

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

SILVERDALE BAPTIST CHURCH
THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM
GOD IS EVERYTHING YOU NEED
PSALM 23:1-2
11/12/2017



MAIN POINT

As the Great Shepherd, God is our provider.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is a major need in your life right now? How do you think this need can be met?

On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to ask for help when you need it? Do you readily admit when you need another's wisdom, support, encouragement, or resources? Explain.

In Psalm 23, David used the metaphor of the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep to vividly describe the relationship between God and His people. David himself was a shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11) and was intimately familiar with the constant provision, guidance, and protection required of a faithful shepherd. In the ancient world, the shepherd stood by his sheep 24/7, attending to their every need. Jesus also described Himself as the "Good Shepherd," who willingly laid down his life for his sheep (cf. John 10:11). In our study today, we will focus specifically on how God, as the Great Shepherd, abundantly provides for His sheep.

DISCUSSION

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about our topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 23:1.

In this beloved psalm, David centered himself on the reality that the Lord is his shepherd. When you think of God as your shepherd, what aspect(s) of God's character or actions does this imagery highlight?

What are some of the needs that a shepherd meets for his sheep?

Left to themselves, sheep lack everything. A good shepherd knows what the sheep need and fulfills his duty to provide for them. There are shepherds who neglect their flocks (see Ezekiel 34), but the Lord is not that kind of shepherd. The Old Testament tells again and again of God's faithfulness to provide for his people Israel. On their 40 year journey through the wilderness into the promised land, the Lord was with the Israelites so that they "lacked nothing" (Deut. 2:7). Moses described life in the promised land as "a land where you will eat food without shortage, where you will lack nothing" (Deut. 8:9). The same God who had been faithful to provide for Israel would be faithful to provide for David and

will be faithful to provide for us who look to Him as our Great Shepherd.

HAVE TWO VOLUNTEERS READ PSALM 23:2 AND MATTHEW 6:25-34.

What does David say that the Lord “lets” him do in Psalm 23:2? What sort of emotions does this imagery bring?

Sheep lying in green pastures by spring waters is an image of springtime in Israel. The land of Israel is generally a dry and rocky set of rolling hills covered with sparse and tough grass, but in the spring green grass is more abundant and sheep can drink from calm wells and springs without being rushed or pushed by a current. David describes himself in a state of rest because of the Lord’s provision for his needs.

What does it feel like when all your needs have been met? When you are full with good food and drink? When you are satisfied?

When sheep lie down, it is because they feel safe and satisfied. Philip Keller, a modern-day shepherd, observes in his book “A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23” that sheep will only lie down if four requirements are met: 1) They are free from fear; 2) they are free from friction with other sheep in the flock; 3) they are free from flies; and 4) they are free from hunger (Keller, Phillip. “A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23.” Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970, p. 35). Because of the care of their shepherd for them emotionally, socially, medically, and physically, they can lie down and rest freely.

In Matthew 6:25-34, what response to life’s needs did Jesus teach against? Do you ever feel the temptation to respond to life’s challenges this way?

Instead, how can the follower of Jesus respond to the needs of this life? How does knowing that God is your Great Shepherd help you to rest in His provision? What does it look like in everyday life? Give specific examples.

Martin Luther once said: “God is a thousand times more willing and ready to do everything that is to be done for his sheep than is any faithful human shepherd” (Pelikan, Jaroslav, ed. “Luther’s Works,” vol. 12. St. Louis: Concordia, 1955. p. 154). Since God Himself is our Great Shepherd, we can rest with confidence and assurance that He will provide for our every need.

APPLICATION

Identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to our lives.

How have you seen God as your Great Shepherd provide for your needs in the past?

What is a need in your life right now that you long for God to meet?

How does the reality of God’s faithful provision for you free you to live life without anxiety?

PRAYER

Praise God for His faithful provision in your life. Recount in prayer some of the ways He has provided for your needs already and petition him boldly for the needs that yet seem unmet. Thank Him for His constant shepherding presence in your life.

COMMENTARY

PSALM 23:1-2

23:1. The Lord is often referred to as the shepherd of His people, Israel (74:1; 80:1; Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:11-16). In the ancient Near East, kings were commonly known as the shepherds of their people. Since Yahweh is the true King, the title shepherd is most appropriate.

23:2-3. "Let's me lie down" is a Hebrew form implying causality, showing that God is the cause of the refreshment. On renews my life, see note at 19:7-9. Right paths might have a twofold idea. In keeping with the shepherd and sheep image, it can mean safe paths that are free from danger. In the larger context of Wisdom literature it refers to paths of righteousness, though usually that would contrast one path of life with another leading to death. The former idea is probably the primary meaning here.