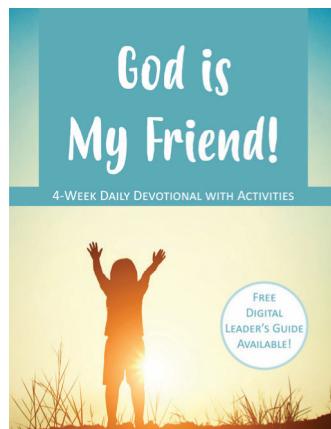


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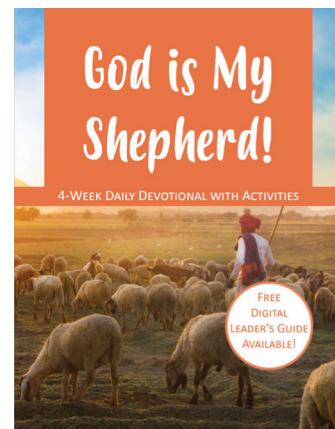
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LEADER'S GUIDE

GOD IS MY FRIEND!



GOD IS MY SHEPHERD!



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Dear Parents, Teachers, and Mentors,

You cannot begin to imagine the impact you can have in a child's life as you come alongside them on their journey with God! As you share your life with a child and see them grow to know and love God more, I believe **you** will be blessed and encouraged as well.

If this is your first time working through a booklet with a child, I highly recommend that you complete each day's devotional during the week. This will help you understand the content and also allow God to speak these truths into your heart as well. This will be very beneficial when you meet each week with the child.

Each Leader's Guide will prepare you for a weekly 10-15-minute conversation with the child about the content. There will be a summary of the content as well as suggested questions to guide the dialogue each week.

May these guides help you as you obey God's voice to come alongside the children he has placed around you. May opportunities abound for you to live out I Thessalonians 2:8, "...we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us."

Blessings,

Carol

P.S. - If there's any way I can help or encourage you along the way, please don't hesitate to contact me! And if you have stories to share, I'd love to hear them at info@findingrhythmsenjoyinglife.com

Author Information



Carol Johnson holds undergraduate and master's degrees in education fields and served in full-time ministry to children for 17 years. During her ministry years, Carol wrote children's lessons, developed children's curriculum, designed and implemented training for children's workers and taught children in a variety of settings. Carol's greatest desire is to come alongside others, including children, and practically help them establish personal rhythms that lead to intimacy with Jesus. You can find her online at www.FindingRhythmsEnjoyingLife.com

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10-15 Minute Weekly Dialogue

Find a regular time that you can get together with the child each week. During this time, you are not just checking the pages for completion or for right answers. While it is important to make sure the content is completed, the emphasis during this time is for you to:

- Share your story.
- Listen to theirs.
- Love them.
- Pray over them.
- Encourage them.

In each weekly guide, you will see four sections. Here is a brief explanation of each one.

Understand the Content

Think of this as the main ideas for the week condensed down into a single paragraph. This can be helpful for you to read through as you prepare for the weekly meeting. You can also glance at it during your meeting to help you emphasize the main ideas as you dialogue together. Please don't substitute this short paragraph for working through the daily content on your own. Your heart will not be impacted by the truths in the same way!

Ask a Question

During this time, you want the child to share from the heart. Remember, you are trying to hear and understand what God is doing in the heart. Most of the questions do not have a right or wrong answer. They are just designed to get the child talking and sharing.

It may take some time for the child to trust you and be open to you. If the child doesn't give an answer right away, try asking the question another way. Or, skip to the next section, share your personal story and then come back here.

You won't have time for all of the questions from this section and the next each week. That's ok! Choose the ones that seem the most fitting. Trust God to accomplish what he wants to during the time together.

Tell a Personal Story

Prepare answers for both questions each week. You will probably only have time for one. You can decide which one to share based on the way the conversation is going. Try to keep your sharing short! (1-2 minutes is ideal.) Practice and time yourself! Try to emphasize ONE idea as you share. This way the child is more likely to remember it.

Pray Over the Child

Close your time in prayer. Pray the truths of the week for the child. Include in your prayer the various things the child talked about and needs you are aware of. Pray for the child's eyes to be opened to the truth of the character of God. Pray for the child to actively see God involved in his life during the week. Use a Scripture from the week to pray personally for the child.

Initial Conversation

Plan to have a conversation with the child when you hand out the booklet.

