

God Will Guide You

²He **leads me** beside still waters. ³He restores my soul. He **leads me** in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (Psalm 23:2-3, ESV)

Why do we, like sheep, easily get lost?

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way. (Isaiah 53:6, NASB)

- **We follow our own desires**

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. (Proverbs 14:12, WEB)

- **We follow after the crowd**

¹Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly ...²But his delight is in the law of the LORD. (Psalm 1:1-2, ESV)

1. You need to ask God for directions

He guides me in the paths of righteousness. (Psalm 23:3, NASB)

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should **ask God**, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (James 1:5, NIV)

2. You need to listen to the right things

- **Principles – Search the Scriptures**

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a **light for my path**. (Psalm 119:105, ESV)

Is what I'm wanting to do, consistent with God's principles?

- **People – Get wise counsel**

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with **many advisers** they succeed. (Proverbs 15:22, NIV)

The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man **listens to advice**. (Proverbs 12:15, NIV)

- **Promptings – Follow the Spirit's leading**

When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, **He will guide you** into all the truth. (John 16:13, NIV)

Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. (2 Corinthians 13:1, CSB)

3. You need to focus on the right priorities

He guides me in the **paths of righteousness** For **His name's sake**. (Psalm 23:3, NASB)

God's will is for you to **be holy**. (1 Thessalonians 4:3, NLT)

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



SILVERDALE BAPTIST CHURCH THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM GOD GUIDES YOUR STEPS PSALM 23:2-3 11/19/2017

MAIN POINT

As the Great Shepherd, God is actively guiding you.

INTRODUCTION

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

When you are facing a major life decision, who do you go to for counsel or advice? Why?

What are some ways you can actively seek God's guidance rather than the guidance of the world?

The imagery of a shepherd and his sheep drives Psalm 23. 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" willing ultimately to lay down his life for his sheep (John 10:14). In our study today, we will focus specifically on how God, the Great Shepherd, actively guides His sheep.

DISCUSSION

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

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 23:2-3.

Oftentimes, Christians talk using the language of "leading." For example, someone might say, "This is what I feel God is leading me to do," or "God has really put a burden on my heart to . . ." How do you know when God is leading you to do something?

In Psalm 23:2, what does David describe God leading him into? In Psalm 23:3, what does this ultimately do for the sheep?

David described how God leads him into "green pastures" by "still waters" to restore his soul. Sheep lying in green pastures by spring waters is an image of springtime in Israel. The "green pastures" are a seasonal phenomenon in the land of Palestine after the spring rains provide rich and abundant pastures. At these natural pastures and springs, sheep could be satisfied without having to move from field to field trying to scrounge up enough good grass to eat. Another way to describe "green pastures" could be "sheep heaven." David describes God, the Great Shepherd leading him into places and seasons of rest, restoration, and righteousness. But unlike the seasonal care and abundance of the "green

pastures” in the springtime of the Palestinian countryside, God’s care and leading is constant and abundant.

In Psalm 23:3, what does David describe God leading him into? What are these “paths of righteousness” David describes?

The “paths of righteousness” are not paths where the sheep can find righteousness but rather paths of righteousness. As William VanGemen notes: “Righteousness’ here signifies in the most basic sense ‘right,’ specifically describing the paths that bring the sheep most directly to their destination (in contrast to the ‘crooked paths’ of Psalm 125:5 and Proverbs 2:15). The shepherd’s paths are straight. He does not unnecessarily tire out his sheep. He knows what lies ahead” and he leads them on the right path. (VanGemen, William, Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 5, Psalms, 254.)

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:10-16, 27.

In John 10:27, Jesus declares: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” If we as followers of Jesus are to be led by Him, the Great Shepherd, we must be able to know and hear His voice. What does it mean to know and hear the leading of Jesus, the Good Shepherd?

What are some ways you can listen to Jesus’ voice? What are some ways we as a group of followers of Jesus can listen to His voice together?

How does listening to the Shepherd’s voice serve to identify us as His sheep in the midst of a world that is following other masters?

APPLICATION

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

Looking back on your experience in the Christian life, how have you seen God lead you into times of restoration? How have you seen God lead you on the right path (even if you didn’t know or think it was)?

How can we be a group and church that encourages and participates together in listening to the Great Shepherd’s voice?

What is a situation in your life, in your group, in Silverdale, or in Chattanooga in which you long for the Great Shepherd’s guidance?

PRAYER

Praise God for His faithful guidance in your life. Recount in prayer some of the ways He has guided you in the past and petition Him boldly for the areas of question you have just discussed. Thank Him for His constant guiding presence in your life and give Him the glory, for He does it all not just for Himself, but “for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3).

COMMENTARY

PSALM 23:2-3

23:2-3. Lets me lie down is a Hebrew form implying causality, showing that God is the cause of the refreshment. 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.

JOHN 10:10-16, 27

10:10. Jesus' promise of abundant life in the here and now brings to mind OT prophetic passages such as Ezek 34:12-15,25-31.

10:11. Jesus is the good shepherd. In the OT, God as the true shepherd is contrasted with unfaithful shepherds whom God will judge (Jer 23:1-4; Ezek 34; Zech 11:4-17). David (or the Davidic Messiah) was also depicted as a good shepherd (2Sam 5:2; Ps 78:70-72; Ezek 37:24; Mic 5:4), as was Moses (Isa 63:11; cp. Ps 77:20). The reference to the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep calls to mind young David (1Sam 17:34-37).

10:12. The hired man does not care for the sheep and abandons them in times of danger. The hired hands of Israel (Ezek 22:27) are contrasted with God and His Messiah, whose role is patterned after God's "good shepherd" par excellence, King David (1Sam 17:34-36).

10:16. The other sheep... not of this fold refers to Gentiles (Isa 56:8). Jesus envisioned a future Gentile mission following His death on the cross. One flock, one shepherd alludes to Ezek 34:23; 37:24. Believing Jews and Gentiles will be united into one messianic community.

10:27. This verse identifies two more characteristics of the sheep: they listen to the shepherd and then they follow the shepherd. True sheep listen to the shepherd; false sheep pay no attention.