



November 24, 2019

Connection Resource

A Sojourner's Guide

1 Peter 2:24-25

Connection Leader: You will be using Psalm 23 to expand on the concepts presented in the Pastor's message on Sunday. There are two activities that will engage your group in discussions about our relationship with the Great Shepherd and how that relationship enables us to die to sin and live for righteousness. It will be important to familiarize yourself with the passage as well as the activities. Your knowledge and your introduction to the activities will greatly impact the discussions that follow. The link below is a resource that maybe helpful in your preparation.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Lord-is-my-Shepherd.html>

Psalm 23: Discovering Truth in the Analogy

"For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd..."
1 Peter 2:25a, NASB

Read Psalm 23 together, then divide into three groups. Assign one of the following sets of questions to each group. Consider and discuss the characteristics of sheep and shepherds, and compare those characteristics to our relationship with the Great Shepherd. Look for Bible verses that demonstrate this relationship. Then come together as a large group to discuss your findings.

1. Sheep have a tendency to wander and get lost.
A good shepherd searches out sheep when they stray, and has great joy in finding them and restoring them to the fold.
2. Sheep have poor eyesight and poor hearing.
A good shepherd goes ahead of the sheep to prepare a safe path, and watches over them as they move from one pasture to the next.

1. Sheep are vulnerable to their own careless actions, and may unwittingly follow other sheep to their death.
A good shepherd loves the sheep, and develops a close relationship with them so that he knows them and they trust him.
2. Sheep don't learn easily and are difficult to train.
A good shepherd disciplines and corrects them.

1. Sheep are vulnerable to predators. They are slow to escape danger and have no natural defenses such as claws or strong jaws.
A good shepherd defends the sheep from predators and watches over them while they sleep.
2. Sheep are easily frightened and easily confused.
A good shepherd comforts them when they are hurt or fearful.

Psalm 23: Finding Results in the Analogy

"...He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness..." (1 Peter 2:24, NASB).

Psalm 23:1 "...I shall not want..."

Do you notice a disparity in this strong statement? If the Bible says we shall not want, then why do we still have so many wants? Why do we still have so many unfulfilled desires? How can you move from the truth in the first phrase, "The Lord is my shepherd," to find truth in the second phrase, "I shall not want?" What do your wants have to do with your ability to die to sin and live to righteousness?

Psalm 23:2 "...He leads me..."

Consider the sheep in this verse resting in a green pasture beside still waters. What is it that allows the sheep to rest in the pasture? What has caused them to lie down, rather than foraging and wandering away? And what about you? What is it that causes you to seek and wander after the things of this world. What does God provide in His relationship with you that allows you to live to righteousness and rest satisfied?

Psalm 23:3 "...He restores my soul..."

Notice that suddenly, we aren't talking about sheep anymore. Sheep do not have a soul, but sojourners do. As you daily face the hazards of a sojourner, God is constantly at work restoring the damage from a cruel world. He is also constantly leading you in His path, away from the risks and dangers of the sojourning life. How does God lead you in paths of righteousness? How do you go about choosing the path of righteousness over the path of sin? How does God restore you when you've chosen the wrong path?

Psalm 23:4 "...the valley of the shadow..."

As a sojourner, you will face difficult and tragic circumstances; but you will never face them alone. God will always walk beside you with His rod that is strong to defend you, and His staff that supports and protects you. His comfort will surround you, leaving you with no reason to fear. Consider the valleys you have walked through and share your strategies for moving *through* the valley without getting *lost in* the valley. How do you grieve without becoming bitter over your loss? How do you face fearful situations without being overcome by anxiety? How do you face disappointment without getting lost in depression? How do you keep moving forward through the valley without losing your way?

Psalm 23:5 "...you prepare a table before me..."

God shows honor and favor by preparing a table in the presence of your enemies. That table declares that God is your abundant provider and strong defender. That table has everything you need to face your enemies. That table is also your best opportunity to deal with your enemies in a godly manner. How do you allow God to direct your approach to difficult people in your life? How do you allow God's provision to protect you from the damage of your enemies? How do you allow God's provision for you to overflow to your enemies?

Psalm 23:6 "...surely goodness and mercy will follow me..."

Here is a beautiful conclusion of the life of a faithful sojourner, both in this life and in eternity. There is no doubt of God's loving care and God's provision for the sojourner. There is also no doubt in the sojourner's mind regarding the future. The future is certain, and eternity is secure. What are your thoughts about the future? How do you rest in God's peace. How do you rely on the certainty of His goodness and mercy for you? How can you be certain of your eternity?