

Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called
God's children. (Matthew 5:9)

Be Peaceful – Psalm 23

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: PEACE

This week the children will become familiar with Psalm 23. Psalm 23 is memorized by many people. The words are often used to comfort those who are experiencing hard times. The image of God caring for God's people as a shepherd would for his sheep brings solace in times of trouble. This psalm reassures God's people that they will never be alone. God will be with them always, even in the darkest of days.

Psalm 23 does not directly mention peace, but the metaphors throughout the psalm bring to mind visions of peace and peaceful surroundings. It has been, and still is, a source of peace for those who read or recite the words.

There are elements of justice in Psalm 23 as well. Shepherds care for all their sheep equally. The shepherd does not give to some sheep and take away from others. All sheep receive the food and water they need. That is what justice is: making sure all are treated fairly and equally. Verses one through three let the reader know that God treats everyone the same.

Children may not understand the metaphors in the psalm, but they will find peace in the words they hear. Help them understand that God cares for every one of them. God will always be with them, even when they experience times of trouble.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

Sometimes we need to let go of adult ways and be children again. This week the children's spiritual practice will be singing. When you are faced with a time of trouble and need peace, you can sing. "My Shepherd" (sung to "Over the River and Through the Woods") from *Piggyback Psalms* is a great choice. The first verse goes like this: "The Lord is my shepherd and I am his sheep. I have everything I need. He lets me rest by the meadows and streams for the sake of his good name. The Lord is my shepherd and I am his sheep. He always walks with me. Through the darkest valleys I will not fear. My shepherd protects me."

Come Together

Welcome to Wonder

Supplies: Class Pack—pp. 7 & 26, 9 & 24, 16 & 17; Activity Sheets—p. 9; Celebrate Wonder Annual Music CD; Wonder Box; CD player; book of children’s psalms; green cloth; battery-operated candle; yarn; hole punch; scissors

Prepare Ahead: Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 4) with a green cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 4). Display the Bible Verse and Faith Word Posters (Class Pack—pp. 7 & 26, 9 & 24). Place the book of children’s psalms inside the Wonder Box, and set the box on the Wonder Table. Punch out the “Sheep Ears” (Activity Sheets—p. 9) for each child.

- Play “Celebrate Wonder” (Annual Music CD) as the children arrive. Greet each child by name and show the children where to mark their attendance.
- Point to the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 24), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *peace* means.
- Have each child assemble the “Sheep Ears” band (Activity Sheets—p. 9), following the directions on the back of the sheet.

Tip: Save each child’s Sheep Ears to use in a later activity.

Sing and Celebrate

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder Annual Music CD, CD player, green streamers

- Tell the children there is green on the Wonder Table and green streamers because green is the color we use in church during the season of Ordinary Time.
- Play the Unit 1 song, “Make Things Right.” Let the children sing and celebrate.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you, sitting in a circle on the floor.
- Read the Bible story, “Peaceful” (Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook—p. 112).
- Watch the Session 3 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack—pp. 4, 9 & 24, 14 & 19; Wonder Box; Wonder Cube; scissors; tape

Prepare Ahead: Locate a previous Wonder Cube and lay out the Unit 1 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 14 & 19). Cut out the sheep with the words “inner peace” on it (Class Pack—p. 4).

- Let the children take turns rolling the Wonder Cube. Have the children answer the question(s) about the Bible story.
- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 1 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 14 & 19).

SAY: Today’s faith word is *peace*.

- Show the children the “Peace” poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 24).

SAY: In this unit, we are using this definition for *peace*: Living together in harmony without fighting. To be calm and know God’s presence.

- Wonder together:
 - What does a shepherd do to make sure the sheep are taken care of?
- Place the third sheep (Class Pack—p. 4) on the Wonder Story Mat.
- Open the Wonder Box and reveal the children’s book of psalms.

WONDER: Why do we have a book of psalms in the Wonder Box?

Experience Wonder

Shepherd and Sheep (Pretend Play)

Supplies: Sheep Ears made earlier (p. 20), shepherd costume and crook

Prepare Ahead: Put on a shepherd costume.

- Have the children put on their sheep ears and pretend to be sheep.

SAY: We will pretend that I am a shepherd, and you are my sheep.

- Guide the children around the room, pointing to places and giving instructions. After each instruction, let the sheep pretend to do the action. Use actions, such as, “Here is a good place to have a drink” and “That grass looks good enough to eat.”

SAY: Our Bible story today is Psalm 23. It tells us that God cares for us like a shepherd cares for sheep.

WONDER: How does it make you feel when you know God is caring for you?

Shepherd Picture (Art)

Supplies: fingerprint paper, washable fingerpaints, smocks, plastic table covering, containers for fingerpaints, cotton balls, glue, wet wipes

Prepare Ahead: Cover the table with a plastic covering. Pour fingerpaints into smaller containers.

- Give each child a smock to protect clothes and a piece of fingerprint paper.

SAY: Shepherds take care of sheep in many ways. They feed them, make sure they have water, and protect them from other animals that might hurt them. Sometimes they put them in pens to keep them safe. Sometimes they just have to watch them and make sure they don't wander off. We are going to paint pictures of sheep and the shepherd taking care of them.

- Have the children glue cotton balls on the paper to represent sheep. Have the children use fingerpaints to paint a picture of a shepherd caring for the sheep.

ASK: Have you ever seen someone taking care of sheep? Do you have a pet at home you take care of? How do you care for your pet?

Class Peaceful Bottle (Group Activity)

Supplies: 16-ounce clear plastic bottle; distilled water; ½ cup glitter glue; shiny glitter or confetti; waterproof, heavy-duty glue; teaspoons and measuring cups

- Have the children sit or stand around the table you will be working at.

SAY: Sometimes we need something to help us calm down and feel peaceful. Today we are going to make a Peaceful Bottle that we can use in class.

- Start the assembly of the bottle by adding ½ cup of distilled water to the bottle. Add ½ cup of glitter glue to the distilled water in the bottle.
- Let each child add about ¼ teaspoon of glitter to the bottle. Total amount of glitter should be about 2 teaspoons.
- Top off the bottle with distilled water, leaving about a half-inch space at the top of the bottle. Secure the lid tightly with the waterproof, heavy-duty glue. Shake.

SAY: We will put the Peaceful Bottle in the Peaceful Place. When we are feeling scared or worried, we can use the Peaceful Bottle to help us remember Psalm 23. God loves us and always cares for us.

WONDER: What else can we do to remember that God loves us and is with us when we are worried or scared?

Tip: If you have a large class, you might want to make two Peaceful Bottles.

Peaceful Place

Supplies: Leader Guide—p. 24, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Problem-solving Cube from Session 1, suggested book: “Snuggle Time Psalms” by Glenys Nellist, Peaceful Bottle made earlier, items and activities from previous weeks, yarn, knitted shawls or scarves, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy “Peace” Journal Page (Leader Guide—p. 24) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided
- Give each child a copy of the “Peace” Journal Page (Leader Guide—p. 24), and have them draw what they think peace looks like.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional. Pick and choose what you want or add your own ideas.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice—Exploring Peace Through Justice

Supplies: Leader Guide—p. 89, optional: Celebrate Wonder Family Activity Book

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to connect to God. This week we have talked about Psalm 23. God is like a shepherd to God’s people. God cares for them and makes sure they have what they need. One way to help us remember God is with us is by singing part of Psalm 23.

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice:
 - Lead the children in the first line of “My Shepherd” from *Piggyback Psalms* (Leader Guide—page 19).
 - Sing, “The Lord is my shepherd and I am his sheep. I have everything I need.”
 - Start softly and get progressively louder. End with a loud “AMEN!”

PRAY: Repeat after me: “God, thank you for caring for me. Help me to care for others. Amen.”

- Bless the children before they leave. Touch each child as you say this blessing: “May God bless you as a person of peace and fairness. Go now in peace.”
- Send home a photocopy of the Celebration Chart (Leader Guide—p. 89) with each child who does not already have one.

**CELEBRATE
WONDER** "Peace" Journal Page

