

# Activities & Learning Suggestions

## Psalm 23: The Lord is my Shepherd

Introduce this Psalm to pupils, and read it together. Teach them that it is one of the most famous chapters in the Bible.

You could get pupils to take one line each and make a picture to go with their line, to create a picture book of the whole Psalm.

*I have everything I need.*

*He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.*

*He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised.*

*Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, LORD, for you are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.*

*You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me; you welcome me as an honoured guest and fill my cup to the brim.*

*I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; and your house will be my home as long as I live.*

**Ask:** when might Psalm 23 be read?  
It is read at both weddings and funerals.

**Ask:** how could this Psalm help people who are worried? Why is it a calming or reassuring poem?

**Ask:** the class to rewrite it into very simple language for children half their age.



**What does the Good Shepherd think about his sheep?**

Fill in their think bubbles for them.

**Is God like a shepherd?**

Say what you think about this.

**Are we like sheep?**

Say what you think about this.

## Write a story, with a prayer in the middle

Listen to the start of these four stories, and choose one to finish off yourself. Your story will include a prayer, and then write the next chapter to show if the prayer makes any difference.

**1.** **Adele** really wanted to do much better at school, but she always found it hard to understand her lessons. The worst thing for her was when the class had a test. She revised hard, but she always found it so scary to do the test that she forgot all the things she had learned. So she was not looking forward to Monday, when the class had the biggest test of the year. At church on Sunday they all sang a song: 'May you find peace.' It was one of Adele's favourites. After she finished singing, Adele sat quietly in the church and said a prayer about the test...

**3.** **Calum** was really scared when he went to the hospital to visit his Gran on Monday. She was not very well, and he was frightened she would die. They had a bit of a chat, and then she fell asleep. On the way home, Calum cried. He and his dad talked about Gran getting better, and coming home, but he was still really worried. A couple of days later his Gran seemed much better. Only then did he explain to his dad why he had been so upset. Dad said, 'She is getting better, Calum, and she'll come home tomorrow. But I worry about her dying as well. She is an old lady, you know. You could say a prayer for her.'

Calum prayed: 'Dear God, I know Gran won't live forever. Please help me to...'

**2.** **Bryony** often felt bad last year because she was the smallest girl in her class, and sometimes this made her feel scared about the bigger children. Would they pick on her? Her mum would say, 'Don't let it get to you, love, you're as good as all the rest.' Her dad would say, 'Good things come in little parcels, y'know.' But as the start of the new term got closer, Bryony became really anxious. There would be lots of new kids in her class, and she felt sure they would pick on her for being small. The first morning of term, she set off to walk to school feeling bad. It was sunny, but she felt dark on the inside. The only thing she could think of was to pray, so as she walked through the park towards school, she began. 'Dear God, I'm so scared I feel like running away...'

**4.** **Danny** had been hoping to make the school soccer team for most of the time he had been going to school, so when his name was shown at number 4 on the teamsheet this Friday on the school sports notice board, he was so excited he almost felt sick. He was going to play in midfield. Excited was one of his feelings, but the other one was anxious. What if he messed up? He'd never get the chance again.

He decided to say a little prayer for calmness.

'Dear God,' he began, 'you know how you can make people feel peaceful? Well, I really need your help tomorrow...'

### Learning method:

Note that some teachers react to this activity by wondering if it is too sensitive. We think this may be the kind of reaction that stops emotional honesty! The fact that these little prayer stories are distanced and grounded from pupils' own experience, and that the pupils can choose which one they work on, makes this a cool way to handle hot topics.

We recommend that teachers 'hold their nerve' and try it out. The pupils may surprise you with both their theological engagement and their emotional depth. Note, too, that young atheists can write stories in which prayer doesn't 'work' or 'make a difference': this can be pointed out to the class.

