

## **Teens in Crisis: The Hope Connection**

The teen years are full of change and growth, emotionally and physically. Many teens navigate the waters of adolescence without many waves and develop into fine young men and women. Other teens experience crisis in these growing up years. It may not be any fault of theirs, such as divorce or death, or it may be because of choices they make. But for whatever the reason, many teens experience crisis. The teen years for them can become terrifying and hopeless.

During adolescence, teens begin to think of autonomy for themselves. They envision breaking away from parents/family to make their own way and own decisions. Control is a big issue for teens. Who will be in control, me? or my parents? or my teachers? or who? Teens in crisis, seem to have no control of their choices, and their life. Or that is the way it appears to them. This module is for those teens who are trying to control their life on their own. The teens will be introduced to the Good Shepherd who can lead them through the teen years. The objective of this module then is to show teens in crisis that they can trust the Good Shepherd to make good choices for their lives and He alone deserves to be in control.

This module is also for those Christian teens who have settled this issue of control and want to learn how to share this decision with their nonchristian friends.

The teen can relinquish control of their life to the Good Shepherd because:

1. He takes care of physical needs.
2. He takes care of spiritual needs.
3. He takes care of them during problems.
4. He loves them.

The Scriptural focus for this module is Psalm 23. The module is approximately 60-75 minutes long. The time frame depends on the activities completed throughout the module. Alternative activities (shown in red) will be included that can be chosen depending on the likes, abilities, skills, and size of your teen group.

The NIV translation was used for this module. Other translations can be used to further clarify the wording if wanted.

(ppt)= If you see a (ppt) beside the text in the instructions then that means there is a power point slide to correspond with that information.

The transition sections suggest dialog to be used to transition from one part of the module to the other part. The dialog is in bold. You do not necessarily need to say it word for word, but it is a suggestion of what to say.

The Shepherd/sheep connection sections are sections where the imagery of God as our shepherd is further developed by knowing more about the reality of a shepherd and his sheep.

Two wonderful books that can be used for further reading and understanding are:

Keller, W. P. *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.

Lucado, M. *Traveling Light—Releasing the Burdens You Were Never Intended to Bear*. W. Publishing Group, 2001.

## **Module Instructions**

To begin this module, help the teens focus on the topic by asking them the following questions:

What do you say to your friends who are in crisis? For example;

1. You see Suzie after school waiting for a ride home. Your ride isn't there yet so you sit down and talk. Through your conversation you learn that Suzie's parents told her and her brother last week that they are getting a divorce. Her father moved out of the house last week and she feels responsible. Suzie tells you that if she had been a better student and helped more around the house then maybe her parents would not be getting a divorce. She begins to cry and tells you it is depressing to go home.

What do you say to her?

2. At a home football game you see one of your good friends drinking alcohol in the parking lot. He is with a lot of people you don't know. You pull him aside to ask him why he is drinking. He tells you it is all in fun and alcohol helps loosen him up so he can really enjoy himself after the long days at school. You know he is making a fool of himself and his "new" friends start to pressure you to drink. What do you do? What do you say to him? What can you say to him on Monday?

3. You started smoking as a dare from some of your acquaintances. You used to just smoke a couple of cigarettes a week, but now you are hooked and smoke a couple of cigarettes each day. Your friends are beginning to notice the change in you—the smelly clothes, the "breath mint" breath you have after lunch, a cigarette package in your car.....You want to quit but you just can't. Your body won't let you. What can you say to your friends to help them know that you need help?

4. You notice that a good friend who sits behind you in Algebra class is absent for a week. You ask around, but no one seems to know where he

is. He comes back on the next Monday and tells you that his father was killed in an accident. His funeral was last week. He looks awful....like he hasn't slept for a week. He is distracted and doesn't even want to try and make up his work from last week. What can you say to give him hope that things will get better?

Let the teens talk about their experiences with their friends who would seem to be in crisis. Ask the teens:

How do you help your friends who are in these situations? or Have you experienced any of those situations before and what did you do to cope with the situation or even overcome these situations?

**Transition: In this module you will learn that the Good Shepherd can help in these situations. The Good Shepherd gives hope even when things seem hopeless.**

(Alternate introductory activity--Bring in several decks of cards. Pair up teens to build a house of cards. See how tall and big they can build it. Let the teens see how many different types of houses are built. Practice at home so you can build one. When you have built one and the teens have shared theirs, take your house and pull out one of the cards on the bottom. Ask the teens to tell you what happens. Ask the teens: Do you ever feel this way? That everything has fallen apart? That nothing seems to be going right? That the world around is crumbling apart? Let your teens talk about their answers.

**Transition: This exercise simulates what happens when we try to control our lives. We build and build but something always happens. We are not good controllers of our lives. We don't know the future, and we can't see what others are doing, but there is someone who makes a great leader for us. He can be in control of our life and instead of a house of cards we can have a life of stability and growth. There is someone who can be in control that will take care of all our needs. He is the Good Shepherd.)**

Introduce the concept of the shepherd and the sheep.

Ask the teens the following questions: (ppt)

1. What does a shepherd do? (takes care of his sheep)
2. Why is this an important job? (very important because the sheep cannot take care of themselves. They need a leader, guide and caretaker. -- someone who will show them what to do, take them where they need to go and supply their needs. Sheep cannot do that on their own.)
3. Throughout the Old Testament and New Testament God is characterized as the Good Shepherd? Why do you think that is?

(Alternate activity--You may want to ask the teens to find the following verses and read them together about the shepherd and the sheep.

I Kings 22:17, Psalm 23:1, Psalm 28: 6-9, Psalm 80:1, Isaiah 40:10-11, Ezekiel 34: 11-16, John 10:11, 14-15 I Peter 5:4, Revelation 7:17.)

**Explain that a well used allusion is that God is the Good Shepherd and we as His children are His sheep. God takes care of us like a shepherd takes care of his sheep. When the shepherd is a good shepherd then the sheep have no fears and can rely on the shepherd. So it is with us. We can let God have control of our lives because he takes good care of us.**

**How Does God, the Good Shepherd, Take Care of His Sheep?** (ppt)

## **1. The Good Shepherd takes care of my physical needs.** (ppt)

Hand out the Needs/Wants worksheet found at the end of this module. Let the students fill in the two columns of needs and wants. (ppt)

Let the students share either with a partner or the group some of the things they put down on the worksheet. Discuss the difference between a need and a want. (A need is something you can't live without....food, clothing, water, and a want is something extra.) **The key is understanding that God supplies all that we need. And with this knowledge comes an attitude of contentment that God's idea of what we need is enough.**

(Alternate Activity: Have the students explain a line from a pop song, "It's not having what you want, but wanting what you have." Emphasize that **the key is understanding that God supplies all that we need. And with this knowledge comes an attitude of contentment that God's idea of what we need is enough.**)

Read Psalm 23:1-2 (ppt)

The NIV says, The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.....  
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters.....

Two important ways to see "I shall not be in want." (ppt)

- a. That you will have all that you need for your physical concerns.
- b. The idea of being totally contented with the Good Shepherd's care of you. (Keller)

(At this point, you may want to explain a personal experience when God took care of your physical needs. Or discuss the idea of being content with what is given to you by God.)

The Sheep and Shepherd Connection: (ppt)

Sheep cannot be made to lie down and be content unless 4 situations are met. They are:

1. They must be free of all fear.
2. They must be free of friction from other sheep.
3. They must be free of pests.
4. They must be free of hunger. (Keller)

**Transition: It is only the shepherd that can meet those needs. What do you have that the shepherd needs to take care of?**

Use the shepherd inventory at the back of this module to help the teens understand what they need from their shepherd. On the different sheep, let them write what they fear, what relationships they need help with, what

some of their frustrations are and what are they hungry for—emotionally as well as physically. Let the students share with a partner or the group if they would like, about the ideas developed on their worksheet. Stress to them that God, the Good Shepherd can take care of those things.

Transition: **When fear and hurt, anger and hunger are taken care of then sheep can lie down and rest. They can be contented in what they have and who they are. So it is with us. When God takes care of all of our fears and hurts, anger and hunger, we too can lie down and rest. We can be contented with what we have and who we are. God goes one step further though, and not only helps us with our physical needs, but with our spiritual needs.**

## **2. The Good Shepherd takes care of our spiritual needs.** (ppt)

View the power point slide and have the students describe what the teen looks like. (ppt) Ask the teens the following questions:

- 1. Imagine it is the hottest day of the year, and you have been helping your neighbor with her lawn all day. You have sweat pouring down your face and your body feels like a wet noodle. What are you going to do to refresh yourself? to revive yourself?** (They may say a glass of cold water, a sport drink, a cold shower....)
- 2. When you do any or all of those things, how do you feel afterwards?** (better, refreshed, back alive...)
- 3. Do you ever feel that way about your life? Like you are so tired you can't get up, you are all drained out, like you are parched, thirsty for life?** (You might want to tell about a time when you were spiritually thirsty.)

The solution to that feeling is found in Psalm 23:2-3.

"...He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." (ppt)

**Because God created us He can restore us when we need it. He knows what we need.**

Discuss with the teens:

- 1. Tell me about something that you have created? an art project, a picture....**
- 2. Do you believe that every artist or creator leaves a bit of himself or herself in each creation?** (hopefully your students will say yes. You might want them to tell the group about how they left a piece of them with a creation of theirs. Or you might want to tell about a time that you created something that required you to give of yourself to your creation. (ppt)

**The same is true of God. Read the following Scriptures and see what it says about God and His creation. Genesis 26: 26-27, Ecclesiastes 3:11.**

- 1. What do those scriptures say about God and His creation?** (We are made in God's image and there is a piece of God in each one of us. We were made for God.)
- 2. Do you agree or disagree? We can only find true peace and love in acknowledging who God is and allowing Him to be shepherd of our life. Discuss this statement.** (ppt)
- 3. What are some ways that people try to find true peace and love without God?** (drugs, premarital sex, other relationships, materialism....)

**King Solomon said it best in Ecc. 2:1-11.** Explain this passage to your teens. (King Solomon tried everything to be happy, but he realized it was all meaningless. He sums it up in Ecc. 12:13.)

Read Ecc. 12:13. (ppt)

**King Solomon found that no matter where you looked or what you did, it was all meaningless unless you followed God. Jesus said it best when He said, "I have come that they might have life and might have it more abundantly." John 10:10 Also Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." John 14:6. We cannot be happy and**

**contented until we satisfy the spiritual part of our life. We do that by accepting the leadership of God, the Good Shepherd.** (The steps to salvation are listed below. You may want to have the students locate these scriptures and read them aloud and explain what it means or you may want to give the Keys to Life worksheet found at the end of the module for the students to work through. Have the teens write the Bible verse around the key corresponding to the correct idea. The teens could use this worksheet to show to their friends to explain the steps to salvation.)

C confess I John 1:9 acknowledge sin  
B believe John 3:16 believe that God loves you so very much  
A assure Romans 10:13 be assured that you can trust Jesus to save you and He can be the leader for your life.

Explain to the teens that if they truly believe the words read above, then they can have Jesus in their hearts also. When Jesus comes into their hearts they acknowledge that they want Him to be the leader of their life. You may want to lead the group in a prayer of repentance-- Or explain what that means. It depends on your group.

### **3. The Good Shepherd takes care of us during problems.**

Read the following poem or make copies of the poem for your teens.

#### FOOTPRINTS

One night a man had a dream.  
He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky  
flashed the scenes from his life.

For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints.

He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life. This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it.

"Lord, You said that once I decided to follow you, You'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The Lord replied,

"My son, My precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.

Ask the teens:

- 1. Have you ever had someone carry you to safety? Explain the situation.**
- 2. Do you remember when you were little when your parents would carry you?**
- 3. How does that feel--to be carried to safety?**
- 4. What do you think the poem, "Footprints" means?**

Use the Footprints worksheet at the end of the module for the teens to write out or draw a situation or situations where they need some help. It may be that they need help with a teacher, or settling a fight with a friend or a parent, ..... Have them write about the situation or situations on the footprints. They could be problems, disappointments, frustrations or aggravations.

Read Psalm 23: 4-5 (ppt)

As the students look over their footprints, lead them in a prayer giving these problems and troubles, these frustrations and aggravations to the

Lord. Help them to see that if they give them to God, the Good Shepherd will take care of them. He knows what to do.

## **4. The Good Shepherd loves us.**

Just by looking at a picture, often times the personality of animals come through. Using the pet pictures on the power point slide, discuss the personality of each pet.

Then ask the teens:

1. Can someone discuss their special pets in their lives?
2. What are some habits, likes, dislikes of your pets?
3. How is your pet different than other pets?

Then ask them if they love their pets. Many will resoundingly say yes. They are being a shepherd to their pets. They are taking care of them and just like they know all about their pets' likes and dislikes, so to, God, the Good Shepherd knows all about his sheep, us.

Using the God Knows Me worksheet at the end of this module, let the teens use Psalm 139 to discover how much God knows about them.

Let the teens discuss the worksheet about how much God knows about them. Ask them to fill in the following statement:  
God knows so much about me, He is like.....

Read Psalm 23: 6 (ppt)

Discuss the following profound statements; (a quick review of the module, but profound statements anyway.)

1. God takes care of my physical needs.
2. God takes care of my spiritual needs.
3. God is concerned about my problems.
4. God loves me.

**Conclusion**

Use the God Loves me worksheet at the end of the module to help the teens understand that God does love them. If the teens are indeed in crisis they may feel like no one loves them, but God does!

**And because God loves you, goodness and love will be with you. The last verse of this Psalm is the sheep exalting how wonderful the Good Shepherd is and is reaffirming that they do not want to be anywhere else but with the Good Shepherd**

Alternate conclusion: Bring in a pair of binoculars. Pass around and let the students experiment with them. Tell them to look at things using the correct way and then have them turn them around and look through them backwards. There is quite a bit of difference. Explain to them: **What you have learned about today is a matter of perspective. Without God as your shepherd and leader... you are looking at things through the wrong lens. It gets you in trouble and distorts reality. With God as your shepherd, the leader of your life, you are looking at things through the correct lens. Your physical needs and spiritual needs can be taken care of by God and stay in the right proportion. God can carry you through your problems and loves you more than anyone else you know. He gives you the correct perspective on life.**

### **Student Worksheets**

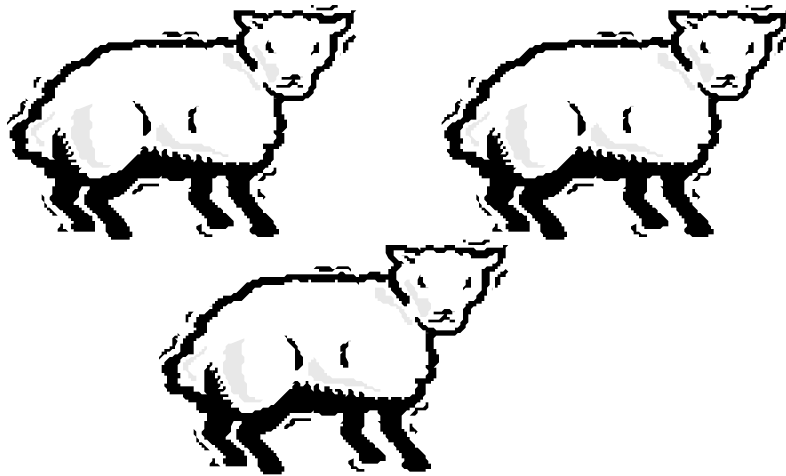
- 1. Needs/Wants**
- 2. Shepherd Inventory**
- 3. Footprints**
- 4. God Knows Me**
- 5. God Loves Me**

Needs

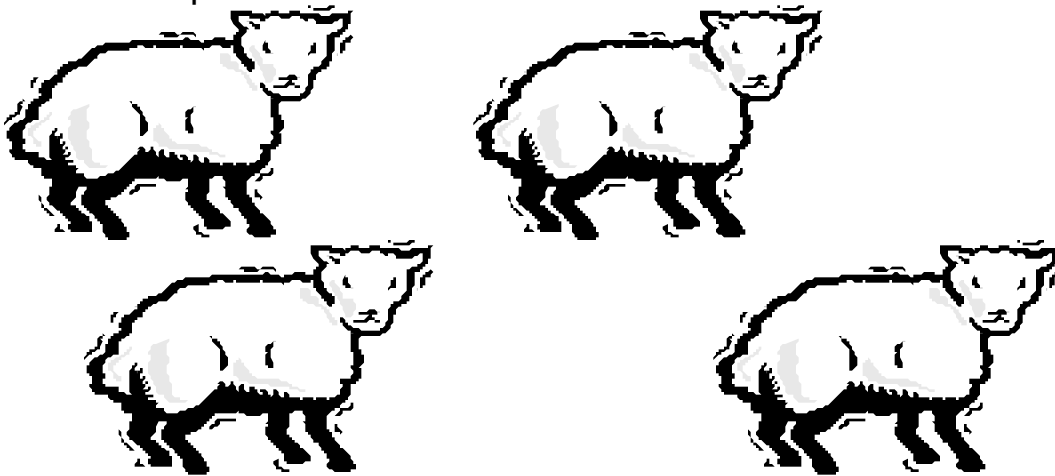
Wants

**Shepherd Inventory:**

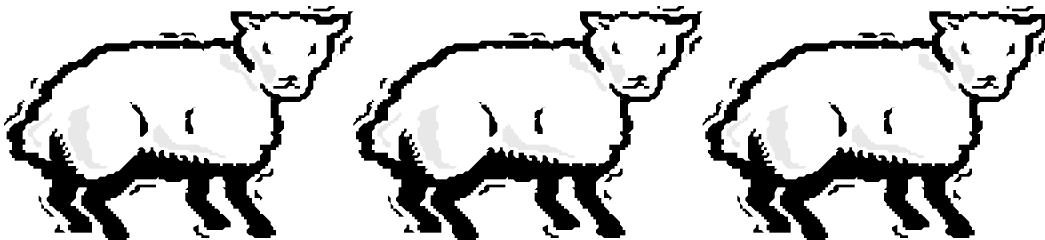
**Fear**



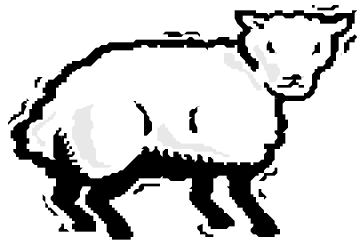
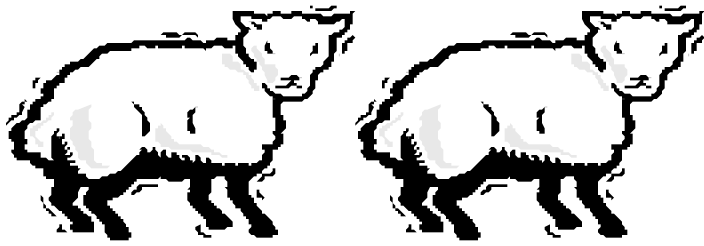
Relationships



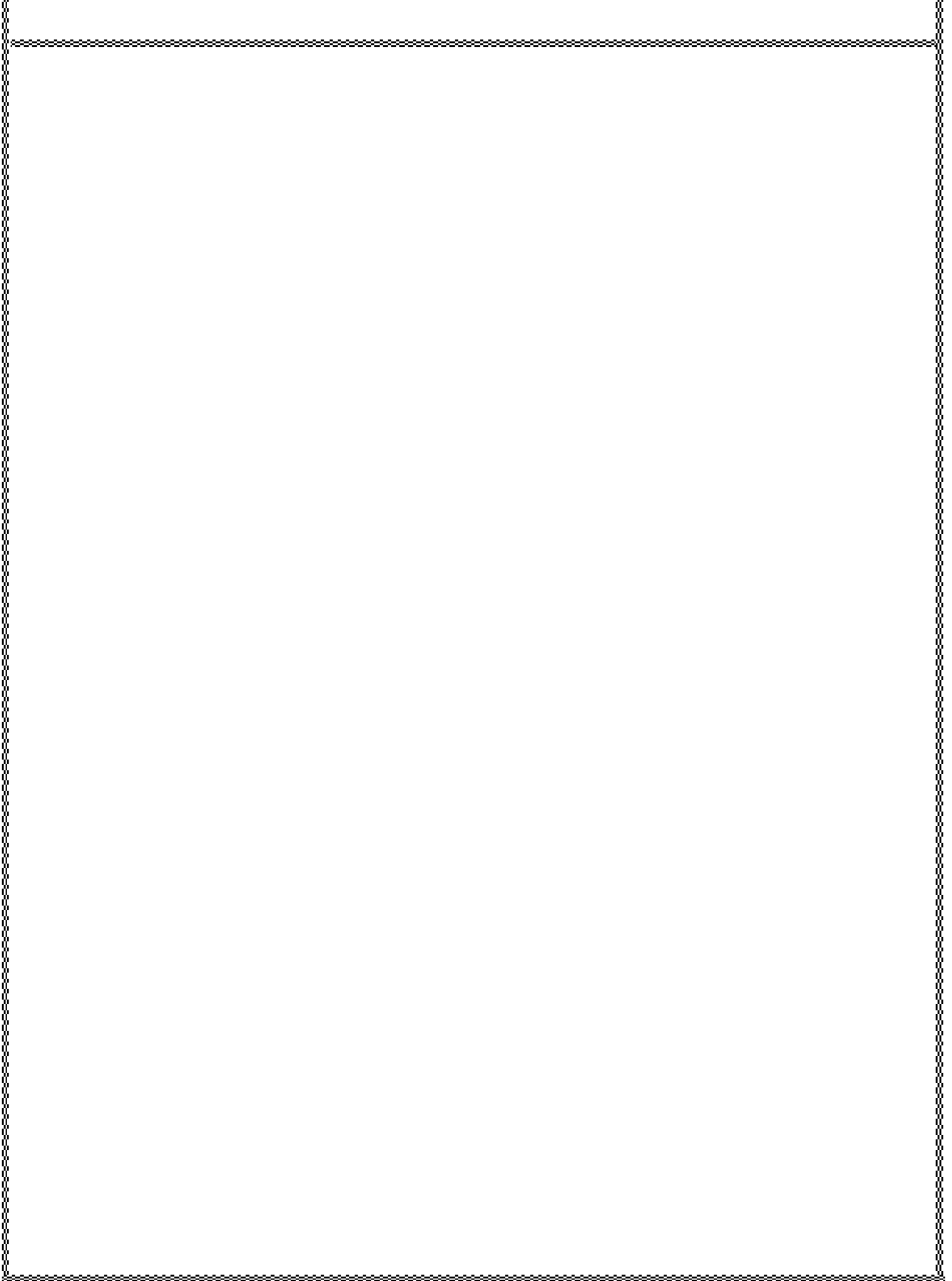
Frustration/Aggravation



Hunger



## **Footprints**



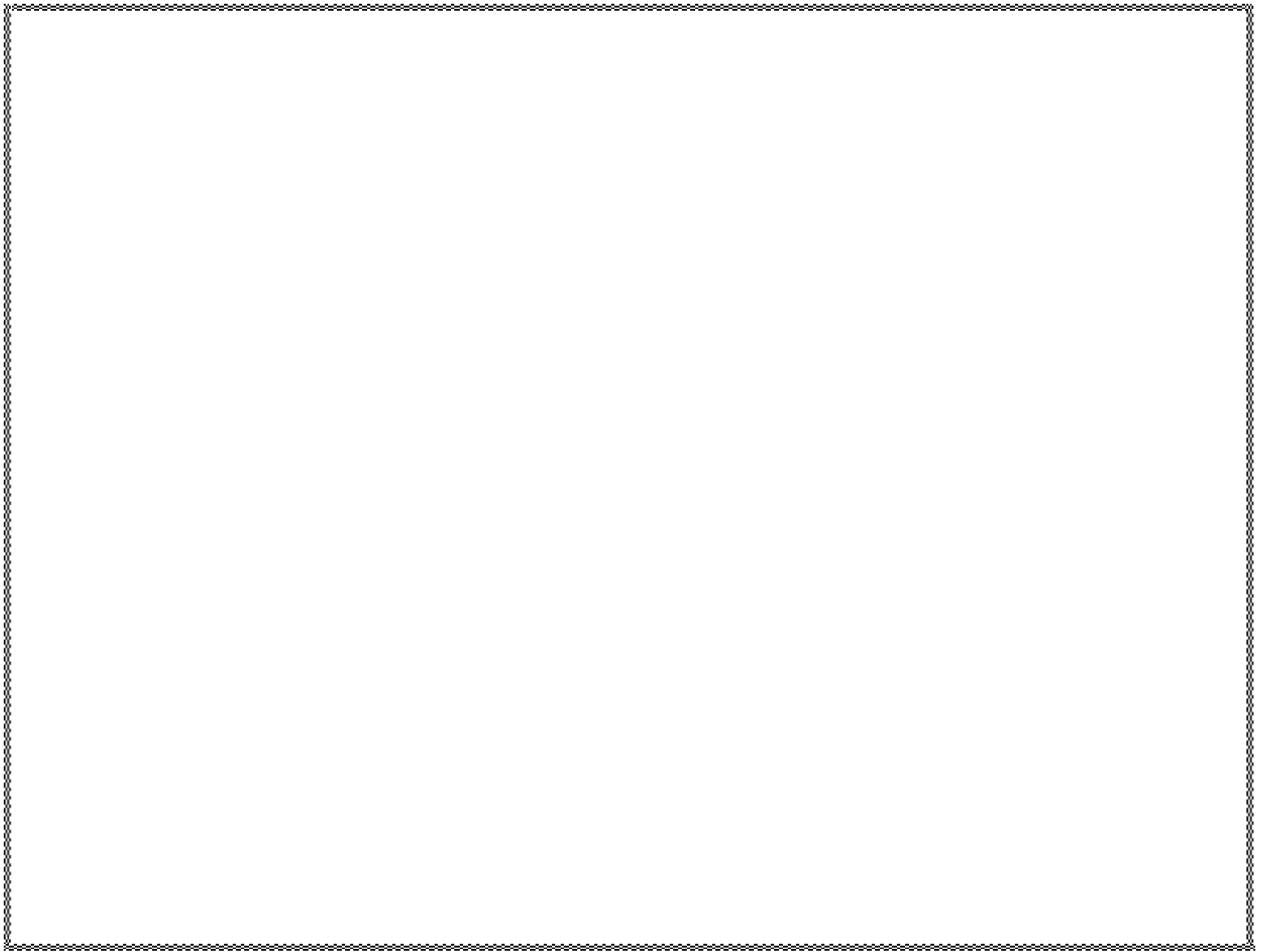
## **God Knows Me**

**Using Psalm 139 as a guide, place a checkmark in the appropriate column.**

**Yes**

**No**

- 1. God knows when I got up this morning.**
- 2. God knows my very thoughts, even before I speak them.**
- 3. If I go to the mountains, God can't find me.**
- 4. God knows where I am,.... anywhere.**
- 5. God created me from the very first moment of my life.**
- 6. I am awesome because I was made by God.**
- 7. God is too busy running the world to think about me.**
- 8. God knows my heart—my feelings, emotions and longings.**



# God Loves Me!

I am \_\_\_\_\_

Who lives at \_\_\_\_\_

Who has the favorite color of \_\_\_\_\_

Who loves to do \_\_\_\_\_

Who has the favorite food of \_\_\_\_\_

And has the greatest achievement of \_\_\_\_\_.

I am \_\_\_\_\_

Who is in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade

Who has the fear of \_\_\_\_\_

Who loves \_\_\_\_\_

Who wants to do \_\_\_\_\_

Who has a problem with \_\_\_\_\_.

I am \_\_\_\_\_

And I want God to be my shepherd.

\_\_\_\_\_

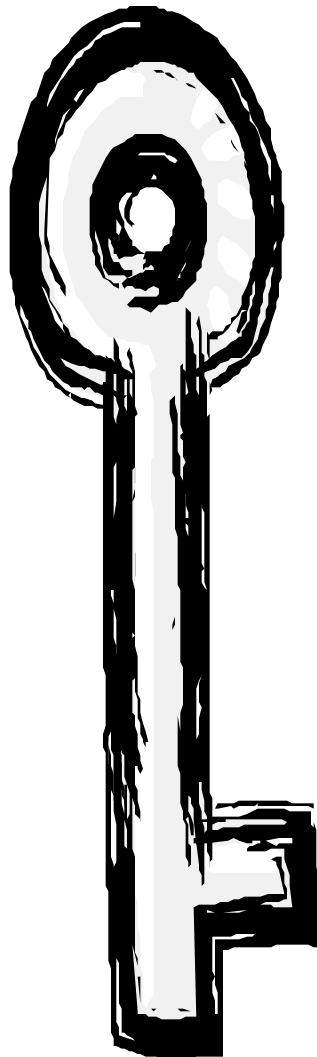
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Name  
The Keys of Life

Date



C=Confess  
I John 1:9



B=Believe  
John 3:16



A=Assure  
Romans 10:13