decision you've had to make.
- Read this verse:
“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- Pray: “God, help me know what to do. Help me choose what’s right.”



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- Take a small paper footprint and write one thing you want to ask God for guidance about.
 - Place it on the “Path of Prayer” on the wall.
-

Station 5: God is always with me.

Supplies: Cross cutouts

Directions:

- Sit or stand quietly. Listen to the sounds around you. Breathe deeply.
 - Read this verse:
“For the Lord your God is with you, wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9b).
 - Take a moment to feel God's presence. Close your eyes and say quietly: “You are here, God. I am not alone.”
 - Take a small cross cutout and print on it: God is always with me. Keep it as a reminder of God’s constant presence with you.
 - Thank God for being with you—always.
-

Once each group has completed all five stations, close in prayer.

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COMMENTARY

1 Samuel 18:10-14

Saul's Jealousy (18:1-30)

SUPPORTING IDEA: Saul grows jealous of David when David is recognized by the people for his military exploits, and the king begins to plot against him.

18:1-5. After defeating Goliath, David's life changed forever. Saul and the royal family would honor David with prestige, position, and possessions. In fact, David would even marry one of Saul's daughters. But David would also find a true friend in Jonathan, Saul's heir-apparent. Gene Getz calls the description offered in verse 1, "the best definition of true friendship I've ever read" (Getz, *David*, 74). The relationship of David and Jonathan provides a biblical model for godly friendship that is worthy of study and consideration.

Jonathan observed David's faith and courage in defeating Goliath. Both were young warriors, and both had trusted God for victory over the enemies of Israel. Now we learn that Jonathan became one in spirit with David. The Hebrew text actually tells us that the soul of Jonathan was "bound" or "chained" together with the soul of David. Jonathan loved David as himself. Saul is also said to have "loved" David (16:21). This was not an impure connection as some have suggested. The friendship of these two was pure and true and "focused on God and their deep love for Him" (Getz, *David*, 75).

From that day forward, Saul kept David with his royal servants (18:2). He sent him on special missions and gave him a high rank in the army (18:5). Jonathan also recognized David's abilities by doing two significant things. First, Jonathan made a personal covenant with David. This covenant would be very important for David's well-being later. Second, Jonathan sealed the covenant with royal gifts. Jonathan took off his robe and gave it to David. He also gave David his tunic, sword, bow, and belt. Jonathan honored David by giving to him the princely garments reserved for the heir to Saul's throne (Bergen, 199). "Here was a son of a king honoring a son of a shepherd!" (Getz, *David*, 79).

Perhaps Jonathan instinctively knew then what he would confess to later—that David would be king over Israel (23:17). David was successful in what he did for Saul because he "was a man under the control and direction of the Lord's Spirit" (Bergen, 200; cp. 16:13). Including David in the army of Israel not only satisfied the officers, but it also pleased all the people (18:5). As believers, we are called to follow Jonathan's example and honor one another above ourselves (Rom. 12:10).

18:6-12. It didn't take long for jealousy to rear its ugly head. It was quite natural for the Israelites to celebrate the victory over Goliath. The women rejoiced with singing and

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dancing (18:6). Probably a number of songs were composed to remember the defeat of the Philistines. Only a few lines of one of them is preserved in verse 7.

In good poetic parallelism, the song used a fixed word pair in common use in the ancient Near East. The terms *thousand* and *ten thousand* were understood to be synonyms (cp. Deut. 32:30; Ps. 91:7; Mic. 6:7). Neither Saul nor David literally killed that many Philistines. Instead, these are figurative terms intended to celebrate the stunning victory over the Philistine enemy. Both Saul and David were exalted in the song.

Saul should have known this. But the attribution of tens of thousands of the enemy killed to David angered Saul. The refrain galled him (18:8). Literally, this means that he considered it evil in his eyes. Saul remembered Samuel's prophecy that the Lord would give the kingdom to an anonymous neighbor who was better than he (Bergen, 201; cp. 15:28). No doubt this bothered Saul, so he kept a jealous eye on David (18:9). Bergen has pointed out that the verb translated "kept a jealous eye" was most likely deliberately used because there is a similar sounding word meaning "transgressed" (p. 201). Perhaps this wordplay was intended to inform the reader that from this point on, Saul intended to watch David like a hawk and do him evil.

One example of such attempted evil against David came the very next day (18:10). David was playing the harp for Saul as he usually did when an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. The text says that Saul was prophesying in his house (see "Deeper Discoveries"). The text also says that Saul had a spear in his hand. This may have been a symbol of his status as king. But the Lord was no longer with Saul, and he acted out of his own sinful fear. Saul said to himself, I'll pin David to the wall (18:11). He hurled the spear not once but twice at David. Both times David escaped harm. The Hebrew text says that Saul was afraid of the presence of David because he knew that the LORD was with him (18:12). Saul also knew that the Lord had left him. Saul's behavior is not that of a godly leader or a true friend. Jealousy is a dangerous and powerful temptation. Godly friends do not give in to jealous scheming.

18:13-30. Saul's behavior through the end of this chapter stands in stark contrast to the covenant loyalty exercised by Jonathan for his friend, David, in chapter 19. Here Saul attempted to use every means to bring about the downfall of David. But the reader understands why David had great success in everything he did. It is precisely because the LORD was with him (18:14). True friends reject such behavior as ungodly and sinful. Neither true friends nor godly leaders should act this way.

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Psalm 57

MAIN IDEA: Confident that the Lord will answer, David petitions God to deliver him from the danger of his enemies.

A: David's Petition (57:1-3)

57:1. David began with the passionate plea that God would have mercy on him. His petition is repeated twice to express urgency and is an identical opening to Psalm 56. Ultimately, it was in God that his soul took refuge for protection. As David trusted in God, he realized he was under the shadow of God's wings. This pictures the divine care he sought that was compared to the care of a mother bird for her young (cp. Ps. 17:8).

57:2-3. God Most High is a divine name which emphasizes that God is lifted up above all His creation, over all circumstances, and that He rules over all. This sovereign God, lifted up and transcendent, fulfills His purpose without any wavering, according to his eternal decree. God can be trusted, David said. He sent from heaven and saved him, rebuking those who hotly pursued him. He was referring to Saul and his skilled warriors. God's overruling purposes are always a great motivation for prayer.

B: David's Persecutors (57:4-6)

57:4-5. Detailing his persecutors, David lamented, I am in the midst of lions and ravenous beasts. He pictured these men with teeth like spears and arrows, meaning they had tongues which were like sharp swords. They were able to inflict disabling, deadly harm. Such is the power of the tongue! In the midst of describing these attackers, David's mind suddenly turned to God: Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth. This God-centered focus on divine supremacy was the strength of his life in every adversity, a sure anchor for his soul in the midst of trouble. David requested that God show His sovereign glory by coming to his rescue.

57:6. Returning to the detailed portrayal of his foes, David continued exposing them before God. Like a hunter seeking prey, they had spread a net for his feet to trap him (Pss. 7:15; 9:15). But God had promised to keep the feet of the righteous from slipping (Pss. 37:24; 55:22). Instead of ensnaring David, they had fallen into the pit they had dug for him.

C: David's Praise (57:7-11)

57:7-8. Still looking heavenward, David steadied his heart in God. My heart is steadfast, he repeated twice, underscoring the firm resolve of his soul to trust in God. Rather than pouting about his plight, he declared, I will sing and make music in worship of almighty God. He roused his own heart, Awake, my soul! as if to say, "Let not my soul



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be sluggish or dull toward God.” David vowed to awaken before dawn to begin the day by offering fervent praise to God.

57:9-10. Looking beyond the confinement of the cave in which he found himself, David vowed, I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations and the peoples. Once he was delivered from his trouble, his worship of God would be his public witness to the unbelieving Gentile nations. David must praise God because his love was great, reaching to the heavens. Because God’s name was high and lifted up, so David’s praise must be.

57:11. Repeating the earlier spoken refrain, David concluded, Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. This was an appeal for God to demonstrate His sovereignty by intervening in David’s life, reversing his plight and turning back his enemies. Such a rescue, a deliverance, would display God’s glory over all the earth.

III. Conclusion

No matter what difficulty may come to believers, they must take refuge in God, calling upon Him for mercy. God is a Savior who delights in rescuing His people, not only from their sin but also from their suffering and sorrow. In an hour of trouble, let the righteous lift to God the petition for Him to exalt Himself above the heavens. He will display His sovereignty over their lives by causing all things to work together for His glory and their good. May hearts be awakened to sing His praise!

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DAY 4: THE GOOD LIFE (6 Day)

OVERVIEW

God established His Kingdom through David.

Shepherding requires a deep commitment to each sheep and the flock as a whole. This commitment is usually long term. The Good Shepherd is good and merciful and promises abundant life now and His presence forever. God established His Kingdom through David forever, to be fulfilled through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Scriptures: Psalm 23:5-6; 2 Samuel 7:6-16; Psalm 89:20-29

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).