- If you do not already have a relationship with the child, introduce yourself and learn their name and some interesting things about them. Share something about yourself.
- Let them know that you love learning about God and are excited to help them learn more about his friendship with them.
- Let them know you can answer any questions they have or help with anything they don't understand as they do the activities.
- Explain that you are going to meet with them every week to talk through what they have learned. Make this sound exciting – not like a school assignment!
- Show them the activity pages in the booklet. You could write down the day of the week that each activity page should be completed on the week's overview page.

God is My Shepherd! Overview

Many people today are unfamiliar with the daily life of a shepherd. Yet this picture is used throughout the Bible to describe God's relationship with us. This booklet explores some common truths and characteristics of both shepherd and sheep. The desire is to help children relate to God as their good shepherd and to see themselves as his sheep.

Children today need someone who cares for them, guides them, protects them and whose heart is always for them. This is who they find in their good shepherd! They can learn to know their shepherd's voice and trust his tender care for them. Understanding the way God relates to them as a shepherd can bring rest into children's troubled souls and establish a pattern of obedience in their hearts.

This booklet is ideal for children who are hurting and in need of a secure love as it illustrates the constant and attentive care of a loving shepherd towards his sheep. The content here will help children be assured of God's presence and his readiness to help and care for those that belong to him. It will also help children learn to fill their mind with truth about God and trust him with their heart. All children relate well to word pictures which also makes this booklet valuable to any child who has never been taught what it concretely means for God to be their good shepherd.

The wording in this booklet is purposefully accessible to both churched and unchurched children. For example, instead of using the word "pray" it uses "talk to God." If you are working through the booklet with a churched child, feel free to use whatever terminology is familiar to them. If you are working with unchurched children, then use the terminology in this booklet in order to keep things simple.

Week 1 Guide

Understand the Content

The first week is designed to establish an understanding of the role of a shepherd and his **relationship** with his sheep. The goal of this week is to help the child **see God as his shepherd and see himself as the sheep**. God enjoys being the child's shepherd and can care for him better than anyone else! There are three main ideas that are introduced this week

1. **God is my shepherd!**
2. **I belong to God!**
3. **God cares for me!**

Children in today's world need permanent relationships, steadfast love and security. Understanding God as a shepherd can meet these deep needs in a child's life.

Day 1 is unique in that it is designed to draw out whether a child has believed in Jesus or not. While only God can truly see a child's heart, it is important to engage with the child and talk about this. The child needs to understand that this decision is foundational to being God's friend.

Ask a Question

1. Look together at Day 1 to see what answer is marked for "Do you believe in Jesus? Are you trusting in Him?"

If yes is circled, say, "Can you tell me about when you believed in Jesus?" After sharing, encourage them with Acts 16:31 - because they believe in Jesus they can know they are saved and now belong to God!

If no is circled, say, "Let's read through Day 1 together and see what it means to believe and what God promises you." At the end ask, "Would you like to believe in Jesus?" If the child answers yes, you can counsel for salvation or find someone to help you do this.

NOTE: If a child does not profess belief in Jesus, then the relationship of God as a shepherd is not promised to him. Continue to work through the booklet, but be sure to make the promises and truths conditional for those who believe in Jesus. Pray for God to use the truths to open the child's eyes for his need of a Savior and a Friend. If you are not comfortable giving further counsel or instruction regarding salvation, then find someone who can help you.

2. Remind the child of the truths taught on Day 4. God wants to give you a heart that
 - a. loves God more than anything else
 - b. wants the same things God wants
 - c. always follows and obeys him

Ask, "Why do you think only God can give you a heart like this?"

 3. Ask to see their Psalm 23 tear-out page. (If they don't have it, ask where they displayed it.) Encourage them to read it and keep it safe. They'll use it again for other activities!

Tell a Personal Story

1. Tell your personal story of believing in Jesus and share one benefit you have experienced.
2. Share one way that Psalm 23 has encouraged you at some point in your life.

Pray Over the Child

Ask God to help the child know and experience the love and care of their good shepherd. Ask God to help them believe that they belong to God and that he will care for them! Ask God to help the child see that his heart is what is most important and then let God change it.

Suggested Scripture to Pray:

John 10:7,9 says, "So Jesus again said to them, '...I am the door of the sheep ... If anyone enters by me, he will be saved.'"

Psalm 100:3 says, "Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

Luke 6:45 says, "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil."