

LESSON 12

HOW CAN WE WANT A SHEPHERD LIKE OURS?

Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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.

⁴Even 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.

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

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

WELCOME: *Fixing Our Focus*

Leader: Share with the group the following:

A 2013 Filipino movie described ‘trust’ as a BIG WORD. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines BIG WORD as a long, difficult word, or a word that expresses a serious or important idea.

Ask: Do you think the word ‘trust’ is a BIG WORD, or the movie’s protagonist was just being melodramatic? Share your thoughts with the group.

WORSHIP: *Adoring Our God*

Suggested songs:

Great is Thy Faithfulness by Thomas Chisholm
From the Inside Out by Hillsong Worship

WORD: *Understanding the Word*

Introduction

Psalm 23 is a song used during worship by the ancient Hebrews. While most contemporary Christians no longer sing it like it was thousands of years ago, it is still one of the popular psalms quoted and memorized. It is read in church gatherings and individual worship, recited during memorable occasions like birthdays and on even on the death bed of loved ones. The verses are even used for displays of one’s living room, or in toilets of commercial establishments. What is in the six verses that many have learned to rely on to keep their lives in tune with God?

Leader: Lead in reading Psalm 23 aloud together. Then read the paragraph on the “Key Verse.”

Key Verse: The key to understanding this psalm is found in verse 1. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

Psalm 23:1-2. Theme: _____

1. Let's break down David's claim, "The Lord is my shepherd." What are your initial thoughts about each of the **bold** words below:

The LORD is my shepherd

The Lord is **my** shepherd

The Lord is my **shepherd**

2. What does "I shall not want" mean? Is this a statement of fact, or is this a decision? Explain your answer.
3. David said that the Lord, his shepherd, sustained him in these ways. Explain what each one means.
 - He makes me lie down
 - He makes me lie down in green pastures
 - He leads me beside still waters
4. How did the psalmist see himself in verses 6 to 8? Encircle the phrases. Why did the psalmist feel this way?

In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 1-2.

Psalm 23:3-4. Theme: _____

1. “He *restores* my soul.” The Hebrew for “restores” (*shuv*) may mean to bring back, to retreat or to recall. Why does the Lord do this for his sheep? Where does he bring them back to?
2. What role or function of a shepherd is implied by the phrase, “He leads me”?
3. The Lord our shepherd not only sustains and provides. He also leads in “paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” What does this speak of the purpose of the Lord?
4. Read verse 4. What makes difficult experiences bearable to David?

Rods are used to protect the flocks from predators or reprimand unruly sheep that pick on others, eat the wrong plants or are oblivious to danger. It is also used by the shepherd to look for wounds, disease and check on the overall condition of the skin. A staff meantime is used to bring timid sheep closer to him, guide the flock into new pasture or through a gate. It is also used to free strayed sheep from bushes or lift them out of water*.

In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 3-4.

*Source: <https://www.quora.com/In-Psalm-23-4-when-it-mentions-a-sheperds-rod-and-staff-whats-dthe-difference>.

Psalm 23:5-6. Theme: _____

1. David talked about dangers that he faced. In verse 4, he alluded to death. In verse 5, he refers to his enemies. Again, explain the implications of the bold words in this verse:

You prepare a table before me

You prepare **a table** before me

You prepare a table **before me**

2. The Lord our shepherd is a gracious host. What else does he do for David so that he could enjoy the generous feast that was prepared for him (v. 5b)?

3. What does it mean when David said, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (v. 6a)? Why are these two “guardian angels” important in life?

Did you know that in ancient Near Eastern Culture, it was a custom to anoint a person with fragrant oil at a feast? Hosts were also expected to protect their guests at all costs*.

4. Does “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (v. 6b) mean that David simply wanted to live in the Temple of the Lord all the days of his life? If not, what does this mean?

In the space above, write what you think is the theme of verses 5-6.

*Life Application Study Bible: NLT, 2nd ed. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers Inc, @ 2007 Page 866.

WALK: *Applying the Word*

Questions for Adults

1. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ presents himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). Could you honestly say that, like David, the Lord Jesus is your shepherd? Why or why not?

If you need help in trusting in Jesus Christ as your Shepherd, Lord and Savior, please talk to the leader of your Growth Group. Do not delay. All the promises of Psalm 23 are waiting to be claimed.

2. Psalm 27:4 is quite similar to Psalm 23:6. It says:

One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to inquire in his temple.

How could you apply this principle of daily living in the presence of the Lord?

3. Share in the group examples of how Jesus Christ has provided for you, protected you, and guided you. After everyone has shared, audibly praise and thank God one by one for everything that He has done.
4. Pray for GCF (Prayer requests supplied by the Leader).

Questions for the Youth

1. What are some things that scare you the most? What makes these things scary for you? Share these with the group and try to find if there are recurring themes behind the group's fears.
2. King David describes God as his shepherd, who guides him through frightful episodes in life. How have you experienced God's tender care and guidance through fearful situations? Share one such episode with the group.
3. What are some things that prevent you from placing your trust in God when going through fearful situations? What can you do to overcome them?

Questions for Children

1. Psalm 23 shows what the Lord does as our shepherd. List down how he takes care of us, his sheep.
2. Have you ever felt so tired? What is the first thing you do when you feel tired? God is our source of strength. Make a promise to God that you'll turn to him whenever you feel overwhelmed and tired.
3. In life, we will find ourselves in the "valley of the shadow of death" (v. 4) or difficult situations. Are you in a difficult situation right now? Write it down and share it to the group so they can pray for you.