Life Question: What does an abundant life look like for you?

GATHER THESE SUPPLIES:

- Key Verse and Timeline Posters
- Physical challenge cards (provided)
- Five large sheets of paper
- Markers
- Two bowls
- Two cups
- Two large spoons
- Cotton balls
- Painter’s tape
- Rope
- Five copies of these questions (provided):
 1. What did David want to do for God in verse 5?
 2. Where had God been residing in verse 6?
 3. What did God do for David in verse 8?
 4. Where has God been, what has God done, and what will He do according to verse 9?
 5. What will God do after David dies? (v11)
 6. Who will build God’s house for him according to verses 12-13?
 7. How long will David’s family and kingdom last per verse 16?
- Pens



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- Camp Guides
- Extra Bibles

PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME:

- Hang up the Key Verse Poster on a focal wall.
- Set up cotton ball game.

MOTIVATION

Physical Challenge

Pass out the physical challenge cards and instruct students to perform the task on their card when you say “go.” Say: **“We are going to see who can do their task for the longest time.”**

- **Hold a plank**
- **Wall-sit**
- **Balance on one leg**
- **Hold both arms straight out to the sides while holding a small object in both hands**
- **Hold your breath**

Note: If you do not have walls for wall-sit, make more copies of the other challenges to ensure everyone gets one.

Once everyone has a card, instruct them to begin. Time this and do not let it go more than one to two minutes. If you have a student who cannot participate in this activity, ask him or her to be the timekeeper.

After time is called, say: **“In order to complete this task, you had to concentrate, persevere, endure, commit to the challenge, and push through the voices in your head that said to quit. Shepherding requires a deep commitment to each sheep and the flock as a whole. This commitment is usually long term.”**



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“This is similar to our walk with the Lord. When we accept Christ as Lord and Savior of our lives, that is just the beginning of the journey, one that will lead to abundant life now and eternal life in the future. God is committed to us, and we must be to Him. Today, we are going to finish our study of Psalms and see how God established His Kingdom through David.”

Say a short prayer, asking God to move and speak through His Word today.

EXAMINATION

Abundant Provision

Ask a student to read aloud **Psalm 23:5-6**.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. **6** 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.

Form five groups by moving around the room and assigning each student a number 1-5. Give each group a large sheet of paper and a marker.

Say: **“You will be hosting a banquet for a large group. What steps will you take to prepare?”**

Allow groups time to plan and then ask one to share briefly. Discuss this question:
What makes a good host?

Reread verse 23:5: **“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”**

Say: **“A gracious host would attend to the needs of his guests. In this verse, David said that God prepares a table in the presence of our enemies. Though surrounded by many enemies who sought to harm him, David recognized that God was with him for his good, supplying his needs as a host would care for a guest.”**

Share: The Lord goes before you. He is not surprised by what is next. He is sovereign. He has prepared your path and is with you just like a shepherd goes before his sheep to

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make sure the pasture (the sheep's table) is prepared and free of anything that might harm the sheep like poisonous plants or predators.

Say: **"You may be wondering what's up with the reference about oil."** Refer students to page 57 to the "Sidebar: The Use of Oil" in their Camp Guides and share about the use of oil in the Bible. Ask four different students to read the four purposes listed.

Sidebar: The Use of Oil

In the ancient Near East, anointing a traveler with oil was a practical and symbolic act of hospitality that provided refreshment, healing, and honor.

The oil served several purposes:

- **protected skin from harsh sun and parched air and served as a moisturizer.**
- **was used for soothing and cleansing, removing grime from skin.**
- **brought relief from tired muscles and sore feet.**
- **helped to make a person smell good.**

Say: **"It was the custom of a loving host to provide oil for his honored guest to refresh him after his travels. It was a gesture of hospitality. As far as sheep and the use of oil, they are prone to be attacked by different types of flies. They are also susceptible to a disease called scab. Putting an oil mixture on their head, ears, and nose will stop the pests and the disease and spare the sheep of much trouble. The shepherd also used oil to heal any wounds.**

"David added this phrase, 'you anoint my head with oil' speaking of the Lord's ministry to revive his heart, especially when surrounded by many foes who threatened him. God's presence renewed David's strength for every challenge in life—and it still renews ours today."

My Cup Overflows

Ask for ten volunteers to play a game. Then, form two teams of five from the volunteers. Give each team a large spoon. Designate two starting points using blue painter's tape. Place two bowls of cotton balls in the front of the line, one for each team. Place a cup for each team at the opposite end of the room. When you signal 'go,' the first student in both lines will scoop cotton balls onto their spoon, race to the

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other end of the room, and drop the cotton balls into their team's cup. This will continue until one of the teams fills up their cup first and it overflows. This team will be the winning team. Invite the students not playing in the game to choose a team and cheer them on and encourage them.

Refer to the ending statement in verse 5 of Psalm 23: my cup overflows. Ask students what this means to them.

Share: The Lord has what we need and gives graciously. He is not withholding good from us even in difficult times.

Refer to the Key Verse Poster and lead students to recite the verse in unison: **“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).**

Say: **“Goodness and faithful love as mentioned in this verse refers to God’s blessings.”**

Point students to page 57 in their Camp Guides to the “My Cup Overflows” section and instruct them to do the activity there.

How does your cup overflow? In the outline of the cup, write as many of your blessings as you can. Try to fill the cup to overflowing.

Say: **“According to this verse, God pursues us with goodness and faithful love. To pursue is to chase after. It’s active, not passive. We do not have to go and seek to find it. But we have a choice in how we will respond to His pursuit.”**

Discuss: **“What does ‘house of the Lord’ mean? And what does it mean to dwell in it?”**

Allow time for students to share their thoughts. Then, say: **“This means to live permanently in God’s presence, which can take two forms: a life of constant, intimate fellowship with God while on earth and an eternal dwelling with Him in heaven. This is the desire of a faithful follower of Christ.”**

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Share: Sheep that are satisfied and content with the care they receive from their shepherd feel at home with no desire to leave or change. For the shepherd, a great affection and devotion to his flock develops. He would never think of parting with his sheep. They are his delight. So strong are the bonds between them that it is as if it was forever.

Eternal Covenant

Point to the Timeline Poster. Move the “God Establishes His covenant” to the fourth mark on the timeline. Lead students to turn in their Camp Guides to pages 6-7 to “Timeline of David’s Life” section and write “God establishes His covenant” on the second mark there.

Instruct students to get back in their five groups from earlier in the session. Instruct them to take turns reading **2 Samuel 7:5-16**:

5 “Go to my servant David and say, ‘This is what the LORD says: Are you to build me a house to dwell in?’ **6** “From the time I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until today I have not dwelt in a house; instead, I have been moving around with a tent as my dwelling. **7** In all my journeys with all the Israelites, have I ever spoken a word to one of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, asking: ‘Why haven’t you built me a house of cedar?’ **8** “So now this is what you are to say to my servant David: ‘This is what the LORD of Armies says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, to be ruler over my people Israel. **9** I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. I will make a great name for you like that of the greatest on the earth. **10** I will designate a place for my people Israel and plant them, so that they may live there and not be disturbed again. Evildoers will not continue to oppress them as they have done **11** ever since the day I ordered judges to be over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. “The LORD declares to you: The LORD himself will make a house for you. **12** When your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. **13** He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. **14** I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with a rod of men and blows from mortals. **15** But my faithful love will never leave him as it did when I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. **16** Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever.”

Give each group a card with the questions below and lead them to answer them after they read the passage.

- 1. What did David want to do for God in verse 5? (Build a temple)**
- 2. Where had God been residing in verse 6? (In a tent)**

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3. **What did God do for David in verse 8?** (*Took him from tending flock to being king of Israel*)
4. **Where has God been, what has God done, and what will He do according to verse 9?** (*Everywhere David has been; defeated all David's enemies; will make David one of the most famous people on earth*)
5. **What will God do after David dies?** (v. 11: God will establish David's family and his kingdom)
6. **Who will build God's house for Him according to verses 12-13?** (*David's son – Solomon*)
7. **How long will David's family and kingdom last per verse 16?** (*Forever*)

After a brief time, walk through the seven questions and share the answers.

Promises

Ask for one volunteer. Give one end of the rope to this student and then hold on to the other end. Say: **"I want you to lean back and put all of your weight on it. I promise to hold you and keep you from falling."** Ask: **"What will happen if I break my promise?"** (*fall*) Say: **"I'm not going to actually let go of the rope, but it is a symbol of how God's promises are strong and dependable, even when things seem difficult. God is different from us; He will never break His promises."**

Refer students to page 59 to the "Sidebar: Davidic Covenant" in their Camp Guides. Share from the information found there.

