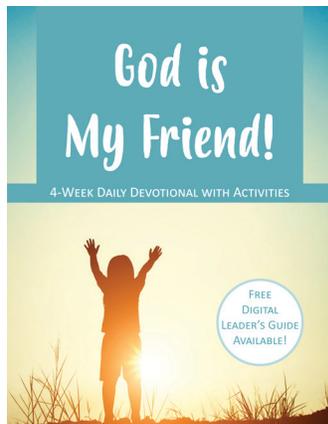


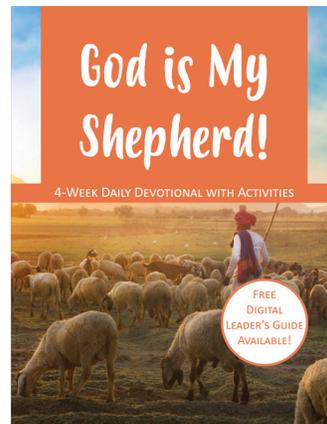
Bonus!

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

Looking for other devotionals in the series?

Digital files available at www.FindingRhythmsEnjoyingLife.com

Printed copies available at www.amazon.com

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.

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God is My Friend!



LEADER'S GUIDE

God is My Friend! Overview

While God relates to us in many ways (Father, King, Creator, Lord, etc.), the focus of this booklet is on God as Friend. The desire is to help children understand the personal nature of their relationship with God. We read of the personal and intimate relationships that God had with people in the Bible. People who were called his friends.

Children in today's world need to have a relationship with someone who truly sees them, loves them, delights in them, enjoys talking to them and listens to them. The foundation of a personal friendship with the God of the universe will then enable children to relate to God in other ways as well. This foundation will also lead to awe and worship of this amazing God who calls them friend!

This booklet is a great one for children who are new Christians as it lays the foundation of a friendship with God. The content here will help them be assured of God's permanent relationship with them and love for them. It will also help them to begin talking and listening to God. Because of its focus on relationship, the content will also be valuable to children who have been Christians but are ready to grow in their intimacy with Jesus.

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 to keep things simple.

Week 1 Guide

Understand the Content

This first week is designed to answer questions that might naturally arise in a child's mind about his friendship with God. The goal of this week is to help the child see that **God is personal**. God thinks about the child all the time! The main idea for the child to remember is that **nothing can change her friendship with God** when she believes. God will be an **Always and Forever friend!** This is an important truth for children today. Especially those growing up in environments that change constantly.

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 John 3:36 - because they believe in Jesus they can have the gift of God's friendship (eternal life)!

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 benefits of God's friendship are 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 these truths taught on Day 4
 - a. Jesus is your shepherd and has a special friendship with you.
 - b. You are safe in God's hands and no one can take you away from him.
 - c. God is your friend Always and Forever!
3. Ask, "How does it feel to think about God being your special friend in these ways?"
4. Ask what they made for the Day 7 activity. Encourage them in whatever they did.

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 remembering God is your friend helps you in your life.

Pray Over the Child

Ask God to help the child know and experience his love. Ask God to bring the pictures of being the Shepherd and being held in his hands to mind when needed. Ask God to remind the child of his promise to love Always and Forever, no matter what!

.....

Suggested Scripture to Pray:

John 3:36a, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life..."

John 10: 27-28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

.....

Week 2 Guide

Understand the Content

This second week describes God’s love for the child. The basic underlying truth that drives everything is that **God is love**. He does not love us because of us but because of himself. He cannot change. God’s love is **not dependent on our actions**, right or wrong. This is a freeing truth! **God’s love lasts forever** as does his friendship. Children today need God’s always and forever love. Many are growing up without a model of true, steadfast love.

Ask a Question

1. Ask for two words that would describe God’s love. (Refer to Day 1 if needed.)
2. Review the truths from Zephaniah 3:17 on Days 4 & 5
 - a. God is with you. You are not alone!
 - b. God can help you. He is on your side!
 - c. God enjoys you!
 - d. God’s love will calm you!
 - e. God sings with shouts of joy because of you!

Ask, “Which one of these sentences did you learn with motions this week? How did it help you?”

Tell a Personal Story

1. Share which of the truths from Zephaniah 3:17 encourages you the most. Tell a story of when you needed that truth in your life.
2. Talk about the Day 7 activity and find out how they completed it. Have a flower of some sort to give to the child. (A real one, picture of one, hand drawn one, etc.) Encourage them to give the flower to someone they know. They can say, “These petals remind me that God loves me and I want you to know that he loves you too!”

