

I Shall Not Want

God Provides All We Need
(Psalm 23:1b)

Introduction

[Teacher, bring in a box of dog care items such as a small blanket, pet basket or cage or dog bed, leash, water bowl, food dish, collar, pet toy, flea powder or pet shampoo, dog food, dog bone or biscuits.]

I have several things in this box that someone would use in caring for a pet. As I show you each one, tell me how that item would provide care for a dog or cat.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Provision</i>
Blanket	Provides comfort , warmth.
Basket	Provides a place to sleep in security
Lease/collar	Leash offers safety & guidance , tags on the collar offer identification
Water bowl	Gives refreshment, quenches thirst and cool down
Food dish	Provides nutrition, satisfies hunger
Flea powder or shampoo	Provides cleanliness and healing , relives irritation.
Pet toy	Provides fun , exercise

In the same way that you and I know how to care for our pets, God cares for us.

Last week we began to look at Psalm 23. So far, we have only looked at the first half of the first verse which says, “*The Lord is my shepherd.*” This week we will look at the next part of that sentence, “*I shall not want.*”

Ask: Is there something special that you really want? What are you hoping to get for Christmas or your next birthday? [Let the children respond. Discuss the difference between wants and needs.]

You can be happy knowing that because the Lord is in control of your life, all your needs will be met.

Opening Prayer

Father, there are so many things that we want in life. But it’s comforting to know that You, our Good Shepherd, will meet every one of our needs. Please help us to love You more today as we think about how good You are and how well You care for us. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from His glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:19 NLT)*

Lesson

Psalm 23 was written over 3,000 years ago by David, the most famous and loved king of the Israelites. This is the same David that killed the giant, Goliath, with a sling shot. Before he was a king, David was a shepherd. His dad would send him out on the range to watch over his family’s flock and while he was out there, all alone at night, he wrote songs to the Lord. It was a real comfort to his sheep.

In this song, David gives us a beautiful picture of what God is like.

Last week we learned a lot about being a shepherd.

Ask: Is being a shepherd an easy job?

No, being a shepherd is a lot of hard work; sheep can't just take care of themselves. A shepherd must provide food, water, care, guidance, protection, and comfort to his flock. Sometimes they have to fight off bears and wolves, they have to sleep outside with the animals; they have to keep watch over the sheep at all times. A good shepherd is willing to do anything to save his sheep from danger — even if he must give up his own life.

Ask: What can happen to a sheep if he wanders away from the flock?

He can get attacked by a wolf.

Last week we learned we are a lot like sheep, too.

Ask: In what ways are we like sheep?

We need a Shepherd to guide us. If we wander away from our Good Shepherd, Jesus, we can get ourselves in trouble. We talked about how important it is for us to know our Shepherd's voice so that we don't follow the wrong shepherd.

A good shepherd takes excellent care of his sheep so they grow up to be fat and fluffy and healthy.

David wrote this song from a sheep's point of view. Imagine this little lamb bragging to the poor sheep on the other side of the fence who don't have a good shepherd. Those poor sheep look sick and scrawny and hungry. Their wool is full of dirt and burrs and bugs. And, here's David's lamb, fat and fluffy and healthy, boasting, "*The Lord is my shepherd!*"

After bragging, this little lamb goes on to say, "*I shall not want.*" He's saying, "*Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I am completely contented.*"

Ask: What does the word, *contentment*, mean to you?

To be completely satisfied or happy.

Ask: Why is this lamb in Psalm 23 contented?

He completely trusts that his Shepherd will supply all his needs.

A good shepherd gets up early every morning and inspects each of the sheep in his flock. He checks to see if they are healthy and happy. If he sees that they need any special attention, he takes care of it. He will even risk his own life to protect them.

In the same way, Jesus, our Good Shepherd, cares for us and is always watching over us. There is nothing about our lives that escapes His notice. He knows when we have needs. And because He knows what our greatest need is, He was even willing to give up His life to protect us from the penalty of our sin.

God has always provided for His people's need. Remember when the children of Israel had left Egypt and were traveling across the desert with Moses to the Promised Land? Even though they were a stubborn and ungrateful lot of people, God met their every need.

Before they left Egypt, God miraculously provided for them by causing the Egyptians to give them all their valuables. The Egyptians were so glad to see the Israelites go that they sent them out with gifts.

Exodus 3:21-22 (God told the Israelites...)