Sidebar: Davidic Covenant

The Davidic Covenant was an unconditional promise God made to King David in which God guaranteed that David's royal lineage and kingdom would endure forever. This covenant, detailed in 2 Samuel 7, is seen as a foundational promise for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is a descendant of David. The promise states that a future son of David would establish an eternal kingdom.

Say: **"Verse 12 is a foreshadowing of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of David. He would be the fulfillment of this verse."**

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Read aloud **Luke 1:31-33**:

31 “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. **33** He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end.”

Share: The world’s longest dynasty is the Dulo Clan in Bulgaria. They reigned from 2137 BC until AD 753 — that’s 2,890 years! The Imperial House of Japan is also one of the longest — 2,669 years and counting — but it’s slowly dying out because there are not many heirs to the throne. But God promised David that his kingdom will have no end. [Source: OpenAI, 2025]

God’s Faithfulness

Say: “**Psalm 89 references the Davidic Covenant. Turn to page 59 in your Camp Guides to read this Scripture and follow the prompts found there.**”

- Underline ways that God was faithful to David.
- Circle David’s response.
- Draw a line through what the enemy cannot do to David.

*20 I have **found** David my servant; I have **anointed** him with my sacred oil. 21 My hand will **always be with him**, and my arm will strengthen him. 22 The enemy will **not oppress him**; the **wicked will not afflict him**. 23 I will crush his foes before him and strike those who hate him. 24 My **faithfulness and love will be with him**, and through my name **his horn will be exalted**. 25 I will **extend his power to the sea and his right hand to the rivers**. 26 He will call to me, ‘You are my **Father**, my **God**, the **rock of my salvation**.’ 27 I will also **make him my firstborn, greatest of the kings of the earth**. 28 I will **always preserve my faithful love for him**, and my **covenant with him will endure**. 29 I will **establish his line forever, his throne as long as heaven lasts**. **Psalm 89:20-29***

Use the color coding above to help students with this exercise, if needed. Do not walk through this as in the other sessions. Allow students to work on their own. Once time is up, ask a couple students to share something they learned and then encourage students to continue this technique of studying the Bible at home.

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Say: **“God is faithful and committed to us. How can we be faithful and committed to Him?”**

Refer students to page 60 in their Camp Guides to the “Commitment Contract” and ask them to complete it.

My Commitment: I want to stay faithful in . . .

Why it matters: Because I believe God wants to grow me in . . .

How I’ll stay committed: I’ll do this by . . .

My prayer: (Write a short, personal prayer asking for strength and perseverance.)

APPLICATION

Abundant Life

Split the group into two teams and ask for a volunteer from each. The volunteers will hold both hands in a cup formation. Students on each team will take turns placing objects in the hands of their volunteer to see how many they can hold without dropping an item. Allow students to find their own objects around the room. Give them one to two minutes. Once a volunteer drops an item, the game is over. Count the items to declare a winner holding the most items.

Say: **“In this game, you were trying to add more and more, to stack items higher and higher in your volunteers’ hands. We try to gain ‘abundance’ from secular things. But that is not the ‘abundant life’ that Jesus speaks of in John 10:10 which says: ‘A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.’ The Good Shepherd is good and merciful and promises abundant life now and His presence forever.”**

Point students back to page 60 to the “Abundant Life” section in their Camp Guides and share the definition of abundant life and then direct them to answer the questions there.

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Sidebar: Abundant Life

A spiritually full, purposeful life with Jesus, characterized by lasting peace, joy, and purpose now and into eternity with God.

Do you think an abundant life is about success, happiness, peace, or something else?

What does “abundant life” mean to you personally?

What choices today could lead to a more abundant life in the future?

PRAYER

Point students back to their Camp Guides to page 61 complete the “Things that Drain/Give Life” activity.

Things that drain life

Things that give life

Pray over your lists, asking God to help you put aside the things that drain life and to pick up more things that give life.

Say: **“Let’s wrap up this week with this activity.”** Instruct students to print a word on each of the fingers on their non-dominant hand as follows as a reminder of our study this week:

Thumb: The

Pointer: Lord

Middle: Is

Ring: My

Pinkie: Shepherd

Close in prayer.

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COMMENTARY

2 Samuel 7:6-16

God Promises to Bless David and Provide a Home for His People Israel (7:8-11a)

SUPPORTING IDEA: In a promise reminiscent of the one made centuries earlier to Abraham, God promises to make David's name great. Furthermore, He promises to protect His people Israel and to give them a home of their own.

7:8-9. Through the prophet Nathan the Lord reminded David that He had guided the king's career from its humble beginnings to the present. Referring to himself as the LORD Almighty, a name that emphasizes God's power over all the forces of the universe, the Lord affirmed that He was the one who took David from the pasture and from following the flock to make him ruler over Israel. David's successes resulted from the fact that God had been with him wherever he had gone. God, and not David's sword, had cut off all his enemies from before him. And that same God would catapult David into the ranks of the great patriarch Abraham, making his name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth (see Gen. 12:2).

7:10-11a. Not only would the Lord bestow blessings on David, He would also bless David's nation. True to the promise God gave to the patriarch Abraham generations earlier (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21), God would provide a place for His people Israel, planting them in the land so they could have a home of their own. With land would come justice and freedom from foreign oppressors. People would not oppress them anymore. As this happened the Lord Himself would give David rest from all his enemies.

God Announces That He Will "Build a House" for David (7:11b-17)

SUPPORTING IDEA: God promises to establish a dynasty through David; from his descendants would come Israel's rulers. One of David's offspring would build a house for God, and God would establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

7:11b-13. The heart of God's covenantal promises to David began at this point as the Lord declared that He would establish a house—that is, a dynasty—for David. Thus, after David's days on earth were over, the Lord would raise up one of David's offspring to succeed him. David's destiny thus contrasts sharply with that of King Saul, whose family line was virtually wiped out by the Philistines, traitorous Israelite soldiers, and the Gibeonites (1 Sam. 31:2; 2 Sam. 4:5-6; 21:8-9). God would establish the kingdom of

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David's son on the earth. Though David was denied the privilege of building a temple for God, his son Solomon would build a house to honor God's name (1 Kgs. 6:1).

7:14-16. The favored son of David would be granted a unique relationship with the Lord. God would be his father, and David's heir would be counted as the Lord's son. This concept is expressed later in two psalms (Pss. 2:7; 89:27) and reflects the understanding that David's royal descendant would have a unique relationship with God. Christian interpretation—based on Jesus' own self-understanding (Luke 22:70; John 10:36)—views this verse as a key prophecy relating to Jesus (Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:19; Heb. 4:14).

On the one hand, David's son would be the recipient of privileges not accessible to other Israelites. On the other hand, as God's adopted son, he would also be disciplined by God. The Lord would punish him when he did wrong (Heb. 12:7). God would make these punishments painful and humiliating, using floggings inflicted by the rod of men. Even so, God's fatherly love would never be taken away from this one, with the result that David's dynasty would not end as Saul's had. David's house and his kingdom—that is, Israel—would endure forever before the Lord. The concluding sentence in verse 16 restates (see v. 13) God's remarkable promise that David's throne would be established forever (1 Kgs. 9:5; Ps. 89:4, 29, 36; 132:12; Isa. 9:7; 16:5), thus confirming its certainty. These divine commitments would be celebrated in song by the Israelites (Ps. 89:4, 35-36); their ultimate fulfillment would occur in Jesus Christ (Luke 1:32-33; Heb. 1:8).

7:17. Nathan spoke all these words and this entire revelation to David. They were arguably the most significant words God had spoken since the revelation at Mount Sinai; they would change the landscape of Israelite politics and ignite messianic hopes that would energize the people of God through the end of the biblical period. Nathan's words may have been given to the king in both an oral and written form (1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29).

PSALM 89

I. Introduction

In contrast to the unfaithfulness of man, God shows Himself to be forever faithful to His people, especially in keeping His promises. How soul strengthening it is to behold One who keeps His word at all times. God always stands committed to do what He says He will do. He never forgets His word, never forfeits His promises, never violates His **covenant**. Never does He pledge something and then fail to bring it to pass. Never does

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He speak and fail to fulfill it. Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful. God is a faithful God.

The faithfulness of God is the chief focus of this royal psalm. It is an agonizing prayer offered for the nation Israel, pleading that God would honor the Davidic **covenant** (2 Sam. 7:8-16). It is a prayer that God would remain faithful to the promises He made to David. This psalm is attributed to Ethan the Ezrahite, a Levite (1 Chr. 15:17-18) and wise person (1 Kgs. 4:31) who interceded with God on behalf of his people at a time when they faced the defeat of their anointed king who stood in the promised line of David. Thus, the psalmist beseeched God to remember His **covenant** which He had made with David and deliver them from their affliction.

II. Commentary

MAIN IDEA: The psalmist rejoices in God's faithfulness to His **covenant** with David and his descendants.

