

“The Shepherd's Psalm”

Expressions #5 • Psalm 23

INTRODUCTION

The 23rd Psalm has been called “The Shepherd’s Psalm.” It is one of the best-known passages in the Bible. David, who was familiar with the role of a shepherd, penned these six verses that have given hope and encouragement to so many.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

Share with your group a short story of one beloved animal in your life.

Study Questions (45 MIN)

Q1. Read Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:11; John 10:11; 1 Timothy 6:6-10

David had been a shepherd himself. He knew by experience the care and tender affection of a good shepherd towards his flock. How does Isaiah 40:11 describe the care of the Lord? How does Jesus’ description of himself as the good shepherd demonstrate the level of devotion He has for you? Because Jesus is our shepherd, we can trust him with our well-being and be content. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. What does Paul want Timothy to understand about contentment? What are some temptations that make us discontent? Are there any areas you struggle with that you want to release into your shepherd’s care?

Q2. Read Psalm 23:2-3; John 4:13-14

In verses 2 and 3 David describes the specific actions of the good shepherd. The pasture, or dwelling place for the sheep, is filled with new grass, yet the shepherd must make the sheep lie down there. What are some of the reasons God’s sheep resist resting in his provision? The shepherd also guides the sheep to quiet waters. What does Jesus explain to the Samaritan woman about the water He offers us? The shepherd restores, or refreshes the core of our being: our soul. How do you prepare your soul for God’s refreshing (music, prayer, reading the Word, solitude)? Where does following God’s path lead us? (Psalm 23:3)

Q3. Read Psalm 23:4; Romans 8:38-39; 1 Cor 15:20-22, 54-55

In perhaps the most familiar passage of this psalm, David offers hope to those facing the valley of the shadow of death. Why is death no longer a

terror to the sheep of God? (1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 54-55) Who have you known that faced death with great confidence and assurance in Christ? What were the two items David mentioned that bring him comfort? These represented a combination of protection and guidance. Which are you most in need of right now, protection or guidance from God?

Q4. Read Psalm 23:5; 2 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 3:20; Romans 15:13

It is at this point in the psalm that David recognizes how abundantly God has provided. How would you describe the “table” God has set before you? Do you feel God has “anointed” you for an area of leadership or ministry? The only way to overflow is to allow yourself to be filled completely. What steps can you take to fully embrace the blessings and anointing God wants to bestow on you so that you can overflow to others?

Q5. Read Psalm 23:6; Psalm 73:1; Psalm 84:11

Both goodness and mercy are part of God’s character. Like David, those who have a relationship with God, recognize His influence in their daily lives. What was the eternal reward and destiny David looked forward to? How has God’s goodness and mercy changed your life?

Wrap-Up

In this psalm, David draws strength from knowing God as his shepherd, and so can we. So much more than mere comfort to us at times of loss, this psalm is a declaration of our source of hope and encouragement every day of our lives. His abundant blessings fill us to overflowing. When we are confident in our relationship with the Good Shepherd, we no longer need to fear death. Indeed, our eternal destiny is to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Now read Psalm 23 aloud in its entirety.

Memory Verse

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23:6 ESV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: _____

Challenge: Memorize the 23rd Psalm.

Q1

Psalm 23:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Isaiah 40:11 ESV - 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.

John 10:11 ESV - 11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10 in your Bible

Q2

Psalm 23:2-3 ESV 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

John 4:13-14 ESV - 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Q3

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Romans 8:38-39 ESV - 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 54-55

Q4

Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

2 Peter 1:3 ESV - 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

Ephesians 3:20 ESV - 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

Romans 15:13 NIV - 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Q5

Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 73:1 ESV - 1 A Psalm of Asaph. Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

Psalm 84:11 ESV - 11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Prayers Con't: _____
