

Psalm 23

L-5: He Restores My Soul

A. Outline of lesson:

1. The 'cast' sheep
 - a. 'Cast' = sin
 - b. The dangers, [Ezek 34:11-12](#)
 - c. 2 cats of sin: cognizance and ignorance, [Lev 5:17](#)
2. Example: Parable of the lost sheep, [Luke 15:3-5](#)
3. Restoring cast sheep, [Ps 56:13](#); [1 John 1:9](#)
 - a. Faithful and Just
 - b. Work on cross, [John 10:11](#)
4. Three causes of 'cast' sheep = 3 kinds of sin
 - a. Mental – too fat, [Prov 16:18](#)
 - b. Verbal – too bossy, [James 3:2](#)
 - c. Overt – too much wool, [2 Tim 3:2-3](#)
5. Solution – [1 John 1:9](#)

B. Bible verse: [Psalm 23:3a](#) “He restores my soul”

The 'memory requirement' for a sticker this week is: “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters.”

C. Review:

1. Need for a shepherd? Becoming His sheep
2. Contentment, LG, the desires of your heart.
3. Lie down and rest = no fear, no infestation, no fighting, no hunger.
4. Grass and water together = BD + HS

D. The Lesson: “He restores my soul”

Late in the morning, after an early meal of luscious green grass drenched with dew, a sheep loves to find a nice soft place to lie down and rest. This is when the sheep digests his food. He has eaten his meal with still pure waters and is ready to ‘think about all he has received’. These are the wonderful relaxing times the shepherd wants for his sheep. However, this is also the time when a sheep can easily make a very bad decision. Often, when a sheep is resting he rolls over on his back. When this happens, the sheep cannot get up. If he stays there very long, he will die. Only the shepherd can rescue the sheep from this problem – he is a turned sheep, a cast down sheep. The old English shepherds call a sheep in this condition a ‘cast sheep’.

A cast sheep is utterly helpless. What a pathetic sight he is – lying on his back, hooves in the air, flailing with his legs. He is frantically struggling to get up by himself, but he doesn’t have the strength. No matter how hard he tries, he fails. He becomes frustrated and frightened. Shepherds who care about their sheep watch their flocks carefully, counting them daily to make sure all are able to be up on their feet. If one is missing, his first thought is, “I may have a cast sheep. I must go find him!” We, as human-sheep have the exact same problem – we become ‘cast’. A cast human-sheep is a believer in Jesus Christ who decides to sin. In the spiritual life,

To the teacher:

Present the gospel and information about salvation as often as the Holy Spirit prompts you. Those who have never believed will have the opportunity and those who have will learn a little bit more about their so great salvation.

Begin every lesson with confession – the naming of sins to God. This insures the filling of the Holy Spirit for the teaching of God’s Word. It may be necessary to repeat this process throughout the lesson so learning will be maximized.

These lessons are consecutive and build on the previous lessons. It will be helpful for you to look over the previous lesson, so you can see their continuity.

One of our objectives is to have the children memorize the entire Psalm, which has only 6 verses. To help encourage this we have a “Psalm 23 chart” with each phrase and a place for a ‘lambie sticker’ when each part is memorized. With each consecutive week, the child needs to say everything so far and the newest part learned in the previous lesson. Then, a sticker can be put in the corresponding box.

Doctrinal materials for this series were taken from R.B.Thieme’s study of the 23rd Psalm (Spiritual Dynamics 232-251) and [A Shepherd Looks as Psalm 23](#) by Phillip Keller

Psalm 23

L-5: He Restores My Soul

sin puts you on your back. You are stuck, upside down, and unable to get up. You are still one of the Shepherd's sheep, but you are not able to obey Him. You cannot live His plan for you while you are 'cast'. A cast sheep is out of fellowship with his shepherd, and by himself he is not able to recover.

Some horrible things happen to a sheep while he is cast, especially if he remains that way even for a few hours. First, the gasses in his stomach which are supposed to be digesting all that food begin to foam and bubble, giving him a terrible stomachache. As the gasses expand the circulation of blood to his limbs is cut off. Soon, his legs will 'fall asleep' and ache. After a while, the buzzards will notice him. The poor sheep lies there on his back, watching them fly in lazy circles overhead, just waiting for him to die so they can feast on his carcass. Other predators, like coyotes and cougars watch the buzzards, or catch his scent on the breeze, and are eager to devour a meal of mutton. If the day is hot, the sheep will die in a few hours. If it is a cool time of year, the sheep may lay there in distress and pain for several days and die slowly. It is very important that the shepherd find the sheep as quickly as possible. Even large, healthy, strong sheep become cast, and when they do, only the shepherd can help them.