A: the Praise for God's Faithfulness (89:1-2)

89:1a. With an initial burst celebrating God's love and faithfulness, the psalmist declared, **I will sing of the LORD's great love forever.** He rejoiced in God's perfect, unconditional love for His own people, a special focus of this psalm (vv. 1-2, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49). Likewise, forever is a critical word in this psalm, used eight times (vv. 1-2, 4, 28-29, 36-37, 46). God's love is without end.

89:1b-2. The psalmist continued, **With my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.** Divine faithfulness was yet another unique focus of this psalm, used seven times (vv. 1-2, 5, 8, 14, 33, 49). By His faithfulness, God remained unconditionally committed to do for His people what He had promised to do. For this reason, he declared God's love and faithfulness **forever.**

B: the Promise of God's Faithfulness (89:3-4)

89:3-4. The psalmist examined one specific aspect of God's faithfulness, a subject that will occupy the entirety of this psalm, God's **covenant** with David. God said, **I have made a covenant with my chosen one.** This **covenant** referred to the Davidic **covenant** (2 Sam. 7:8-16) that God made with **David**, a **covenant** that will extend to his descendants and establish the royal **line**. Thus, the rightful heir to the **throne** would always be a descendant of David. Ultimately, this royal recipient would be the **Messiah** (Luke 1:31-33).

C: the Perfections of God's Faithfulness (89:5-18)

89:5-8. Focusing on this divine attribute, faithfulness, it is a quality that uniquely distinguishes God from all other beings and powers. **The heavens praise your**

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wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too. This worship of God comes from the holy ones, or the angelic beings, depicted here as the heavenly beings. They are declaring God's unique holiness, for who in the skies can compare with the LORD? The answer to this question was no one. In their midst above, God is greatly feared because his faithfulness surrounds him.

89:9-14. Day by day, the Lord remains unwaveringly faithful to rule over and sustain all creation. You rule over the surging sea and all that it contains. God founded the world and all that is in it, including the north and the south, a reference to Tabor and Hermon, the two tallest mountains that surrounded Israel. All this, God created and controlled by His right hand. Likewise, the psalmist cited other attributes of God that work for the good of His people, causing them to praise Him. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne, meaning God can do only that which is right, just, equitable, and fair. Love and faithfulness, both already mentioned, go before you, meaning they proceed from God's throne to work His will. Everything God does emanates from the foundation of His throne as He rules as the only sovereign.

89:15-18. It is because God possesses these many perfections that His people are blessed. They are greatly favored, happy, and satisfied who have learned to acclaim Him in worship and walk in the light of holiness. They rejoice and exult in God's righteousness because He is their glory and strength. Our shield, a metaphor for the king as their defender (Ps. 84:9), belongs to the LORD.

D: the Pledge of God's Faithfulness (89:19-37)

89:19-25. The psalmist here returned to a subject he introduced earlier, namely, God's covenant with David (vv. 3-4). God spoke in a revelation to both Samuel (1 Sam. 16:1-12) and Nathan (2 Sam. 7:4-16) in which He made known that He had chosen David, a young man and warrior, to be king. He was divinely anointed, sustained, and strengthened, enabled to withstand his foes. God decreed that David's rule would reach from the Mediterranean Sea to the rivers.

89:26-29. The writer described the special father-son type relationship that will exist before God and David. As if he were God's firstborn son, this anointed king will have the highest position and holy privileges in the earthly kingdom, making him the most exalted of all kings. God promised to keep His covenant with David forever, as well as his line (dynasty) and throne, as long as the heavens endure (2 Sam. 7:12-13,16).

89:30-37. Although the Davidic covenant was unconditional and eternal, disobedience would lead to suffering. If his sons forsake my law, then God promised, I will punish their sin with the rod. Disobedience would bring divine discipline. In spite

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of His divine **covenant** with David's descendants, the Lord said, **I will not take my love from him**, nor **violate my covenant**. God has **sworn** this by His **holiness** that the terms of the **covenant** with David will stand **forever**. This is because God is faithful to keep His word even if David's descendants are unfaithful.

E: the Perplexity with God's Faithfulness (89:38-45)

89:38-39. With this pledge in mind, the psalmist lamented that their king had been afflicted and defeated. How can God's apparent rejection of Israel be reconciled with his Davidic **covenant**? In what is probably a description of the Babylonian captivity, the psalmist asked, **But you have rejected, you have spurned, you have been very angry with your anointed one**. God had rejected David's descendants with painful consequences. In a state of perplexity, Ethan wrote, **You have renounced** (literally, "disdained") **the covenant with your servant**. How could God seemingly break the **covenant** which he said was forever? This was the psalmist's dilemma.

89:40-45. Pointing to the demise of the **holy** city, he said, **You have broken through all his walls**, referring to the city walls of **Jerusalem**. Its protection was gone, and the city was rendered defenseless, subject to being **plundered** and being made the object of **scorn**. As an unwalled city, it seemed as if God had **exalted the right hand of his foes**, giving their enemies the opportunity to defeat and destroy them. The outward appearance was that God had **not supported** His own people **in battle** against the invading Babylonians as He had promised He would do. Instead, it seemed that God had **put an end to Jerusalem's splendor**, a total contradiction to His pledge in the Davidic **covenant**. Likewise, concerning the king, God had **cast his throne to the ground**, ending his reign, and **cut short the days of his youth**, abruptly ending his life. In all this, God had covered **him with a mantle of shame**, ending his glory. In light of God's promises, no wonder the psalmist was bewildered and distraught.



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CLOSING MORNING: THE GOOD SHEPHERD (6 Day)

Pass out an evaluation form to each student and give them a few minutes to complete it.

Recap the Bible study. Refer to the Timeline of David's Life poster and walk briefly through it. See if students can recite from memory the entire Psalm 23 passage.

Allow students who have made decisions this week to share.

Instruct students to take home their Camp Guides. Take photos, if students would like to do this.

Play a game, if time permits.

Dismiss students to Closing Celebration.

CLOSING MORNING: THE GOOD LIFE (5 DAY)

OVERVIEW

God established His Kingdom through David.

Shepherding requires a deep commitment to each sheep and the flock as a whole. This commitment is usually long term. The Good Shepherd is good and merciful and promises abundant life now and His presence forever. God established His Kingdom through David forever, to be fulfilled through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Scriptures: Psalm 23:5-6; 2 Samuel 7:6-16; Psalm 89:20-29

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).

Life Question: What does an abundant life look like for you?

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GATHER THESE SUPPLIES:

- Key Verse and Timeline Posters
- Physical challenge cards (provided)
- Five copies of these questions (provided):
 1. What did David want to do for God in verse 5?
 2. Where had God been residing in verse 6?
 3. What did God do for David in verse 8?
 4. Where has God been, what has God done, and what will He do according to verse 9?
 5. What will God do after David dies? (v11)
 6. Who will build God's house for him according to verses 12-13?
 7. How long will David's family and kingdom last per verse 16?
- Pens
- Camp Guides
- Extra Bibles

PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME:

- Hang up the Key Verse Poster on a focal wall.
- Set up cotton ball game.

MOTIVATION

Physical Challenge

Pass out the physical challenge cards and instruct students to perform the task on their card when you say "go." Say: **"We are going to see who can do their task for the longest time."**

- **Hold a plank**
- **Wall-sit**
- **Balance on one leg**
- **Hold both arms straight out to the sides while holding a small object in both hands**
- **Hold your breath**



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Note: If you do not have walls for wall-sit, make more copies of the other challenges to ensure everyone gets one.

Once everyone has a card, instruct them to begin. Time this and do not let it go more than one to two minutes. If you have a student who cannot participate in this activity, ask him or her to be the timekeeper.

After time is called, say: **“In order to complete this task, you had to concentrate, persevere, endure, commit to the challenge, and push through the voices in your head that said to quit. Shepherding requires a deep commitment to each sheep and the flock as a whole. This commitment is usually long term.**”

“This is similar to our walk with the Lord. When we accept Christ as Lord and Savior of our lives, that is just the beginning of the journey, one that will lead to abundant life now and eternal life in the future. God is committed to us, and we must be to Him. Today, we are going to finish our study of Psalms and see how God established His Kingdom through David.”

Say a short prayer, asking God to move and speak through His Word today.

EXAMINATION

Abundant Provision

Ask a student to read aloud **Psalm 23:5-6**.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. **6** 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.

Say: **“You will be hosting a banquet for a large group. What steps will you take to prepare? What makes a good host?”** Discuss as a large group.

Reread verse 23:5: **“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”**



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Say: **“A gracious host would attend to the needs of his guests. In this verse, David said that God prepares a table in the presence of our enemies. Though surrounded by many enemies who sought to harm him, David recognized that God was with him for his good, supplying his needs as a host would care for a guest.”**

Share: The Lord goes before you. He is not surprised by what is next. He is sovereign. He has prepared your path and is with you just like a shepherd goes before his sheep to make sure the pasture (the sheep’s table) is prepared and free of anything that might harm the sheep like poisonous plants or predators.