Pray Over the Child

Focus your prayer on the deep truths of God’s love for the child. Pray Zephaniah 3:17 over the child. Use the words of scripture and the sentences that explain them. Pray them one at a time asking God to help the child believe them to be true and see them happening in life.

Zephaniah 3:17

“The Lord your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.”



This verse means:

God is with you. You are not alone!
God can help you. He is on your side!
God enjoys you!
God’s love will calm you!
God sings with shouts of joy
because of you!

Week 3 Guide

Understand the Content

This third week is designed to help the child understand what they can talk to God about and the types of words they can use. God is a friend who is with them in every part of the day. They can **talk to God** about anything in their life! God wants them to **ask him for what they need** and **cast their worries onto him**. There are no wrong words to use when talking to God. **He loves to hear simple words from the heart!** Children can be naturally timid in new situations or when they don't understand what is expected. They need to know that God wants them to talk to him and that simple words are what he loves.

Ask a Question

1. Ask what need or worry the child talked to God about this week. (Refer to Days 2 & 3 if needed.) Follow up by asking how it helped them to talk to God about the situation.
2. Talk about the Day 7 activity. Ask, "Did the 5 minutes seem long or short?" Talk about how the more we talk to God, the more we want to talk about with him.

Tell a Personal Story

1. Tell about a need or worry that you prayed about this week. Share how you felt before and after you prayed. Help children see that talking to God gives us calmness on the inside and helps us trust him.
2. Choose one of the aspects of the Lord's Prayer that was meaningful to you this week. Share how it helped you to pray about that aspect.

Pray Over the Child

Take time to pray for whatever the child shared during your conversation – a need, worry, etc. Pray for God to bring calmness to the child's heart. Pray for the child to see God at work in the situation and to see God's love and power at work. Be sure to use simple words while you pray!

You might also want to see if the child wants to talk to God during prayer time today. They can talk about something discussed or just talk to God about what is on their heart. Encourage them in their decision even if they decide not to pray out loud.

Suggested Scripture to Pray:

Matthew 7:11, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

I Peter 5:7, "casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."

Week 4 Guide

Understand the Content

The fourth week is focused on teaching the child to listen for and discern God's voice. God is a good shepherd. The child can **learn to hear and follow his voice. He will not speak in an audible voice but will put thoughts in the child's mind and heart** through the work of the Holy Spirit. Oftentimes, it takes **waiting patiently** in order to hear God's voice above the noise and chaos of life. God's voice is always truthful and kind and will always agree with the Bible. **Reading the Bible and listening to what he says through its words is the best way to get to know God's voice!**

Ask a Question

1. Ask the child to share one thing God said to them from Matthew 22:37-39. (Refer to days 5 & 6 if needed.)
2. During Day 4 the child was asked to write down the name of another Christian who could help him know he has heard God's voice. Ask the child who he wrote down. Ask the child how he knows the person. Be supportive of the choice but also guide the child towards a more suitable person if needed. You can remind the child of the qualities that this person should have:
 - a. A love for God.
 - b. A knowledge of the Bible.
 - c. Time to talk and listen to the child.
 - d. The ability to point out what the Bible says and talk about whether what the child heard agrees or disagrees with that.

Tell a Personal Story

1. Share one thing God said to you from Matthew 22:37-39.
2. Share someone you go to that helps you hear and understand God's voice.

Pray Over the Child

Ask God to help the child hear his voice. Ask God to give the child a love for hearing his voice and discernment to identify his voice. Ask God to bring verses to the child's mind that will help him. Ask God to speak clearly to the child in the coming week so that the child can learn what his voice sounds like.

Suggested Scripture to Pray:

John 10:2-4, "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ...and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."

Proverbs 2:6 says, "The Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding."

God is My Shepherd!



LEADER'S GUIDE

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 church 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 church 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."

.....

Week 2 Guide

Understand the Content

This second week helps the child understand the process and result of trusting in God. **Trust in God happens as we fill our minds and hearts with truths about God.** God is omnipresent. God always gives what we need (not always what we want). God enjoys being with us. These are truths that children need to **think with their mind and trust with their heart.** As they practice this, **they will be able to rest in God's care for them,** just as Jesus rested in the middle of a storm.

Ask a Question

1. Review Isaiah 40:11, "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."

Ask, "How do you imagine God caring for you in loving ways?"

