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Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

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RESOURCES FROM ILLUSTRATED MINISTRY

As the world struggles to adjust to life amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, necessary disruptions are affecting all aspects of our lives. Schools are closing, places of worship are canceling services, sports seasons are being suspended, and we are all adjusting to this new way of life. Illustrated Ministry hopes that these faith formation resources are meaningful and helpful to you.

We will be sending a weekly email during the COVID-19 pandemic which will include faith formation resources for all ages. We will be following the Revised Common Lectionary, and most of the resources will line up with the appropriate texts for each of the Sundays. If this resource was forwarded to you, and you would like to sign up to receive the weekly email in your inbox, you can sign up at: illustratedministry.com/flattenthecurve

The weekly resource consists of a variety of resources, including children's worship bulletins, devotionals, and coloring pages. There are a variety of different ways you could use these resources at home:

- As a family, put together an order of worship. You can use this as an interactive piece to the scripture reading and message/sermon.
- Use this as an individual or family devotional to reflect on throughout the week.
- Get a group of friends together, color the coloring page and reflect on the scripture passage.
- While you watch your church's virtual worship service, your children can color the coloring page or do the activities in the children's worship bulletin.

We hope you enjoy this resource, and if you have any questions about it, you can always reach us at info@illustratedministry.com. If you want to connect with others and see how they are using our resources, you can also follow us on social media:

Facebook: fb.com/illustratedmin
Instagram: instagram.com/illustratedmin
Twitter: twitter.com/illustratedmin
Pinterest: pinterest.com/illustratedmin

Our Facebook Group is a growing community. If you're looking for ideas and suggestions for using this resource, you can request to join here:
fb.com/groups/illustratedmin

Peace,

The Illustrated Ministry Team

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT - MARCH 22

Describe a time when you've been out in nature, what was peaceful about it, where you were and how it felt to be there.

Note: If you are with a group, have each person take a turn sharing.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 23 (a Psalm of David)