The comparison to 'the sin resulting in death' is obvious. If you are teaching older children, you may want to bring out the principle of perpetual carnality, reversionism, and the ultimate discipline – physical death by predator. For younger children, simply stating the 'animal' dangers will suffice.

“For thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.’ Ezekiel 34:11-12

Most of the time, when a sheep becomes cast, he doesn't do it on purpose. What happens is the sheep finds a nice soft low dent in the grass, a comfy little hollow in which he can lie down and rest. After a while, he stretches or changes position and turns a little on his side. Suddenly, the center of gravity in his body shifts and he rolls over on his back. His feet can no longer touch the ground. The sheep then begins to panic and starts pawing the air frantically, but this only makes things worse. It is completely impossible for him to get back on his feet He just lies there and struggles; things only get worse. A good shepherd is constantly alert to this problem. He keeps an exact count of his sheep at all times. If he sees buzzards in the air he is gripped with anxiety until he knows all his sheep are safe. If one is missing he will leave everything and go out into the rough wild hillside to find his sheep.

However, sometimes a sheep seems to get himself turned on purpose. There is a story of one ewe who was notorious for doing this. Every spring, when she was heavy with a baby lamb in her tummy, she would find a nice little depression in the thick grass under a shady tree. There she would lie down and roll to her side. Almost every day, this pregnant ewe would become 'cast'. The only reason she lived from year to year was because the shepherd's son, who had taken a special interest in her, went out into the pasturelands everyday after school, and set her up again, so she and her lamb would live. One spring the shepherd boy was rewarded with a pair of lamb twins, which became his own.

Psalm 23

L-5: He Restores My Soul

When human-sheep become 'cast' it is because we have **decided** to sin. In the spiritual life, sin puts us on our backs, unable to walk or even get up. Sometimes we choose to sin on purpose. This means that we know that a certain thing is wrong and disobedient, but we decide to do it anyway – because we want to. Sometimes, we sin without knowing it. This is when we decide to do something that is a sin, but we don't know it. Either way, we are a 'cast' sheep, on our backs, down and unable to get up. You, as a human-sheep are guilty, whether you did a sin on purpose or whether you did a sin without knowing it.

"Now if a person sins and does any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment." Leviticus 5:17

Jesus tells a wonderful story of a shepherd who has a hundred sheep. After counting them, he discovers that only ninety-nine are present. So what does this good shepherd do? He immediately leaves the ninety-nine and goes searching for the one lost sheep. Perhaps the sheep has fallen off a cliff, perhaps he is cast, or worst-case perhaps he has been attacked by a mountain lion. So, he searches everywhere, even if it takes several days. And, when he finds his lost sheep, he restores him – he puts him back on his feet if he is cast, or carries him home on his shoulders if he is injured.

"So He [Jesus] told them this parable, saying, 'What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.'" Luke 15:3-5

It is very interesting as to exactly how a shepherd restores a cast sheep. As soon as he discovers that the sheep is missing, he goes looking for him. He may see him off in the distance, or perhaps he sees the buzzards circling overhead. He may spend hours searching before he finds him. When the shepherd lays eyes on his sheep, he runs, hurrying as fast as possible, for every minute is critical. As soon as he reaches his sheep he picks up his head in his hands, letting the sheep know that he is there. The sheep looks up into the face of his shepherd, his eyes pleading for help. The shepherd tenderly rolls the sheep to his side. This relieves the gasses in his stomach. If the sheep has been down for a long time, he will have to lift him to his feet. Then straddling him with his own legs to keep him up, the shepherd begins rubbing his legs to get the blood circulating again. This takes quite a while. Then, when the sheep begins to walk, he often stumbles and collapses in a heap once more, only to need to be restored again. All the time, the shepherd is gently talking to his sheep. "When are you going to learn to obey? I am so glad I found you!" And so the conversation goes – words of tenderness mixed with rebuke, correction with compassion, forgiveness and instruction. After a while the sheep is fairly steady again and begins to walk. Soon, it runs off to join the rest of the flock, set free from its worries and fears. The sheep is restored and will live happily for a while longer, until the next time he gets himself 'cast'.

"For You have delivered my soul from death, indeed my feet from stumbling, so that I may walk before God in the light of the living." Psalm 56:13

Psalm 23

L-5: He Restores My Soul

*Our Good Shepherd does the same thing for us, His human-sheep. He keeps close watch over us at all times. When we sin and become ‘cast’ He runs to our rescue. This is a picture of what happens when we confess our sins. When the sheep looks into the face of his shepherd, there is no faking it – he knows he is in a helpless situation and so does the shepherd. Looking into the face of the shepherd is a picture of admitting your sins. Admitting your sins and confessing your sins is the same things. And, what does our Good Shepherd do for us at that moment? He is **faithful** to His sheep. This means that He never leaves a sheep who will admit his sin on his back. Faithful means that every single time, the Shepherd will forgive and restore you to your feet. Many people think that when a human-sheep sins God is angry with him. Some people think that sooner or later God will get tired of lifting a sheep who keeps getting turned in the same rut, day after day. But, this is not so. The Bible says that God will **FAITHFULLY** restore us – every time! He is ever patient. How does God do this? Does He pretend that the sins never happened? Is that how He forgives us? Absolutely not! God cannot pretend that sin never happened. If God did such a thing as that, He would not be fair, and our enemy, Satan, would remind Him of this. However, not only is God Faithful, but He is also **JUST**. This means that He is perfectly right and fair about all He does. So, what did He do to get rid of the sins? God the Father sent His very own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to become the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.*

“I [Jesus Christ] am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” John 10:11

While Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross, God the Father put all the sins of the world on Him. Then, God judged them. Jesus is both the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, but also the Lamb of God who is sacrificed as a substitute for the sheep. The sacrifice is how the punishment for our sins is paid. The actual payment is spiritual death. While Jesus was alive and hanging on the cross, He died spiritually instead of us – to pay the price for our sins. When all the sins were paid and the spiritual death was over He yelled out “It is finished” which means that the payment for sin is forever finished, never to be needed again – for all eternity. Then, after all that was completed, the human body of our Good Shepherd died. So, Jesus actually died two times on the cross. The first was spiritual death, when He paid for all our sins and bought our salvation. And, the second time was when His whole job of being our Good Shepherd was completed and His human body died. But, this is not the end of His story, for after three days, He was raised from the dead, never to die again. This is called the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*When, the now Living Good Shepherd, comes to rescue a cast sheep, He can forgive the human-sheep of his sins – not by pretending that they never happened, but because they really did happen – and were paid in full on the cross. This is how God forgives and continues to be **JUST** at the same time. The whole story of restoring a cast sheep is described in one very important verse in the Bible...*

“If we confess [admit, name] our sins, He is Faithful and Just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness [wrongdoing].” 1 John 1:9

Psalm 23

L-5: He Restores My Soul

Our Shepherd comes to us every time we are cast from our bad decisions to sin. He never gets tired of coming to our rescue. He is not disgusted with us or fed up or mad; but, He continually loves us and deeply desires to restore us again. The whole picture is intensely personal and tender. Yet, at the same time it is a very dangerous moment. For if the sheep refuses the Shepherd's help, if he won't admit his problem or continues to try to restore himself (which is impossible for either animal sheep or human-sheep), the Shepherd has to stand there and wait – wait for the sheep to repent (repent means to change your mind). You see, in the case of human-sheep, our Good Shepherd will not restore a sheep who won't 'look into His face'. A human-sheep must admit to God that he has sinned. When he does the Shepherd immediately, "restores his soul" faithfully, every time. "He forgives us our sins and purifies us from all wrongdoing."

There are actually three ways a sheep becomes cast, and there are three basic kinds of sins. The three kinds of sins are mental (sins you think, like bad attitudes), verbal (sins you say, like unkind words or having a sassy tongue), and there are overt sins (sins you do, like a direct disobedience to your parents).