And I will cause the Egyptians to look favorably on you. They will give you gifts when you go so you will not leave empty-handed. (22) Every Israelite woman will ask for articles of silver and gold and fine clothing from her Egyptian neighbors and from the foreign women in their houses. You will dress your sons and daughters with these, stripping the Egyptians of their wealth."

Ask: Why would God see to it that the people had articles of silver and gold and fine clothing when He knew that they were heading out for a long trek across the desert?

God knew that the people were going to need these things later to build the tabernacle.

Let's look at some other ways God provided for the Israelite's needs out in the desert.

The Israelites had to cross the wilderness to get to the Promised Land. It was very big and totally barren. It was mostly sand and stone. They had been so anxious to leave Egypt they hadn't prepared themselves for just how big and barren it would be out there. After three days in the wilderness without water they began to worry and complain.

Exodus 17:3

But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Are you trying to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"

Moses goes to the Lord in prayer...

Exodus 17:4

Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What should I do with these people? They are ready to stone me!"

The Lord answered Moses and miraculously provided water.

Exodus 17:5-6

The LORD said to Moses, "Walk out in front of the people. Take your staff, the one you used when you struck the water of the Nile, and call some of the elders of Israel to join you. (6) I will stand before you on the rock at Mount Sinai. Strike the rock, and water will come gushing out. Then the people will be able to drink." So Moses struck the rock as he was told, and water gushed out as the elders looked on.

The striking of this rock to provide water was a picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us. The striking of the rock pictures Jesus being crucified. The life-giving water that came gushing out of the rock pictures the Holy Spirit being poured out for us to give us the power to live our lives to please God. (See 1 Corinthians 10:4)

John 7:37-39

On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! (38) Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'" (39) (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

So not only did God provide life-giving water to the Israelites out in the desert, He provides Living Water to anyone who believes in Him.

God also provided food from heaven for the children of Israel to eat:

Numbers 11:7-9

The manna looked like small coriander seeds, and it was pale yellow like gum resin. (8) The people would go out and gather it from the ground. They made flour by grinding it with hand mills or pounding it in mortars. Then they boiled it in a pot and made it into flat cakes. These cakes tasted like pastries baked with olive oil. (9) The manna came down on the camp with the dew during the night.

The Lord provided this food from heaven every morning the whole time it took them to get to the Promised Land—40 years.

In teaching his disciples, Jesus told them that just like the Father gave the Israelites manna from heaven during their 40-year journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land, the Father gives Jesus to people during their journey through life towards heaven.

John 6:32-35

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. (33) The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (34) "Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day." (35) Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Jesus was comparing Himself with bread, a common, everyday thing that everybody can understand. Bread is the basic food of life. You and I cannot live very long without eating, can we? Bread brings you nourishment and makes you grow. In the same way that food is the only source of life here on earth, Jesus is the only source of eternal life.

As our bodies feel hunger for food, so our souls feel hunger for forgiveness and peace. Only Jesus can satisfy the hunger of your soul. Just as bread will not do you any good unless you take it into your body, Jesus will not save you until you receive Him as your Savior from sin. Once you do, the Lord will continue to "feed" you spiritually through His Word.

God knew the people needed food and water; He planned to provide for their needs because He wanted them to learn that they could trust Him to provide everything they need. He wanted them to be contented sheep.

And, God wants us to be content in just knowing that He will provide all our needs, too. He wants us to be like this sheep in Psalm 23 who said, "*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.*"

Are you content, like the sheep in Psalm 23? What would it take for you to be totally and completely content? Doesn't it satisfy you just knowing that the Lord is your Shepherd and that you shall never *want* for anything? Jesus is our protector and our provider; He has promised to never leave us for forsake us. He is always watching over us.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for Your great provision in our lives. We trust that You will meet every need that we have in the future. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Game Center

I've Got My Eye on Ewe

Jesus as our Good Shepherd not only gives us things that can be bought but He gives us things that money cannot buy. When we receive Him as our Savior He makes a covenant or promise to us to fill all our needs. Especially needs that no one else can satisfy.

Materials needed: Two sets of large index cards. One set of cards with the following words written on them: healing, protection, safety, security, love, friendship, counsel, help, guidance, and companionship. Another set of index cards with the following verses written on them: [Do not write the word on the index card. This is for your reference.]

<i>Provision Cards</i>	<i>Promise Cards</i>
Healing	Matthew 15:30 And a great multitude came to Him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb, and many others, and they put them down at His feet and He healed them.
Protection	Luke 10:19 ...and nothing shall in any way harm you. Or Psalm 91:10-11 No evil shall come to you for He will put His angels in charge over you.
Safety	Proverbs 18:10 The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into and they are safe.