Say: **“You may be wondering what’s up with the reference about oil.”** Refer students to page 57 to the “Sidebar: The Use of Oil” in their Camp Guides and share about the use of oil in the Bible. Ask four different students to read the four purposes listed.

Sidebar: The Use of Oil

In the ancient Near East, anointing a traveler with oil was a practical and symbolic act of hospitality that provided refreshment, healing, and honor.

The oil served several purposes:

- **protected skin from harsh sun and parched air and served as a moisturizer.**
- **was used for soothing and cleansing, removing grime from skin.**
- **brought relief from tired muscles and sore feet.**
- **helped to make a person smell good.**

Say: **“It was the custom of a loving host to provide oil for his honored guest to refresh him after his travels. It was a gesture of hospitality. As far as sheep and the use of oil, they are prone to be attacked by different types of flies. They are also susceptible to a disease called scab. Putting an oil mixture on their head, ears, and nose will stop the pests and the disease and spare the sheep of much trouble. The shepherd also used oil to heal any wounds.**

“David added this phrase, ‘you anoint my head with oil’ speaking of the Lord’s ministry to revive his heart, especially when surrounded by many foes who



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threatened him. God's presence renewed David's strength for every challenge in life—and it still renews ours today."

My Cup Overflows

Refer to the ending statement in verse 5 of Psalm 23: my cup overflows. Ask students what this means to them.

Share: The Lord has what we need and gives graciously. He is not withholding good from us even in difficult times.

Refer to the Key Verse Poster and lead students to recite the verse in unison: **"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).**

Say: **"Goodness and faithful love as mentioned in this verse refers to God's blessings."**

Point students to page 57 in their Camp Guides to the "My Cup Overflows" section and instruct them to do the activity there.

How does your cup overflow? In the outline of the cup, write as many of your blessings as you can. Try to fill the cup to overflowing.

Say: **"According to this verse, God pursues us with goodness and faithful love. To pursue is to chase after. It's active, not passive. We do not have to go and seek to find it. But we have a choice in how we will respond to His pursuit."**

Discuss: **"What does 'house of the Lord' mean? And what does it mean to dwell in it?"**

Allow time for students to share their thoughts. Then, say: **"This means to live permanently in God's presence, which can take two forms: a life of constant, intimate fellowship with God while on earth and an eternal dwelling with Him in heaven. This is the desire of a faithful follower of Christ."**

Share: Sheep that are satisfied and content with the care they receive from their shepherd feel at home with no desire to leave or change. For the shepherd, a great

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affection and devotion to his flock develops. He would never think of parting with his sheep. They are his delight. So strong are the bonds between them that it is as if it was forever.

Eternal Covenant

Point to the Timeline Poster. Move the “God Establishes His covenant” to the fourth mark on the timeline. Lead students to turn in their Camp Guides to pages 6-7 to “Timeline of David’s Life” section and write “God establishes His covenant” on the second mark there.

Instruct students to get back in their five groups from earlier in the session. Instruct them to take turns reading **2 Samuel 7:5-16**:

5 “Go to my servant David and say, ‘This is what the LORD says: Are you to build me a house to dwell in?’ **6** “From the time I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until today I have not dwelt in a house; instead, I have been moving around with a tent as my dwelling. **7** In all my journeys with all the Israelites, have I ever spoken a word to one of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, asking: ‘Why haven’t you built me a house of cedar?’ **8** “So now this is what you are to say to my servant David: ‘This is what the LORD of Armies says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, to be ruler over my people Israel. **9** I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. I will make a great name for you like that of the greatest on the earth. **10** I will designate a place for my people Israel and plant them, so that they may live there and not be disturbed again. Evildoers will not continue to oppress them as they have done **11** ever since the day I ordered judges to be over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. “The LORD declares to you: The LORD himself will make a house for you. **12** When your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. **13** He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. **14** I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with a rod of men and blows from mortals. **15** But my faithful love will never leave him as it did when I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. **16** Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever.”

Give each group a card with the questions below and lead them to answer them after they read the passage.

- 1. What did David want to do for God in verse 5? (Build a temple)**
- 2. Where had God been residing in verse 6? (In a tent)**

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3. **What did God do for David in verse 8?** (*Took him from tending flock to being king of Israel*)
4. **Where has God been, what has God done, and what will He do according to verse 9?** (*Everywhere David has been; defeated all David's enemies; will make David one of the most famous people on earth*)
5. **What will God do after David dies?** (v. 11: God will establish David's family and his kingdom)
6. **Who will build God's house for Him according to verses 12-13?** (*David's son – Solomon*)
7. **How long will David's family and kingdom last per verse 16?** (*Forever*)

After a brief time, walk through the seven questions and share the answers.

Promises

Ask: **“What do we know about God's promises?”** (Found in Bible, shows He loves us and provides for us, are dependable, etc) Say: **“God is different from us; He will never break His promises.”**

Refer students to page 59 to the “Sidebar: Davidic Covenant” in their Camp Guides. Share from the information found there.

Sidebar: Davidic Covenant

The Davidic Covenant was an unconditional promise God made to King David in which God guaranteed that David's royal lineage and kingdom would endure forever. This covenant, detailed in 2 Samuel 7, is seen as a foundational promise for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is a descendant of David. The promise states that a future son of David would establish an eternal kingdom.

Say: **“Verse 12 is a foreshadowing of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of David. He would be the fulfillment of this verse.”**

Read aloud **Luke 1:31-33:**

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31 “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end.”

God’s Faithfulness

Say: “Psalm 89 references the Davidic Covenant. Turn to page 59 in your Camp Guides to read this Scripture and follow the prompts found there.”

- Underline ways that God was faithful to David.
- Circle David’s response.
- Draw a line through what the enemy cannot do to David.

20 I have **found** David my servant; I have **anointed** him with my sacred oil. 21 My hand will **always be with him**, and my arm will strengthen him. 22 The enemy will **not oppress him**; the **wicked will not afflict him**. 23 I will **crush his foes** before him and **strike those who hate him**. 24 My **faithfulness and love will be with him**, and through my name **his horn will be exalted**. 25 I will **extend his power to the sea** and his right hand to the rivers. 26 He will call to me, ‘You are my **Father**, my **God**, the **rock of my salvation**.’ 27 I will also **make him my firstborn, greatest of the kings** of the earth. 28 I will **always preserve my faithful love** for him, and my **covenant with him will endure**. 29 I will **establish his line forever, his throne as long as heaven lasts**. Psalm 89:20-29

Use the color coding above to help students with this exercise, if needed. Do not walk through this as in the other sessions. Allow students to work on their own. Once time is up, ask a couple students to share something they learned and then encourage students to continue this technique of studying the Bible at home.

Say: “God is faithful and committed to us. How can we be faithful and committed to Him?”

Refer students to page 60 in their Camp Guides to the “Commitment Contract” and ask them to complete it.

My Commitment: I want to stay faithful in . . .

Why it matters: Because I believe God wants to grow me in . . .

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How I'll stay committed: I'll do this by . . .

My prayer: (Write a short, personal prayer asking for strength and perseverance.)

APPLICATION

Abundant Life

Split the group into two teams and ask for a volunteer from each. The volunteers will hold both hands in a cup formation. Students on each team will take turns placing objects in the hands of their volunteer to see how many they can hold without dropping an item. Allow students to find their own objects around the room. Give them one to two minutes. Once a volunteer drops an item, the game is over. Count the items to declare a winner holding the most items.

Say: **“In this game, you were trying to add more and more, to stack items higher and higher in your volunteers’ hands. We try to gain ‘abundance’ from secular things. But that is not the ‘abundant life’ that Jesus speaks of in John 10:10 which says: ‘A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.’ The Good Shepherd is good and merciful and promises abundant life now and His presence forever.”**

Point students back to page 60 to the “Abundant Life” section in their Camp Guides and share the definition of abundant life and then direct them to answer the questions there.

Sidebar: Abundant Life

A spiritually full, purposeful life with Jesus, characterized by lasting peace, joy, and purpose now and into eternity with God.

- Do you think an abundant life is about success, happiness, peace, or something else?
- What does “abundant life” mean to you personally?
- What choices today could lead to a more abundant life in the future?

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PRAYER

Point students back to their Camp Guides to page 61 complete the “Things that Drain/Give Life” activity.

Things that drain life

Things that give life

Pray over your lists, asking God to help you put aside the things that drain life and to pick up more things that give life.

Say: **“Let’s wrap up this week with this activity.”** Instruct students to print a word on each of the fingers on their non-dominant hand as follows as a reminder of our study this week:

Thumb: The
Pointer: Lord
Middle: Is
Ring: My
Pinkie: Shepherd

Close in prayer.

WRAP UP

Pass out an evaluation form to each student and give them a few minutes to complete it.

As time permits, allow students who have made decisions this week to share.

Take photos, if students would like to do this.

Instruct students to take home their Camp Guides. Dismiss to Closing Celebration.

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COMMENTARY

2 Samuel 7:6-16

God Promises to Bless David and Provide a Home for His People Israel (7:8-11a)

SUPPORTING IDEA: In a promise reminiscent of the one made centuries earlier to Abraham, God promises to make David's name great. Furthermore, He promises to protect His people Israel and to give them a home of their own.

7:8-9. Through the prophet Nathan the Lord reminded David that He had guided the king's career from its humble beginnings to the present. Referring to himself as the LORD Almighty, a name that emphasizes God's power over all the forces of the universe, the Lord affirmed that He was the one who took David from the pasture and from following the flock to make him ruler over Israel. David's successes resulted from the fact that God had been with him wherever he had gone. God, and not David's sword, had cut off all his enemies from before him. And that same God would catapult David into the ranks of the great patriarch Abraham, making his name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth (see Gen. 12:2).

7:10-11a. Not only would the Lord bestow blessings on David, He would also bless David's nation. True to the promise God gave to the patriarch Abraham generations earlier (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21), God would provide a place for His people Israel, planting them in the land so they could have a home of their own. With land would come justice and freedom from foreign oppressors. People would not oppress them anymore. As this happened the Lord Himself would give David rest from all his enemies.

God Announces That He Will "Build a House" for David (7:11b-17)

SUPPORTING IDEA: God promises to establish a dynasty through David; from his descendants would come Israel's rulers. One of David's offspring would build a house for God, and God would establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

7:11b-13. The heart of God's covenantal promises to David began at this point as the Lord declared that He would establish a house—that is, a dynasty—for David. Thus, after David's days on earth were over, the Lord would raise up one of David's offspring to succeed him. David's destiny thus contrasts sharply with that of King Saul, whose family line was virtually wiped out by the Philistines, traitorous Israelite soldiers, and the Gibeonites (1 Sam. 31:2; 2 Sam. 4:5-6; 21:8-9). God would establish the kingdom of

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David's son on the earth. Though David was denied the privilege of building a temple for God, his son Solomon would build a house to honor God's name (1 Kgs. 6:1).

7:14-16. The favored son of David would be granted a unique relationship with the Lord. God would be his father, and David's heir would be counted as the Lord's son. This concept is expressed later in two psalms (Pss. 2:7; 89:27) and reflects the understanding that David's royal descendant would have a unique relationship with God. Christian interpretation—based on Jesus' own self-understanding (Luke 22:70; John 10:36)—views this verse as a key prophecy relating to Jesus (Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:19; Heb. 4:14).

On the one hand, David's son would be the recipient of privileges not accessible to other Israelites. On the other hand, as God's adopted son, he would also be disciplined by God. The Lord would punish him when he did wrong (Heb. 12:7). God would make these punishments painful and humiliating, using floggings inflicted by the rod of men. Even so, God's fatherly love would never be taken away from this one, with the result that David's dynasty would not end as Saul's had. David's house and his kingdom—that is, Israel—would endure forever before the Lord. The concluding sentence in verse 16 restates (see v. 13) God's remarkable promise that David's throne would be established forever (1 Kgs. 9:5; Ps. 89:4, 29, 36; 132:12; Isa. 9:7; 16:5), thus confirming its certainty. These divine commitments would be celebrated in song by the Israelites (Ps. 89:4, 35-36); their ultimate fulfillment would occur in Jesus Christ (Luke 1:32-33; Heb. 1:8).

7:17. Nathan spoke all these words and this entire revelation to David. They were arguably the most significant words God had spoken since the revelation at Mount Sinai; they would change the landscape of Israelite politics and ignite messianic hopes that would energize the people of God through the end of the biblical period. Nathan's words may have been given to the king in both an oral and written form (1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29).

PSALM 89

I. Introduction

In contrast to the unfaithfulness of man, God shows Himself to be forever faithful to His people, especially in keeping His promises. How soul strengthening it is to behold One who keeps His word at all times. God always stands committed to do what He says He will do. He never forgets His word, never forfeits His promises, never violates His **covenant**. Never does He pledge something and then fail to bring it to pass. Never does

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He speak and fail to fulfill it. Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful. God is a faithful God.

The faithfulness of God is the chief focus of this royal psalm. It is an agonizing prayer offered for the nation Israel, pleading that God would honor the Davidic **covenant** (2 Sam. 7:8-16). It is a prayer that God would remain faithful to the promises He made to David. This psalm is attributed to Ethan the Ezrahite, a Levite (1 Chr. 15:17-18) and wise person (1 Kgs. 4:31) who interceded with God on behalf of his people at a time when they faced the defeat of their anointed king who stood in the promised line of David. Thus, the psalmist beseeched God to remember His **covenant** which He had made with David and deliver them from their affliction.

II. Commentary

MAIN IDEA: The psalmist rejoices in God's faithfulness to His **covenant** with David and his descendants.

A: the Praise for God's Faithfulness (89:1-2)

89:1a. With an initial burst celebrating God's love and faithfulness, the psalmist declared, **I will sing of the LORD's great love forever.** He rejoiced in God's perfect, unconditional love for His own people, a special focus of this psalm (vv. 1-2, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49). Likewise, forever is a critical word in this psalm, used eight times (vv. 1-2, 4, 28-29, 36-37, 46). God's love is without end.

89:1b-2. The psalmist continued, **With my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.** Divine faithfulness was yet another unique focus of this psalm, used seven times (vv. 1-2, 5, 8, 14, 33, 49). By His faithfulness, God remained unconditionally committed to do for His people what He had promised to do. For this reason, he declared God's love and faithfulness **forever.**

B: the Promise of God's Faithfulness (89:3-4)

89:3-4. The psalmist examined one specific aspect of God's faithfulness, a subject that will occupy the entirety of this psalm, God's **covenant** with David. God said, **I have made a covenant with my chosen one.** This **covenant** referred to the Davidic **covenant** (2 Sam. 7:8-16) that God made with **David**, a **covenant** that will extend to his descendants and establish the royal **line**. Thus, the rightful heir to the **throne** would always be a descendant of David. Ultimately, this royal recipient would be the **Messiah** (Luke 1:31-33).

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C: the Perfections of God's Faithfulness (89:5-18)

89:5-8. Focusing on this divine attribute, faithfulness, it is a quality that uniquely distinguishes God from all other beings and powers. **The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too.** This **worship** of God comes from **the holy ones**, or the angelic beings, depicted here as the **heavenly beings**. They are declaring God's unique holiness, **for who in the skies can compare with the LORD?** The answer to this question was no one. In their midst above, **God is greatly feared** because his faithfulness surrounds him.

89:9-14. Day by day, the Lord remains unwaveringly faithful to rule over and sustain all **creation. You rule over the surging sea** and all that it contains. God **founded the world and all that is in it**, including **the north and the south**, a reference to **Tabor and Hermon**, the two tallest mountains that surrounded Israel. All this, God **created** and controlled by His **right hand**. Likewise, the psalmist cited other attributes of God that work for the good of His people, causing them to praise Him. **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne**, meaning God can do only that which is right, just, equitable, and fair. **Love and faithfulness**, both already mentioned, **go before you**, meaning they proceed from God's **throne** to work His will. Everything God does emanates from the foundation of His throne as He rules as the only sovereign.

89:15-18. It is because God possesses these many perfections that His people are **blessed**. They are greatly favored, happy, and satisfied who have learned to **acclaim** Him in **worship** and **walk in the light** of holiness. **They rejoice** and **exult** in God's **righteousness** because He is their **glory and strength. Our shield**, a metaphor for the king as their defender (Ps. 84:9), **belongs to the LORD.**

D: the Pledge of God's Faithfulness (89:19-37)

89:19-25. The psalmist here returned to a subject he introduced earlier, namely, God's **covenant** with David (vv. 3-4). God **spoke** in a revelation to both Samuel (1 Sam. 16:1-12) and Nathan (2 Sam. 7:4-16) in which He made known that He had chosen **David, a young man and warrior**, to be king. He was divinely **anointed**, sustained, and strengthened, enabled to withstand **his foes**. God decreed that David's rule would reach from the Mediterranean Sea to the **rivers**.

89:26-29. The writer described the special father-son type relationship that will exist before **God** and David. As if he were God's **firstborn** son, this anointed king will have the highest position and **holy** privileges in the earthly kingdom, making him the **most exalted** of all **kings**. God promised to keep His **covenant** with David forever, as well as **his line** (dynasty) and **throne**, as long as the **heavens endure** (2 Sam. 7:12-13,16).

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89:30-37. Although the Davidic **covenant** was unconditional and eternal, disobedience would lead to suffering. **If his sons forsake my law**, then God promised, **I will punish their sin with the rod.** Disobedience would bring divine **discipline.** In spite of His divine **covenant** with David's descendants, the Lord said, **I will not take my love from him**, nor **violate my covenant.** God has **sworn** this by His **holiness** that the terms of the **covenant** with David will stand **forever.** This is because God is faithful to keep His word even if David's descendants are unfaithful.

E: the Perplexity with God's Faithfulness (89:38-45)

89:38-39. With this pledge in mind, the psalmist lamented that their king had been afflicted and defeated. How can God's apparent rejection of Israel be reconciled with his Davidic **covenant**? In what is probably a description of the Babylonian captivity, the psalmist asked, **But you have rejected, you have spurned, you have been very angry with your anointed one.** God had rejected David's descendants with painful consequences. In a state of perplexity, Ethan wrote, **You have renounced** (literally, "disdained") **the covenant with your servant.** How could God seemingly break the **covenant** which he said was forever? This was the psalmist's dilemma.

89:40-45. Pointing to the demise of the **holy** city, he said, **You have broken through all his walls**, referring to the city walls of **Jerusalem.** Its protection was gone, and the city was rendered defenseless, subject to being **plundered** and being made the object of **scorn.** As an unwalled city, it seemed as if God had **exalted the right hand of his foes**, giving their enemies the opportunity to defeat and destroy them. The outward appearance was that God had **not supported** His own people **in battle** against the invading Babylonians as He had promised He would do. Instead, it seemed that God had **put an end** to **Jerusalem's splendor**, a total contradiction to His pledge in the Davidic **covenant.** Likewise, concerning the king, God had **cast his throne to the ground**, ending his reign, and **cut short the days of his youth**, abruptly ending his life. In all this, God had covered **him with a mantle of shame**, ending his glory. In light of God's promises, no wonder the psalmist was bewildered and distraught.



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BIBLE STUDY LEADER 101

GENERAL TIPS

1. Learn names. Find a way that works for you and do it. This doesn't sound like much, but when you know their names, students feel you are interested in and care about them.
2. Study the student information card. The questions really help in starting relationships. You may want to think of some more questions such as favorite movie, worst gift, proudest moment, etc.
3. Do your best to hang out and talk with students during meals and hang time. Granted, sometimes they will be preoccupied with others, but find times to talk with them.
4. Be yourself. The Bible study materials, as written, are great, but allow it to take on your personality and teach it the way that is best suited to you.
5. Love students but lead them. You will have times that you will want them to think you are the coolest, but make sure you lead them. Being a Bible study leader is not a popularity contest.
6. Do not compare yourself or your group to others. Anytime we compare, we will always come out the loser. Focus on your students and your call to the job.
7. Don't focus on negatives, but believe you have a great group—because you do.
8. Don't give up when you have a tough group, or they don't meet your expectations. They can and will be a great group if you lead them the way they need to be led. Study your group and meet them where they are.
9. Pray, pray, and pray some more for your students. Pray over the seats before opening night. Pray over chairs in your Bible study room daily. Pray with students. Pray!



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10. Don't just hang out with the "fun kids," "popular kids," or "pretty kids" in your group. Try to build relationships with all of them. Some may not be responsive, but you may just be surprised if you try.
11. When you need help, ask for it. Other staffers and your leadership will be ready to help.
12. Your Bible study may flop one day. Do your best to fix it.
13. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak and teach through you. Pray for this each day.
14. See Bible study as a time of worship and lead that way.
15. Don't stay up too late. Lack of sleep will eventually affect you in your Bible Study.
16. Keep personal time with the Lord a priority throughout the summer.
17. Be forgiving. They are kids.
18. Look for students who need encouragement and encourage them.
19. Build them as a group.
20. Challenge students to minister to one another.
21. Help them search for why they are in this specific Bible Study group.

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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS

1. Set expectations from the beginning and hold students to that (especially day 1) to make the rest of the week easier. Be consistent from day to day.
2. Tell students on opening night that Bible study is God's time, to respect that and be prepared to listen to what He is saying.
3. Do not be afraid to have students sit in a different area if they are being disruptive where they are.
4. Allow rowdy/active students to be active. Forcing an active student to sit alone in silence will most likely cause a larger distraction.
5. Be prepared! Do not procrastinate setting up for Bible study. If you are prepared, you will have confidence and in turn, Bible study will run smoother.
6. Set the tone the first night and watch your own attitude and enthusiasm. Students will feed off of you.
7. On your Bible study outline, keep a maximum and minimum time for each section.
8. Do not allow down time. In other words, know where you are going and move from one thing to the next with easy, smooth, and quick transitions.
9. Learn names of students. They have more respect for you, and it is easier to stop a behavior that is a distraction.
10. Know your material backward and forward so you can keep a flow of Bible Study regardless of time, tangents, etc.
11. Do not yell over your students. Silence is your friend.
12. Address disruptive behavior immediately. Pull students aside, make expectations clear.
13. If your group is sleepy, lead them to stand and stretch or take a move break.



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14. Walk around during Bible study. Do not sit during group discussion time. Keep moving around from group to group.
15. Keep your frustrations to yourself. Do not allow this to show.
16. Give all students a note card to hold throughout Bible study if they are too nervous to ask questions out loud or if it is not pertinent at the time.
17. Establish a healthy learning environment from the beginning. Students must feel safe. They must feel comfortable to participate and ask questions. Students must feel like what you are teaching is relevant.
18. Always keep calm. Do not panic. Never let them see you sweat.

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CLASSROOM DECORATING AND MAINTENANCE TIPS

1. Classrooms should be neat, professional, colorful and distraction free. We want to create a learning environment where students can hear from the Lord and experience life change.
2. Be aware of what your location wants you to use to hang items on the wall masking tape, painters' tape, packing tape, sticky tack, push pins, etc. Do not use tape on walls that may pull off the paint. Do not use sticky tack if it will leave a greasy spot.
3. When taping items to a wall, roll the tape and place it on the back of the poster, butcher paper or whatever you are hanging. Tape should not be seen on the outside of the item being hung.
4. When you cut an item to display, make sure you cut in straight lines.
5. Handwriting should be neat and readable. Get someone who has good handwriting to write your posters if you need to. It makes a big difference.
6. Use color-coding. Use the color that has been assigned to each day of Bible study and make all of your posters, Bible study note cards, etc. match that color for the day. This can help both you and students keep things straight.
7. Use colored posters/butcher paper when you can, instead of white.
8. Display your Bible study name in your room. Consider creating a signing wall. Purchase a bed sheet or use butcher paper, write the Bible study name on it in large letters, then invite students sign the sheet each week so you can take it home at the end of the summer.
9. Use your Bible study packet to prepare. Consider laminating the items that will be used from session to session.
10. Make sure you have a set place for everything. Don't just keep markers in a pile on the floor, but have an actual place for them, etc.



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11. Include your students in keeping everything looking neat. Bible study isn't over until everyone has helped get the classroom back in order.
12. During reset each week, make sure you have all butcher paper pulled and labeled for each day. Also, make sure you have enough supplies. Don't wait for each day to grab your supplies. Your week will be much smoother if everything is already set.
13. Even after you have everything prepared, make sure you check your room before opening night. We are rarely the only activity on campus, so make sure that everything is ready to go where you left it.
14. Feel free to collect items to bring from home that are thematic, the color of your Bible study flag, or that relate to your Bible study name.

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HOW TO DEAL WITH A DIFFICULT STUDENT

Participants who are difficult may have other issues that are the root of their behavior. Please remember they are not acting up against you.

Common Factors That Lead to Misbehavior:

Fear of failure
Fear of the unknown
Poor self-esteem
Displaced anger
Attention seeking
Loss of personal power
Physiological factors – drugs, malnourishment, etc.

Guidelines for Dealing with Difficult Participants:

1. Reinforce the positive – when the participant does something right – praise him/her.
2. Redirect challenging behavior.
3. Be consistent/fair in your conduct and expectations.
4. Respond to rational questions with rational responses and authoritative questions with authoritative responses.
5. Always remain calm when participants misbehave.
6. Avoid power struggles – redirect the structure/situation.
7. Serve as a good role model – verbally/non-verbally consistent.
8. Do not allow one belligerent participant to ruin the entire experience for the other participants.

Techniques for Dealing with Difficult Participants:

1. “Contracting” – establish reasonable, positive expectations.
2. Rephrase the negative situation with a positive response.
3. Establish clear, concise, truly enforceable limits.
4. Ask questions such as:
 - What is the problem?
 - Why is this a problem?
 - What are your choices?
 - What are you going to choose to do?
5. Allow natural consequences to teach if the participant's safety isn't jeopardized.
6. Seat disruptive participants close to you.



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Reporting Difficult Participants:

1. Report difficult participants to your camp leadership.
2. Camp leadership will lead and direct the situation from there. He/she will communicate with you, if your participation is needed.

Restraining a Participant:

- Staffers should not restrain participants under any circumstances.
- If a leader feels that an extreme circumstance warrants breaking with this policy for the safety and well-being of the participant, they will have to exercise independent judgment given the circumstances to do so.
- Any time a participant exhibits behavior that causes a staffer to consider an exception to this policy, it is recommended the camp director contact the group leader and possibly the local police. The camp director should decide whether the participant should be sent home.



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APPROACHES TO LEARNING

Students learn in different ways. Below is an outline of the different learning styles. The goal is to engage every student by using a variety of activities to address all learning styles.

Verbal

These people learn best by talking and hearing. They show proficiency in using words and have a large vocabulary. They love to tell stories and to write.

Activities include storytelling, discussion, testimony, lecture, interviews, reading scripture, debate, role plays.

Logical

These people learn best by categorizing, classifying, and working with abstract patterns/relationships.

Activities include research, agree/disagree, graphs, true/false reaction, case studies.

Visual

These people learn best by visualizing, dreaming, using the mind's eye, and working with colors/pictures. They are very observant and use their imaginations to “see”.

Activities include drawing, collage, montage, charts/maps, puzzles, computer presentations, photos, painting.

Natural

These people learn best by collecting, identifying, sorting, and organizing. They love being in nature and the outdoors.

Activities include go outdoors, hike, complete nature projects, science experiments and environmental studies, build or make objects from wood, leaves, sticks, etc.

Physical

These people learn best by touching, moving and interacting with space. They like to use their entire body to learn. They love physical games and activities.



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Activities include role play, pantomime, charades, acting out a song, scavenger hunt, high, energy contact play, sign language, hands-on mission work.

Musical

These people learn best by rhythm, melody, and music. They are creative thinkers and express themselves creatively. They find pleasure in listening to music. They have great problem-solving skills.

Activities include write new lyrics to a song, listen to music, watch music a video, read a hymn, play an instrument, sing a Bible verse, perform a stomp-type routine.

Relational

These people learn best by sharing, relating, cooperating, socializing, and leading. They care deeply for others and have a good understanding of others' feelings.

Activities include networking, service projects, support groups, skits, teaching, group discussions or projects, group games.

Reflective

These people learn best by reflection, thinking and working alone. They are independent and have a good understanding of themselves and their feelings.

Activities include self-tests, open-ended statements, journaling, sharing feelings, reading and responding to questions.



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KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

Facts about Generation Z

The older students coming to camp this summer (and some of you) are part of Generation Z. Below are some facts about these students to help you know more about them before you spend time with them and minister to them. These are general statements that do not apply to all students in Generation Z.

-Generation Z now constitutes 25.9 percent of the US population and consists of those born between 1995 and 2010. Approximate ages of this group are 14-27.

-This generation is the “internet-in-its-pocket” generation. They do not know a world without constant, immediate, and convenient access to the web. This means a world with very few restraints. They are able to find whatever they’re after without the help of intermediaries.

-Teenagers in this group spend nearly nine hours a day absorbing media. Social media is not second nature; it is their primary nature. They gravitate less toward Facebook than anonymous social media platforms. Because social media is their nature, so is seeking its immediate affirmation and acceptance. They can filter out things to create an ideal image for the public.

-Generation Z is the most racially diverse of any generation to date. They are globally connected.

-Generation Z is sexually fluid. They have become sexually and relationally amorphous. Nearly half of all young people don’t think they are exclusively heterosexual. They refuse either the heterosexual or homosexual label. Many believe sexuality should be set free from any and all restrictions, and people should be allowed to follow their desires, moment by moment.

-Generation Z students are mature and in control. They intend to change the world and are eager to start working. Entrepreneurship is in their DNA. They seek education and knowledge. They multitask and think spatially.

-Generation Z is the first generation in the West that will have been raised in a post-Christian context. Most people in Generation Z still believe in the existence of God, but less than half attend weekly religious services of any kind. They tend to fall into the category of religiously unaffiliated-the nones.

-Generation Z is being raised by underproductive parents. As a result, they have been given more space and more independence than any other generation.



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-Students in Generation Z lost their childhood to becoming adults too early. They have been asked to embrace mature issues, themes, and experiences long before they are ready. They are growing older younger.

-No other generation has had pornography so available, in such extremes, at such a young age. Seventy percent of all eighteen- to thirty-four-year-olds are regular viewers. Nearly three-quarters of fifteen- to eighteen-year-olds have sexted, and half have sent naked or semi naked photos and videos of themselves.

Facts about Gen Alpha

The younger students coming to camp this summer are part of Generation Alpha. Below are some facts about these students to help you know more about them before you spend time with them and minister to them. These are general statements that do not apply to all students in Generation Z.

-Generation Alpha consists of those born between 2011 and current. Approximate ages of this group are 0-13. They are the first generation to be raised entirely in the 21st Century.

-Alpha students are hyperconnected. Such is their attention to new technologies that it becomes a way of life. They become experts in the use of new technologies, which facilitates their digital learning and opens up a wide range of possibilities.

-They are independent when it comes to making their own decisions and managing their digital identities, and they expect their individual needs and preferences to be taken into account.

-They are visual. Video will be their preferred format. In addition, video games will boost their visual skills, improving eye-hand coordination and the ability to easily switch tasks.

-They are diverse. Diversity not only refers to demographics, such as ethnicity and gender, but also to tastes, lifestyles and points of view.

-Gen Alpha has a heightened awareness of mental health issues and other pressing issues such as climate change.

-They are well-traveled at a young age. Being exposed to different cultures gives them a unique global perspective.

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-They have reduced attention spans and concentration due largely to using several screens at once and quickly scanning information.

-Spending much of the day online, both inside and outside the home, reduces the time for learning, playing and socializing in more traditional ways.

-They experience less development of creativity and imagination due to their use of technology.

-Gen Alpha suffers from a reduced ability to achieve happiness. They often deal with being depressed, anxious, and lonely.

Age Group Characteristics and Needs

Tweens-ages 9 to 12

Bodies:

- For the most part, still children physically
- Some are beginning puberty stage
- Girls maturing faster than boys

Social/Emotional:

- Main worries are friendships and school
- Becoming more self-absorbed
- May experience mood swings previously associated with teens
- Self-concept is beginning to develop
- Same-sex friends are main interest
- Little interest in opposite sex

Mental:

- Begin new ways of thinking-independent thinking
- Moral and ethical decisions may be peer influenced
- Optimistic for the future
- Beginning to think more abstractly

Spiritual:

- Embrace traditional beliefs and value the family
- Still learning and inquiring as children
- Many accept Christ during this phase
- Beginning walk as a Christian-discipleship is huge during this time
- In a strange place-between children and youth group

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7th and 8th Grades

Bodies:

- Puberty occurring
- Bodies changing-height and weight increase, skin and hair become more oily, pimples may appear, voice changes, muscles develop, reproductive maturity reached/developing
- Boys smaller; behind the development of girls
- May look like kids – OR – MUCH older
- Awkward and clumsy

Social/Emotional:

- Self-image is BIG – insecure, self-conscious
- Moody
- “Finding” themselves
- Interest grows in opposite sex
- Need attention but don’t want to stick out
- Can have child-like emotions still
- Spend more time with other teens and less time with family
- Push limits of adults
- Mixed feelings about "breaking away" from parents

Mental:

- Concrete thinkers-no hypotheticals
- Think in terms of the PRESENT
- See themselves as the center of attention
- Risk takers-believe bad things will not happen to them
- Impressionable
- Short attention span

Spiritual:

- Beginning to question things personally
- Still have child-like faith
- Excited in youth group – will do anything you ask them to do

9th and 10th Graders

Bodies:

- Growing rapidly – spurts of 3-4 inches
- Girls have usually reached full physical development while boys are close

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- Boys' voices lower, facial hair appears, weight and muscle gain continue

Social/Emotional:

- More self-assured
- Girls are more caddy and judgmental – “Mean Girls,” drama queens
- Apathetic toward opinions and life
- May struggle with urges to use alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and become sexually active
- Eating disorders
- Get their driver’s license and first job in this phase

Mental:

- Better able to solve problems, think about the future, appreciate opinions of others, and understand long-term effects of their decisions
- Often self-centered
- Organizational skills improve-better able to juggle school, church, family, work
- Frequently challenge parental and school rules

Spiritual:

- Many know the "church" answer but do not apply to life
- Have not grasped concept of personal relationship with Christ and making Him Lord in life
- Either ON or OFF
- Jesus is there when they need Him; don't think about Him if they don't

11th and 12th Graders

Bodies:

- Physically developed for the most part (still growing but past major changes)

Social/Emotional:

- Relationships are big to them-think about opposite sex often
- Starting to see the world (outside hometown)
- Guys internalize; girls can be extreme
- Not totally confident but more aware of who they are
- More guarded... don't show emotions easily

Mental:

- Abstract thinkers
- Plan for graduation
- Seeing the “Bigger Picture”
- Reaching independence



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Spiritual:

- Maturity in this area can vary dramatically
- Still questions to be answered
- Putting pieces together of their faith
- Starting to understand why they believe