



## Psalm 23

Welcome to this first edition of 'Together, Apart', a new-format Reflectionary post while we are all keeping each other safe. The idea is to give you resources to fill the gaps left by the many mid-week events that are now cancelled. All the sections below explore the same Bible passage (find that in *A Word in Your Ear*) in a range of creative ways. Choose whichever parts work best for you. You can use the resources on-line or print whichever pages of the PDF you need.

If you are missing your home group Bible study, *Food for Thought* takes a fresh look at some familiar passages. You can use this on your own

or encourage some friends to sign up then discuss what you have learned over the phone or Skype.

*Inner Space* is just that – space for you to record your thoughts as a response to the sections above or below.

The sections *Looking Closer* and *I Wonder...* are designed to appeal to children or adults who prefer a creative or imaginative approach. There's no fixed age.

*Take a Break* is for everyone. Put on some music, or listen to the passage being read out while you sit and simply be. You can colour the picture, fill the spaces with zentangles or spend the time breathing.

*Creation Station* is time to get creative. These are art and craft projects that everyone can try, even if you think you are not artistic - the point is the doing, not the result. *Outside In* has some ideas for things to do over the next few days to keep the Bible story fresh in your mind – outside if that is safe, inside if not.

Finally, *High 5* has prayer ideas to start you off spending five minutes (or more) talking and listening with God.

I hope you find these sessions a blessing as we all do our part in keeping vulnerable people safe, and slowing the spread of Covid-19.

Remember, distancing is not about me, it's about protecting the people who will get very ill, and the health workers. So let's all keep 2m apart, and wash our hands for 20 seconds.

Blessings



## A Word in Your Ear

A Bible passage that we can all learn from together, whatever our age.



## Food for Thought

Aimed at adults and teens, some thoughts and questions on the passage.



## Inner Space

A blank space for you to record your thoughts.



## Looking Closer

A creative and interactive look at the Bible passage. Great for older children and anyone who likes a creative approach.



## I Wonder...

An imaginative style of Bible study, perfect for younger children and those who like to immerse themselves in the Bible world.



## Take a Break

A chill-out zone, with meditative colouring for adults and children, and links to audio recordings of the passage so that you can listen while resting your eyes.



## Creation Station

A craft activity for children (or silly adults!)



## Outside In

Suggestions for activities throughout the week that link with the Bible passage.



## High 5

Suggestions for how to spend time with God.



## A Word in Your Ear

Take your time reading this passage from The Bible. Ask God to help you hear.

You can decorate the space around the words if you like.

### Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd.

I am never in need.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside peaceful waters.

He renews my soul.

He guides me along the paths of righteousness  
for the sake of his name.

Even though I walk through the dark valley of death,  
because you are with me, I fear no harm.

Your rod and your staff give me courage.

You prepare a banquet for me while my enemies watch.

You anoint my head with oil.

My cup overflows.

Certainly, goodness and mercy will stay close to me all the  
days of my life,

and I will remain in the Lord's house for days without end.

A psalm by David.

(GW)



## Food for Thought

The twenty-third psalm is one of the most familiar parts of the Bible, and rightly so, it's a beautiful picture of God's care in times of trouble. So it's no surprise that it's many people's go-to Scripture when life is worrying.

But over-familiarity can perhaps dull its edge for us, so how can we read it with fresh eyes?

Let's put ourselves in David's shoes for a while. Or rather, at the start of the psalm, in his bare feet.

We first meet David as a teenager – a handsome lad, we're told, but not old enough to be a serious contender for the next king. A bit like Cinderella, his dad left him out in the field, minding the sheep, while Samuel was bringing round the Bible's equivalent of the glass slipper.

As a shepherd, David probably had no shoes, but after Samuel picked him out as God's chosen, he gained several pairs over the course of his life: First as court musician to Saul, then rising hero of the army and finally, of course, king himself. It's a true rags-to-riches story worthy of any Disney film.

But this was no easy ride for David, and the trouble started early. Samuel anointed David as king in 1 Samuel 16, (secretly, because Saul was still on the throne), and it took another 20 chapters before David saw his anointing fulfilled. In between, David faced many troubles and dangers including homelessness, marriage failure and a murderous boss-cum-father-in-law.

Hopefully, none of us have to put up with an employer who throws spears at us, but we all face troubles of many kinds. David pictured these as the 'dark valley of death'.

### **Q: What does that mean for you today?**

The second part of the psalm changes the picture from a field to a feast. Have you noticed that it changes the pronoun, too? David stops talking *about* God – *he* does this, and *he* does that – and starts talking *to* God. *You* prepare a table. *You* anoint my head.

### **Q: Why do you think this happened?**

Perhaps what changed David's words was the experience of passing through the dark valley of death, and finding that God was with him every step of the way. We can know this for ourselves in Jesus. He became human, just like us. He walked this earth, just like us. He faced life's trials, worries, heartbreak, just like us. He knows. He cares. He is with us through the dark valley.

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7 NIV)

### **Q: What anxieties would you like to cast on Jesus today?**



## Inner Space

What's going round your head? Here is a space for you to put your thoughts on paper. You can write, draw ... whatever you like. What will you put here?