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.*

Reflection

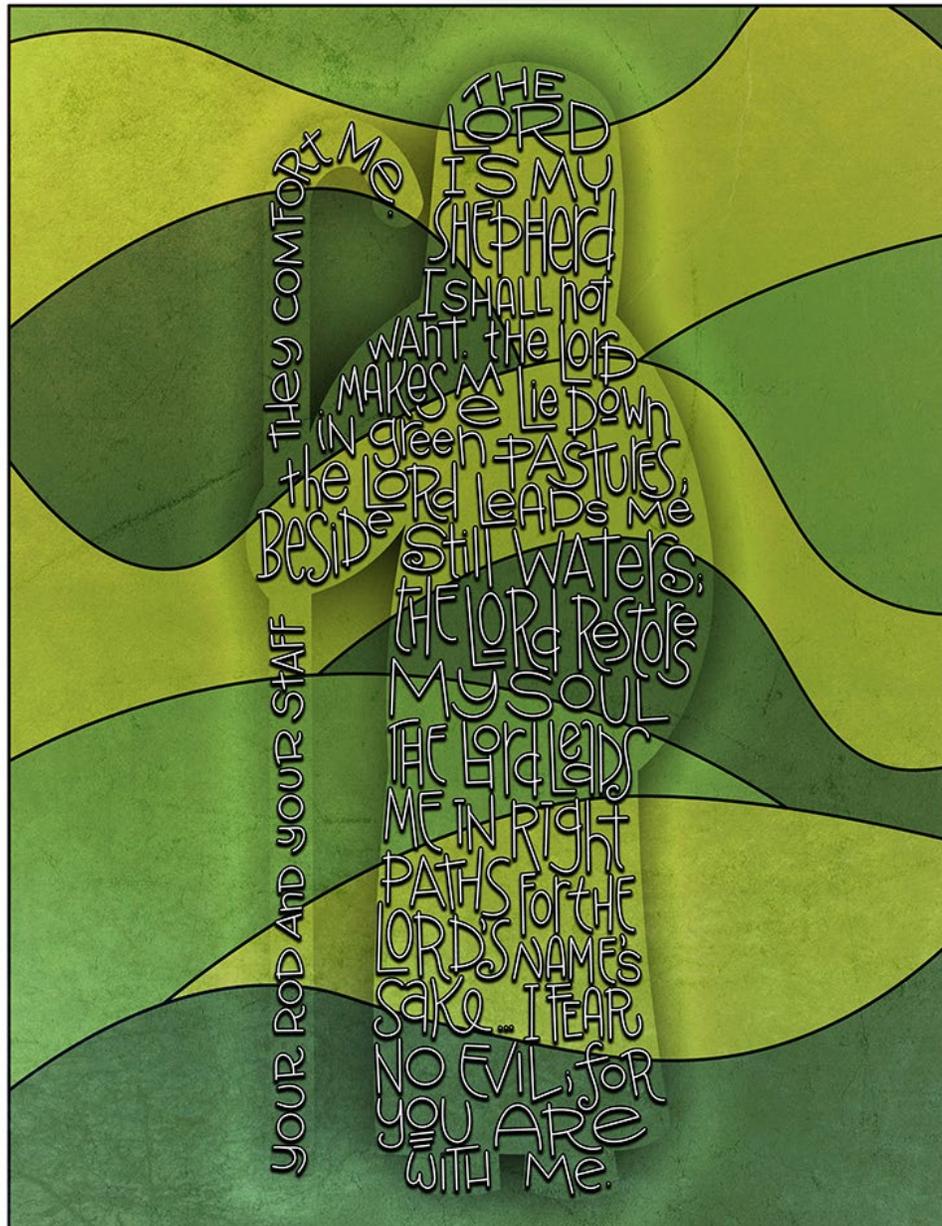
Today's scripture is from Psalms, an entire book of songs and prayers written to God. David, the author of this psalm, wrote many songs and prayers as a way to express his feelings to God about the things that happened to him - good things, difficult things, things he was thankful for, struggles he faced. He also wrote about how aware he was that God was always with him in every situation. He talked about how God has always been with God's people and will continue to be with us.

In Psalm 23, David describes God as a shepherd. Shepherds are like guides who give love, care always, and never leave their flock. He also describes being with God is like the feeling of lying down in a quiet green meadow or like walking by a quiet creek. Spending time with God, as David did, can help us to feel calm and safe when times are troubling, frustrating, and even a bit scary.

When we begin to worry, we can tell God all of our feelings and emotions like David did, because we know God is always with us, no matter what life brings. When we start feeling nervous or afraid, we can think of David's words in Psalm 23 and remember God is like our shepherd, guiding us and with us always.

Discussion Questions

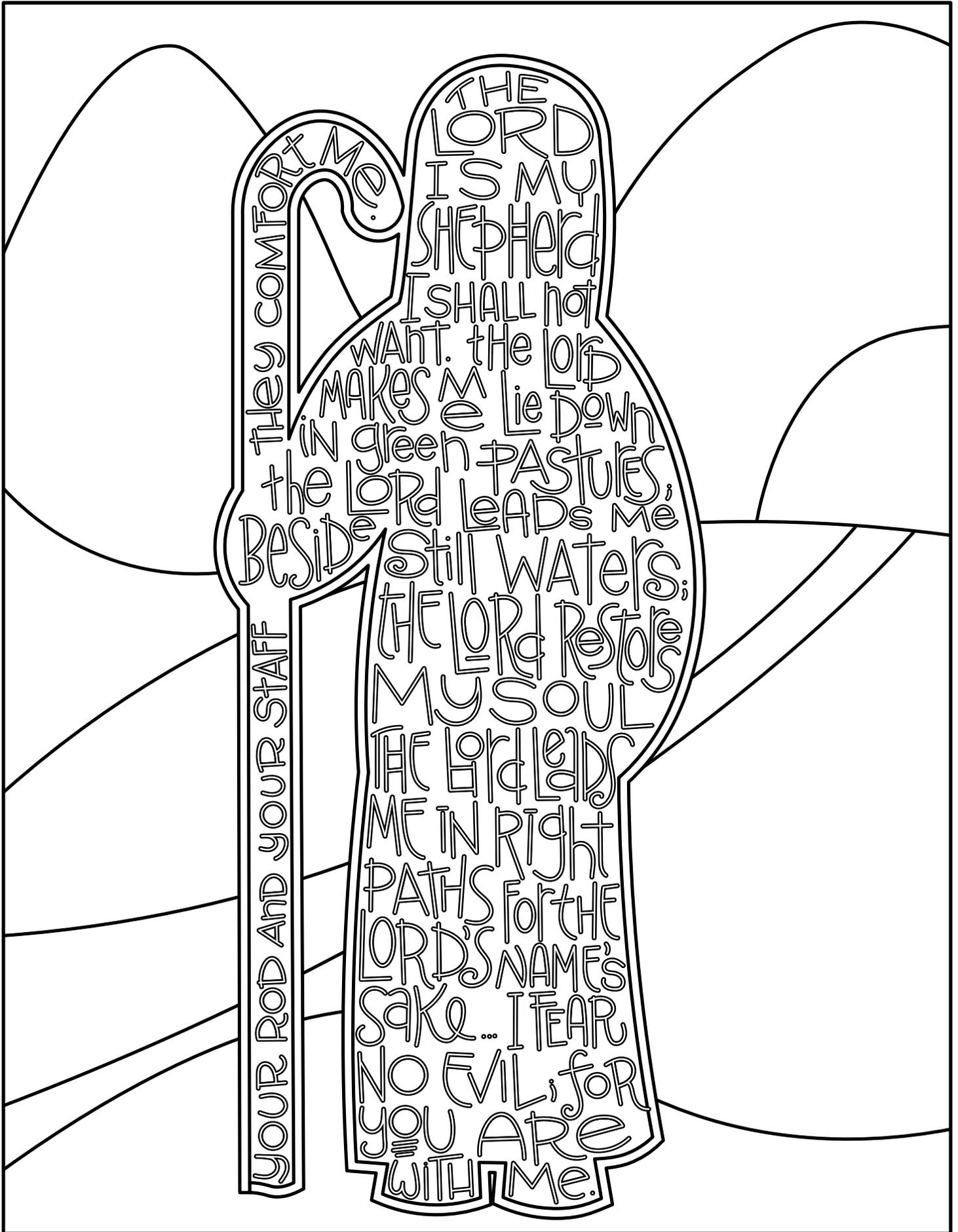
1. What it might be like to lie down in a green pasture? Or to walk along a quiet creek?
2. How do you express what you are feeling?
3. What can these feelings teach us?
4. What things help you feel really calm and safe?
5. How might our relationship with God help us feel calm and safe?



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Prayer

Dear God, thank you for being like a shepherd to us, helping us, and caring for us always. When we feel afraid or alone, remind us that you are always with us. **Amen.**



THEY COMFORT ME

YOUR ROD AND YOUR STAFF

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD I SHALL NOT WANT. THE LORD MAKES ME LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES; THE LORD LEADS ME BESIDE STILL WATERS; THE LORD RESTORES MY SOUL THE LORD LEADS ME IN RIGHT PATHS FOR THE LORD'S NAME'S SAKE... I FEAR NO EVIL, FOR YOU ARE WITH ME.

PSALM 23 ACTIVITY

Write out your own version of Psalm 23 or draw out your own scenes of what Psalm 23 means to you.

Psalm 23

(translation from *The Inclusive Bible*)

YHWH, you are my shepherd
I want nothing more.
You let me lie down in
green meadows;
You lead me beside restful waters:
You refresh my soul.
You guide me to lush pastures
For the sake of your Name.
Even if I'm surrounded
by shadows of Death,
I fear no danger,
for you are with me.
Your rod and your staff,
They give me courage.
You spread a table for me
In the presence of my enemies,
And you anoint my head with oil
My cup overflows!
Only goodness and love
will follow me
all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in your house,
YHWH,
For days without end.

PSALM 23 • LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is a way of prayerfully reading scripture that slows you down, creates space to listen, reflect, and respond to God as you center yourself on a scripture passage. This practice can be done by yourself or in a group and at your own pace. You can use the inclusive language translation provided or any translation you enjoy.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 23 – a Psalm of David

(translation from *The Inclusive Bible*)

*YHWH, you are my shepherd, I want nothing more.
You let me lie down in green meadows;
You lead me beside restful waters: you refresh my soul.
You guide me to lush pastures, for the sake of your Name.
Even if I'm surrounded by shadows of Death,
I fear no danger, for you are with me.
Your rod and your staff, they give me courage.
You spread a table for me in the presence of my enemies,
And you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows!
Only goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in your house, YHWH, for days without end.*

Lectio Divina

Prepare to listen. Find a comfortable sitting position and take a few moments to prepare your heart, mind, body, and soul to listen to the Word of God. This might mean doing some breathing exercises to quiet your mind and slow your body down, lighting a candle, or saying a prayer.

Slowly, read Psalm 23 aloud. Notice any words, phrases, sentences that stand out to you or resonate with you now. Allow for a few moments of quiet.

Read Psalm 23 aloud again. Draw your focus to the words, phrases, or sentences that stood out to you. Reflect on and be curious about why they resonate with you. You can even write or color in the phrases on the provided coloring page. Allow for a few moments of quiet.

Read Psalm 23 aloud again. As you hear the words, phrases, or sentences that stand out to you, offer up any emotions, feelings, thoughts you have to God as a response of prayer. Allow for a few moments of quiet.

Read Psalm 23 aloud one last time. This time, reflect on what was meaningful to you as you read or listen to the scripture. Allow for a few moments of quiet, and then offer a prayer to God as you end your Lectio Divina time.



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

ALISSA ELLETT has worked in ministry for fifteen years, serving in churches across California. She earned her Masters in Christian Education from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Currently based in Fresno, California, when she's not writing curriculum for Illustrated Ministry, she's immortalizing moments and seasons in others' journeys through her photography business, Waypoint Photography (waypointphotography.com).

ARIANNE BRAITHWAITE LEHN is a mother, one half of a clergy couple, writer, and ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church (USA). As a South Dakota native, Arianne originally planned on Law School until God called her to Taiwan where everything changed. She later graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary (Chicago). She and her family live in Wilmette, Illinois. Arianne is the author of *Ash and Starlight: Prayers for the Chaos and Grace of Daily Life*. You can connect with Arianne and her writing at her website ariannebraithwaitelehn.com.

CORBY ORTMANN is a digital illustrator and animator, whose work includes caricatures, graphic design, children's books, and animated commercials/music videos. He currently lives in Fargo, North Dakota with his wife and daughter, who help him to step away from the art table every so often. You can find more of his work at www.corbyortmann.com.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

REBEKAH LOWE, a local of Kansas City, Southern California, and Austin, Texas, earned a B.A. in Biblical Studies with a minor in Leadership Studies and a minor in Hebrew at Azusa Pacific University and served as the Director of Children's Ministry at Brentwood Presbyterian Church (USA) in Los Angeles, California, for over five years. She resides in Austin, Texas with her husband and their two daughters.

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ADAM WALKER CLEVELAND is an artist, pastor, pastor's spouse, and father of four (two living). Adam is an ordained Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA), and after doing youth ministry for over 15 years, he founded Illustrated Ministry, LLC. He resides in Racine, Wisconsin with his wife and children.