First, a sheep can become cast because he is too fat. It is easy to see how a fat sheep becomes cast – he is too big and can't get up. Human-sheep become fat in their souls. This compares to mental sins. Mental sins are sins that you think. Almost always a mental sin is when a human-sheep thinks he is bigger and better than he really is – he is fat in his thinking. The Bible calls this being arrogant (pride). Once a sheep becomes fat with arrogance, he adds lots of other mental sins to his thinking – planning how to get even with others, thinking everything is unfair to him, arguing in his mind with his parents, pouting when he doesn't get his way, being selfish, the list goes on and on. This human-sheep needs to go on a spiritual diet – and lose that arrogance. A fat sheep sins a lot!

"Pride [arrogance, mental sins] goes before destruction [a fall], and a haughty spirit before stumbling [becoming cast]." Proverbs 16:18

Sometimes, a sheep's words cause him to become cast. Now, a sheep can't actually talk, but he sure can tell another sheep off. This is especially true of the older ewes. A bossy old ewe will think to herself, "I want my favorite spot and nobody better get in my way" So, being determined to get what she wants, she clearly communicates her wishes to the other sheep. Usually her special spot is a soft rounded hollow where she feels comfortable. An old ewe will 'talk' by butting the other sheep out of the way. Then old ewe becomes cast in the very spot she wanted; she sinned to get what she wanted and she became cast when she got it. Human-sheep do their verbal sins with their mouths and tongues – they say mean things to the other kids. Sometimes, human-sheep whine and cry and throw a fit when they don't get their own way. Human-sheep argue, even with the Shepherd. We say things to God like, "God, I am cast and can't get up; why did You let this horrible thing happen to me?" They blame others for their own sins – they are flailing their legs in the air, making the problem worse instead of better, saying it's someone else's fault they are cast. The Good Shepherd will come, and take the noisy, complaining, cast sheep out of the nicer pasture and put her into another one, one with less 'nice spots' so she will learn to stop sinning with her mouth and be less likely to become cast.

Psalm 23

L-5: He Restores My Soul

“For we all stumble [sin, a cast sheep] in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a mature [perfect] man, able to bridle the whole body as well [not become cast].” James 3:2

When a sheep’s wool is too thick and heavy, he can easily become cast. When wool becomes very long and weighs a lot, it causes a sheep to roll over easily. This wool is filled with mud and stickers and manure. It is matted and full of burrs. It is hot and very heavy. This sheep needs to be sheared and cleaned. To shear the sheep of his wool the shepherd takes a very sharp knife and begins to cut the wool off. If the sheep relaxes and stands very still, it won’t hurt at all. But, generally, the sheep won’t obey. So, he gets a few cuts and scrapes along the way. It is hard work for the shepherd, but when it is all done, the sheep is clean and the heavy wool is all gone. In human-sheep the wool compares to overt sins – the sins he does. These are the sins that show the most. Some examples of ‘heavy wool’ sins are hitting and fighting, or breaking and ruining property, or stealing things that don’t belong to you. Kicking would be another ‘heavy wool’ sin. One of the very worst sins a human-sheep can do is disobey his parents. You probably know of many yourself, for human-sheep by nature (old sin nature) grow sinful wool, just as we also have verbal and thinking sins.

“For men [human-sheep] will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,” 2 Timothy 3:2-3

Learning why you become a cast sheep is important, for it will help you avoid making those same bad decisions in the future, and you will spend less time on your back, in danger of predator animals or dying in the hot sun. But, the solution to being cast is the same no matter what kind of sin you did. The solution is to look up into the face of your Good Shepherd and tell Him your sins. He is always faithful and just to forgive you of your sins and to put you back on your feet once again (purify you from all wrongdoing). Then, your soul – together with your spiritual life – is restored! You are a happy sheep, walking contentedly back to the pasture beside your Good Shepherd.

“He restores my soul.” Psalm 23:3a

“If we confess [admit, name] our sins, He is Faithful and Just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness [wrongdoing].” 1 John 1:9

Craft: Sponge paint the outside of the “23rd Psalm Play-box”

Coloring Picture: Shepherd restores a ‘turned’ sheep

Take-home pamphlet:

This little pamphlet is a short version of this lesson, a picture to color, a puzzle to do, and a question and answer section at the end. It is designed to be given to the children at the end of class. However, if you need to fill time, you can give it out early. A child can read the story and all the children can work together for the answers to the questions on the back.