Provision Cards	Promise Cards
Security	Luke 12: 32 Do not be gripped with fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
Love	John 16:27 for the Father Himself loves you dearly because you love Me and believe that I came from God.
Friendship	James 2:23 Abraham believed God and he was called God’s friend.
Counsel	Psalm 120:1 And I cried unto the Lord and He heard me...
Help	Isaiah 41:14 I will help thee says the Lord...
Guidance	Exodus 15:13 In Your mercy and loving-kindness You have guided them in Your strength...
Companionship	Joshua 1:5 As with Moses I will be with you, I will not leave you or forsake you.

The “Provision” cards describe some things that a good shepherd provides for the sheep. Show each word card one at a time to the children as they read each it aloud. Then lay them face down on the floor.

The cards in my hand are all verses from the Bible that give us a promise that God will be a Good Shepherd to us. Let’s take turns and see if we can match the scripture to each of God’s promise of provision in our lives.

Read the first “Scripture” card. Let a child turn over one of the “Provision” cards that are on the floor. If the “Provision” does not match, turn the card back over and choose another child to pick another “Provision” card until we find one that matches the promise.

Continue until all scriptures are matched with the descriptions of a good shepherd. At the end, once again read the qualities of a good shepherd and remind the children that because Jesus is The Good Shepherd, we shall not want.

Note: An alternative for the older children may be to ask them to look up the verses and allow them to write the verses on the cards. Proceed with the above format.

Whadda’ Ya Want?

Write the following actions on index cards: thirst, hunger, cold, hot, wet, tired, an annoying bug, scared of dark, dirty, sticky, bothered by the sun, boredom, itching, poor, falling (losing balance), and drowning.

Let each child select an action card to act out (pantomime). Have the children guess what the need is and make suggestions for meeting that need. (Such as providing a glass of water, snack, mittens and hat, ice or swimming suit, umbrella, pillow, fly swatter, flashlight, soap and washcloth, wet wipe, sunglasses, game, cream, money, cane or rope, life jacket.)

Wolf and sheep Tag

This variation on freeze tag begins with one student as a “Shepherd” and another as “wolf;” the remaining students are the “sheep.”

Note: Create a safe zone in the corner of the room as a “sheepfold.”

The *sheep* have 3 minutes to scatter across a playing field. If tagged by the *wolf*, students must “baa” and lie or crouch down. The *shepherd* will use a long pool noodle “staff” to un-tag the *sheep*. When a sheep is un-tagged, he goes immediately to the *sheepfold* where he

is “safe.”

Object of the game: All the *sheep* are either brought into the *sheepfold* or are not yet caught by the *wolf* when the time is up.

Or, use the following review questions in a time of discussion or a game of your choice:

1. How is God like a shepherd? (He provides healing, protection, friendship, etc.)
2. How are we like sheep? (We need a Shepherd to guide us.)
3. Do you think a shepherd has an easy job? (No, they have to fight off bears and wolves, they have to sleep outside with the animals, and they have to keep watch over the sheep at all times.)
4. What are some of the things a good shepherd provides for his sheep? (food, water, care, comfort.)
5. Why is the sheep in Psalm 23 contented? (He completely trusts that his Shepherd will supply all his needs.)
6. What can happen to a sheep if he wanders away from the flock? (A wolf can attack and devour him.)
7. In what 3 ways did God provide for the needs of the children of Israel while they were in the desert? (He caused the Egyptians to give them all their wealth. He also provided water from a rock and food from heaven, manna.)
8. Why would God see to it that the children of Israel had articles of silver and gold and fine clothing when He knew that they were heading out for a long trek across the desert? (God knew the people were going to need these things to build the Tabernacle.)
9. How did God miraculously provide water for the people in the wilderness? (He instructed Moses to strike the rock and water gushed out.)
10. What were the water and the rock pictures of? (The rock is a picture of Jesus and the water is a picture of the Holy Spirit.)
11. What was manna? (The word *manna* means, “*What is it?*” It was food from heaven that God miraculously provided for the people to sustain them for the 40 years they were in the desert.)
12. Why did Jesus refer to Himself as the Bread of Life? (He wanted us to know that only Jesus can satisfy the hunger of our souls; just as food sustains our earthly lives, He provides eternal life to us.)

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