## Looking Closer

Psalm 23 is a very famous song and it was written by a very famous person. What's that you say? It doesn't sound like a song to you? Well, yes, I guess you're right. We've lost the music, so all we have left is the words. But it is a song, honest, and it paints beautiful pictures in our minds as we hear about God being like a shepherd and us being like his sheep.

**How is God like a shepherd and you like a sheep? Write or draw something here.**

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a double-line border. It is intended for the student to write or draw their response to the prompt above.

This song was written by David - the same David as in 'David and Goliath', and 'Once in Royal David's City'. It was quite a life for one person! He was a shepherd when he was a teenager, became a leader of the king's army and finally the king himself! And wherever he was, he wrote songs about God. A LOT of songs. The Bible calls them psalms.

**What do you think David was feeling when he wrote this song?**

**David wrote about sheep. What would you write songs about?**

**Have a go at writing your own psalm. It can be about sheep like this one, or about somethings else. It does not have to rhyme. (And God does not mind wobbly spelling!)**

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a double-line border. It is intended for the student to write or draw their response to the prompts above.



## I Wonder...

Try to picture yourself in the story.

Where are you? What can you see, hear, smell, feel?

**I wonder what your favourite bit of this song is. Write or draw it here.**

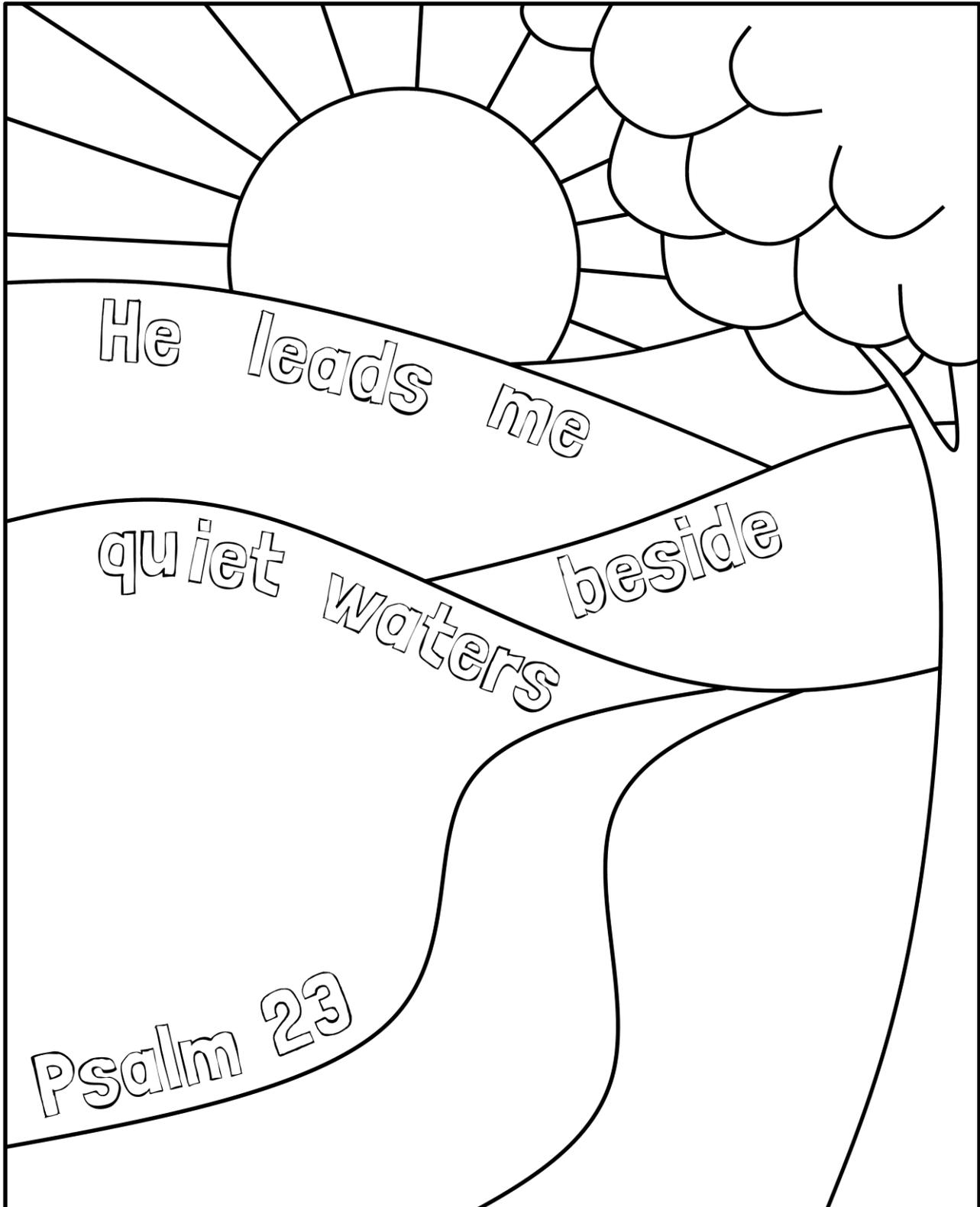
**I wonder what happened next. Tell me the next bit of the story.**

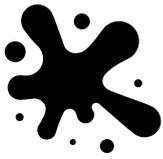


## Take a Break

Put on some music, or listen to the passage being read out while you simply sit and be. You can colour the picture below, or fill it with zentangles, or you can just spend the time breathing.

You can find Psalm 23 on Bible Gateway audio [ESV](#) – [KJV](#) – [NIV](#) – [NIV\(UK\)](#)





## Creation Station

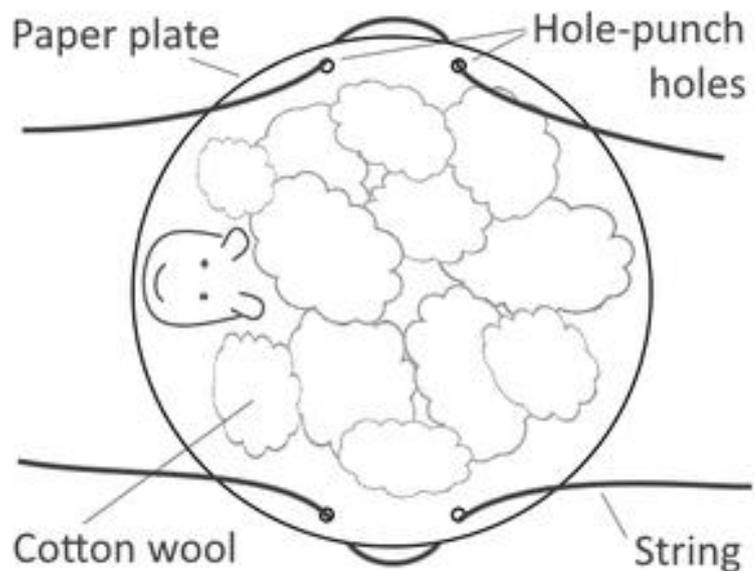
Make some hilarious racing sheep, and see who can get theirs to the green pasture first.

### You will need:

- Paper plates (one per sheep)
- Yarn or string (5 m or more per sheep)
- Hole punch
- Black markers
- Glue sticks
- Cotton wool
- Chair or table legs to anchor the racers
- Green or blue paper or fabric

### What to do:

1. Draw a sheep face near the rim of the plate, facing out (see picture).
2. Cover the rest of the plate with cotton wool.
3. Punch two holes at each side of the plate.
4. Loop your string or yarn around a chair or table leg. This is where your sheep will start racing from.
5. Thread the ends of the yarn through the side holes on your racer as shown. The sheep's bum should be nearest the chair and the head towards the loose ends.
6. Now tie loops at the ends of the yarn, just big enough for a finger or thumb.



### How to race your sheep:

7. Place the green or blue fabric at your feet for the green grass or still waters.
8. Put the loops onto the thumb and little finger of one hand. (For younger children use different hands for each string.)
9. Hold the strings taut and call your sheep to come.
10. Hold your hand with thumb and little finger outstretched and all the others folded, then waggle your hand from side to side to pull the strings alternately. The sheep should waddle along the strings to you in a most adorable manner.



## Outside In

You lead me beside peaceful waters, you renew my soul.

It's good to get outdoors if you can do so safely, but be sure to follow physical distancing rules. (We all need to do our part to #FlattenTheHump.) If you can't get out, you can always bring the outside in.

What can you do this week to find some 'peaceful waters'?

Here are some ideas.

- Close the curtains and lie on the sofa listening to a recording of birdsong for 15 mins.
- Have a picnic next to a stream or pool. If you can't get to a real one, make one at home with blankets on the floor, potted plants and a video from the internet of a babbling brook.
- Sit quietly in the garden and see how many different birds you can spot in half an hour.
- Go to bed extra early then get up at silly o'clock and step outside before the sun is up to listen to the dawn chorus.
- Make your own pool of still water with a tray of water mixed with metallic paint, or that fancy metallic eyeshadow you bought in a moment of madness and used once, five years ago. Crumble it into the water and watch the beautiful swirls as you trail your finger through the mixture. Magical!

What else can you think of?

**My ideas:**

Which will you do this week?



## High 5

Spend five minutes (or more) talking and listening with God.

Here is one way you could pray:

### Pointing Prayers

First, we point upwards and think of God. God does not live on the roof or on a cloud, but it can help to think of God as being higher than us. We point upwards and we praise God for his goodness:

*[Fill in your own prayer here]*

Now we point downwards, and think of people who are feeling low. Perhaps you can think of someone who is ill or worried. We point downwards and we pray:

*[Fill in your own prayer here]*

Now we point outwards, through the walls and windows, as we think about people in our town, our country and the world, particularly those who are working so hard to help others. We point outwards and we pray:

*[Fill in your own prayer here]*

Now we point to the people around us. Choose one person nearby and ask God to bless them. We point to the people around us and we pray:

*[Fill in your own prayer here]*

Finally, we point to ourselves. What would you like to tell God today? What might you hear? We point to ourselves and we pray:

*[Fill in your own prayer here]*

Amen.