2. Discuss the ways the child's soul is hungry. (from Day 4)

Ideas given:	happiness	love	friendship
	to be the best	attention	

Review Psalm 107:9 and God's promise to meet these needs. "For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things."

Tell a Personal Story

1. Share ways that you find your soul to be hungry too. Talk about how you find rest when you trust God to meet that need instead of trying to meet it yourself.
2. Talk about the Day 7 activity. Share the principle that change in life happens based on what we fill our minds and our hearts with. (Change does not happen just by trying harder.)

Truths about God In = Peace and Rest Out

Encourage children to fill their minds and hearts with truths about God whenever they can.

Pray Over the Child

Focus your prayer on the truths about God taught this week:

God is always with me.

God enjoys being with me.

God gives me what's best.

God gives me what my soul really needs.

Ask God to fill the child's heart and mind with these truths about him. Ask God to satisfy the child's soul with good things.

.....
: **Suggested Scripture to Pray:** :

: Pray Isaiah 26:3 over the child, ""You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is :
: stayed on you." :

Week 3 Guide

Understand the Content

This third week is designed to help the child understand how good it is to trust God, listen to him and follow him. **God, like a good shepherd, rescues, guides, and protects his sheep. His steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness can always be counted on.** As children understand the character and compassion of God, **they begin to trust him. They learn to recognize His voice.** And **their hearts desire to follow him.** Some children may have already experienced broken trust in their earthly relationships. In God, they can find a shepherd who is always good and will always care for them!

Ask a Question

1. Ask how the child needs God to guide them in their life right now. (Reference their pictures on Day 2 if needed.) Follow up by asking how it helps them to know God will always be a good guide to them.
2. Talk about the game they chose to play for the Day 7 activity. Ask, “Which did you like best, being the sheep or the shepherd? Why?” Talk about any new things that stood out to them about God being their shepherd as they played the game.

Tell a Personal Story

1. Tell about a time you needed God to be your guide. Help children understand how you practically trusted God, listened to him and followed him.
2. Share a story about Jesus listening to God and following God that encourages you to do the same.

Pray Over the Child

Take time to pray for whatever way the child needs guidance from God right now. Thank God that He promises to guide. Pray for God to help the child trust him with their heart. Pray for God’s mercy, steadfast love and faithfulness to be evident to the child. Pray that they can listen and follow him.

.....
: **Suggested Scripture to Pray:** :
:

: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with :
: my eye upon you.” (Psalm 32:8) :
:

: “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they :
: are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23) :
:.....

You might also want to see if the child wants to talk to God during prayer time today. They can thank him for the way He holds their hand and walks with them, or for the way He guides them.

.....
: **Suggested Scripture to Pray:**

: “I am the Lord ... I will take you by the hand and keep you.” (Isaiah 42:6)

: “In you I trust. Make me know the way I should go.” (Psalm 143:8)
:

Week 4 Guide

Understand the Content

The fourth week is focused on helping the child thank and praise God, his good shepherd. God offers **abundant life**. He **never changes**. He **always speaks truth**. He is **always on the child's side**, no matter what. These truths can bring excitement to a child, causing him or her to exclaim, "**The Lord is my shepherd! I shall not want!**" This first verse of Psalm 23 can bring reassurance to a child during hard times and give words to the exuberance in his heart during good times. **How good it is to have a good shepherd who will never leave!**

Ask a Question

1. Look at the child's answers to the final activity for Day 1. Talk about what the child might be doing at each of those times in life. Imagine with them how they might be experiencing God's love, care, and abundant life in that season of life. Talk about the security it brings to know God will always be their good shepherd! You can reference the truth of

Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

2. Talk about the activity from Day 7 - practicing being a shepherd. Have the child share with you how they did the activity and what happened with their "sheep." Use some of the questions from that day to find out what they enjoyed most and what it taught them about God.

Tell a Personal Story

1. Share one time in life God used Psalm 23:1 to encourage or help you. See if the child can say the verse from memory. Share with them the benefit of learning this verse.
2. Share about a time in your life that you knew God was on your side and it helped you trust and depend on him.

Deuteronomy 31:8, "It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

Pray Over the Child

Ask God to help the child believe that he will always be their good shepherd. Pray that God would help the child know that God is sufficient for everything they will ever need. Pray that they would experience and identify his graciousness, mercy, and love in their lives both today and throughout their whole lives.

Suggested Scripture to Pray:

Psalm 103:8, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

Psalm 90:14, "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Psalm 79:13, "But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever."