

Psalm 23 – Week 4 – The Lord is my Shepherd – Bible Study Helps

Title: The Lord Is My Shepherd

Sermon Summary: Drawing from one of the most beloved passages in all of Scripture, this sermon walks through Psalm 23 verse by verse, unpacking the practical and eternal promises God makes to those who trust Him as their shepherd. The message centers on three foundational spiritual realities for the believer: contentment rooted in God's provision, peace that comes from surrendering worry to Him, and the eternal hope that awaits those who belong to Christ. The sermon weaves personal testimony throughout, demonstrating how God's faithfulness has been evident even in seasons of uncertainty, poor decisions, and financial fear. The sermon also emphasizes that God leads His people in paths of righteousness for His name's sake, meaning the Christian life is not merely personal but reflects directly on the God we represent. Closing with the glorious promises of Revelation and Romans, the message reminds believers that whatever suffering exists in this present life cannot compare to the glory that awaits those who dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Key Points:

- God as shepherd guarantees provision, meaning believers need not live in fear over material circumstances, though this is not a prosperity gospel
- Contentment is a learned attitude, not a natural feeling, and stands in direct opposition to the covetousness that drives much cultural and political unrest today
- Peace is the fruit of a mind stayed on God, and prayer is the proper response to anxiety and worry
- God leads believers in paths of righteousness for His name's sake, meaning the Christian's conduct reflects upon God and carries weight in both the seen and unseen world
- God's chastisement of His children is an act of love, not cruelty, and serves to redirect them toward righteousness
- Believers have been adopted into God's family and given a royal identity as kings and priests through Jesus Christ
- The eternal promises of Scripture, including the removal of death, sorrow, pain, and tears, give the believer enduring hope regardless of present circumstances

Scripture Reference:

- Psalm 23 (primary text)
- Philippians 4:6-7 and 4:11 on peace and contentment
- 1 Timothy 6:6 on godliness with contentment
- Proverbs 30:8-9 on the prayer for neither poverty nor riches

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- Isaiah 26:3 on perfect peace for the mind stayed on God
- Daniel 9:18 on praying for God's name and mercy
- Psalm 51:12-13 on repentance and usefulness to God
- Psalm 67:1-2 on seeking blessing for God's glory among the nations
- 2 Corinthians 5:20 on believers as ambassadors for Christ
- Job 1:8 on God's commendation of a blameless servant
- Hebrews 12:6-11 on God's chastisement of those He loves
- 1 Samuel 16:13 on the anointing of David as king
- Romans 8:15 on the spirit of adoption
- Revelation 1:5-6 on believers made kings and priests
- Revelation 21:3-4 on God dwelling with His people in eternity
- Romans 8:18 on present suffering compared to future glory
- Psalm 17:15 on being satisfied when awakening in God's likeness

Stories:

- Nate recounts how God provided a career path through a series of jobs he never directly applied for, including a teaching position at Fairless High School, a sales role with Aflac, and ultimately an editing job at the Bargain Hunter, using this as a personal testimony to the truth that the Lord is his shepherd and he shall not want
- He shares his background of struggling with drugs and alcohol through his early twenties and how God gradually pulled him out of that life, including a memorable moment in his senior year of high school when reading Revelation convicted him deeply, followed by breaking a vow to God the very next day and suffering a physical consequence that he reflects on as a moment of divine redirection
- He describes a mission trip to the Philippines with Pastor Doug, contrasting the material poverty of rural pastors there with their extraordinary spiritual joy and zeal, using it to illustrate the importance of counting blessings and cultivating contentment
- He recalls a humorous childhood memory of running past a row of dark bushes behind his parents' house and quoting Psalm 23 to himself out of fear, having watched horror movies he should not have seen
- He references the recent passing of his Uncle Bob, using it to contrast the peace of attending a funeral for a believer versus the grief of attending funerals for friends who died of heroin overdoses without that same assurance of faith

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Discipleship Questions

Nate describes contentment as 'not a feeling, but rather an attitude to work toward' -- in what practical ways can believers actively cultivate contentment in a culture that constantly encourages comparison and acquisition?

Paul writes in Philippians 4 that he had to learn contentment, suggesting it is a process rather than an instant transformation -- what experiences in your own life have been the most effective teachers of contentment, and what made them so formative?

The sermon draws a sharp contrast between David and Saul, noting that both sinned but responded very differently -- how does the posture of our hearts after we fail, whether we own our mistakes or make excuses, shape our relationship with God over time?

Nate reflects on how Daniel prayed not for his own comfort but for the honor of God's name -- how often do our own prayers center on God's glory versus our personal circumstances, and what might it look like to shift that balance?

God is described as using both the rod and the staff to protect and redirect His people, and David calls this a comfort -- have you ever experienced a moment of divine redirection that felt painful at the time but proved to be an act of God's care?

The sermon connects the anointing of David's head with oil in 1 Samuel 16 to the believer's identity as a king and priest in Revelation 1 -- how does truly understanding your royal identity in Christ change the way you face everyday hardships and uncertainties?

Nate warns that a lack of divine chastisement in the life of someone living in sin could be a spiritual red flag, based on Hebrews 12 -- how should believers interpret seasons of difficulty or correction in their lives rather than viewing them only as misfortune?

The sermon emphasizes that as Christians we are called by Christ's name and therefore our conduct reflects upon God before a watching world -- in what specific areas of daily life do you find it most challenging to live in a way that honors the name you carry?

Nate shares that memorizing Scripture like Psalm 23 and Psalm 18 has provided comfort during fearful moments throughout his life -- what role does Scripture memory play in your own spiritual life, and are there particular verses that have anchored you during difficult seasons?

Revelation 21 describes a future where God wipes away every tear and there is no more pain, death, or sorrow -- how does keeping an eternal perspective on that promised reality practically change the way you endure present suffering or grieve the loss of loved ones?

Small Group Guide:

Psalm 23 — The Lord Is My Shepherd

Overview

This guide is based on a sermon exploring Psalm 23, one of the most beloved passages in all of Scripture. The message walked through the promises of God as Shepherd — provision, peace, righteousness, protection, and eternal dwelling — and challenged believers to respond with contentment, trust, and a life that honors God's name.

Key Takeaways

- God is a faithful shepherd who provides for His people, even when circumstances feel uncertain or frightening.
 - Contentment is not a feeling that comes naturally — it is an attitude that must be learned and cultivated through trust in God.
 - As Christians, we are called by God's name, and the way we live reflects upon Him.
 - God's correction in our lives is not punishment to dread but a sign of His love and ownership.
 - Every believer has been adopted into God's family and given a royal identity as a king and priest through Jesus Christ.
 - The promises of eternity far outweigh the sufferings of this present life.
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Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- What is your earliest memory of Psalm 23? Did you grow up hearing it, or did you encounter it later in life? What does it mean to you personally?
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Section 1: "The Lord Is My Shepherd, I Shall Not Want" — Provision and Contentment

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- Nate shared several moments in his life where God provided a job or opportunity he never applied for. Can you think of a time when God provided for you in an unexpected way? What did that teach you about His character?
 - Philippians 4:11 says that Paul learned to be content in whatever state he found himself. Why do you think contentment has to be learned rather than coming naturally? What makes it difficult in your own life?
 - The sermon drew a distinction between contentment and covetousness. Where do you see covetousness showing up most in your own life or in the culture around you?
 - Nate reflected on a mission trip and how believers in poverty could put wealthier Christians to shame spiritually because of their joy and zeal for God. What does that challenge you to think about regarding your own spiritual life?
 - Read Proverbs 30:8-9 together as a group. The writer asks God for neither poverty nor riches, only for what is needed. How does this kind of prayer challenge the way you typically approach God with your needs and wants?
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Section 2: "He Leadeth Me Beside the Still Waters" — Peace

- Isaiah 26:3 describes a perfect peace that comes when the mind is stayed on God. What are the biggest obstacles in your daily life that pull your mind away from God and rob you of that peace?
 - Philippians 4:6-7 instructs believers to bring everything to God in prayer with thanksgiving, and promises a peace that passes understanding in return. Is there something you are currently carrying that you have not fully surrendered to God in prayer? What is holding you back?
 - The sermon suggested memorizing Scripture as a practical tool for combating worry and fear. Do you have a verse or passage that has carried you through a difficult season? Share it with the group.
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Section 3: "He Leadeth Me in the Paths of Righteousness for His Name's Sake" — Living for God's Glory

- The sermon pointed out that the word "Christian" literally contains the name of Christ. How does that reality shape the way you think about your daily choices, conversations, and conduct?
- Nate contrasted David and Saul — both sinned, but David owned his failure and repented with a heart focused on God's glory, while Saul made excuses. Which tendency do you find yourself leaning toward when you fall short? What makes genuine repentance difficult?
- In Psalm 51, David asks for restoration not primarily for his own comfort but so that he can be useful to God and teach sinners. How does this reframe the way we think about asking God for forgiveness?

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- Job 1:8 records God pointing to Job as an example of a man who did what was right and avoided evil. If God were to point to your life right now as an example, what would He be pointing to? What would you want Him to see that is not yet there?
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Section 4: "Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Comfort Me" — God's Correction

- The shepherd's staff was used both to guide and to rescue sheep that had wandered or fallen. Can you think of a time when God redirected your path in a way that felt uncomfortable at the time but proved to be for your good?
 - Hebrews 12:6-11 teaches that God disciplines those He loves, and that the fruit of that discipline is righteousness. How do you typically respond when you sense God correcting you? Is your first response resistance, grief, or something else?
 - The sermon made a sobering point: if there is no chastisement from God in your life when you are living in sin, that may be a red flag. How does that statement sit with you? Does it change the way you think about God's discipline?
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Section 5: "Thou Anointest My Head with Oil" — Royal Identity

- Romans 8:15 says believers have received the spirit of adoption and can call God "Abba, Father." What does it mean to you personally that God is not just the Creator or Judge but your Father?
 - Revelation 1:5-6 describes believers as kings and priests through Jesus Christ. How does remembering your identity as a child of the King change the way you face hardship, financial pressure, or feelings of failure?
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Section 6: "I Will Dwell in the House of the Lord Forever" — Eternal Hope

- Revelation 21:3-4 promises no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. How does the reality of eternity shape the way you face difficulty or loss right now?
 - Nate mentioned attending the funeral of a believing family member and experiencing a peace that was absent at the funerals of friends who did not know the Lord. Have you experienced that contrast? How did it affect your faith?
 - Romans 8:18 says the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed. Is there a current struggle in your life that feels overwhelming? How does this verse speak to it?
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Practical Applications

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1. **Memorize a promise.** Choose one verse from the sermon — such as Psalm 23:1, Isaiah 26:3, or Philippians 4:6-7 — and commit it to memory this week. Use it the next time worry or fear begins to take hold.
 2. **Practice gratitude deliberately.** Set aside time this week to write down ten specific ways God has provided for you. Review the list when anxiety about finances or the future arises.
 3. **Examine your contentment.** Identify one area of your life where covetousness or discontentment has taken root. Bring it honestly before God in prayer and ask Him to replace it with a spirit of thankfulness.
 4. **Consider your testimony.** Ask yourself honestly: does the way I live — at work, online, in my home, and in private — reflect well on the name of Christ? Identify one specific area where you want your conduct to better honor God's name.
 5. **Pray like Daniel and David.** This week, when you bring a request to God, try framing it around His glory rather than your comfort. Ask God to be honored through your situation, whatever the outcome.
 6. **Encourage someone in grief.** If you know someone who has recently lost a believing loved one, consider sharing Psalm 17:15 or Revelation 21:3-4 with them as a reminder of the hope that is theirs in Christ.
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Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together around these themes:

- Gratitude for God's faithful provision in each person's life
 - A request for genuine contentment and peace in the areas where group members are struggling
 - Prayers for anyone in the group who is grieving a loss
 - A commitment as a group to live in a way that honors the name of Christ
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"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." — Psalm 23:1

5-Day Bible Reading and Devotional Guide

Based on Psalm 23 and Supporting Themes

Day 1: The Shepherd Who Provides

Reading: Psalm 23:1-2; Philippians 4:11-13

Devotional: The declaration "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" is not a promise of a trouble-free life, but a promise of a faithful Provider. Paul reminds us that contentment is something learned, not something that arrives automatically. It grows through seasons of uncertainty, unmet expectations, and redirected plans. God often provides in ways we did not ask for and through doors we did not knock on. Reflect today on the moments in your own life when God supplied what you needed, not necessarily what you demanded. Rest in the truth that your Shepherd knows exactly what you lack.

Personal Reflection: Can you identify a time when God provided for you in an unexpected way? How did that experience shape your trust in Him?

Practical Application: Write down three specific provisions God has given you this week, including ones that are easy to overlook. Return to this list whenever anxiety about finances or the future begins to take hold.

Day 2: Still Waters and the Peace That Passes Understanding

Reading: Isaiah 26:3; Philippians 4:6-7

Devotional: The image of still waters in Psalm 23 is not accidental. A shepherd leads sheep to calm water because sheep will not drink from turbulent streams. God understands that a troubled soul cannot receive what it needs from a place of chaos. Isaiah makes clear that perfect peace belongs to the mind that stays fixed on God, not the mind that has eliminated all problems. The peace God offers is not the absence of difficulty but the presence of a Shepherd in the middle of it. When worry floods your thoughts, prayer is not a last resort. It is the first and most powerful response available to you.

Personal Reflection: What area of your life feels most turbulent right now? Have you brought that specific concern before God in honest prayer?

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Practical Application: Set aside ten uninterrupted minutes today to pray through your most pressing worries. Commit each one specifically to God, and then spend a few moments in silence, allowing His peace to settle over your heart.

Day 3: Called by His Name

Reading: Daniel 9:17-19; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Psalm 51:12-13

Devotional: Psalm 23 declares that God leads His people in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. This is a profound and sobering truth. The Christian life is not lived in isolation. Every believer carries the name of Christ into every room, every conversation, and every decision. Daniel prayed not for his own comfort but for the honor of God's name among the nations. David, in his repentance, longed to be restored not simply to feel better, but so that sinners might be led to God through his testimony. The question worth sitting with today is this: does the way I live make God look trustworthy to those who are watching?

Personal Reflection: In what areas of your daily life is the gap between your professed faith and your visible conduct most noticeable?

Practical Application: Identify one relationship, whether at work, at home, or in your neighborhood, where you can be more intentional this week about representing Christ with both your words and your conduct.

Day 4: The Valley and the Rod That Redirects

Reading: Hebrews 12:6-11; Romans 8:15

Devotional: The valley of the shadow of death is not a place to avoid. It is a place to walk through, and the Psalm makes clear that the Shepherd walks through it with you. The rod and the staff, instruments of correction and rescue, are described not as threats but as comforts. A God who disciplines is a God who is engaged. Hebrews reminds us that chastisement is evidence of belonging, not abandonment. If you are in a difficult season today and feel the weight of God redirecting your path, take courage. The discomfort of correction is always aimed at the peaceable fruit of righteousness that comes on the other side.

Personal Reflection: Is there an area of your life where God may be using difficulty or conviction to redirect your path? How are you responding to that correction?

Practical Application: Spend time today reading Hebrews 12:1-11 in full. Ask God honestly whether there is sin or a misaligned priority in your life that He has been patiently addressing. Then ask Him for the willingness to respond with humility rather than resistance.

Day 5: Forever in the House of the Lord

Reading: Revelation 21:3-4; Romans 8:18; Psalm 17:15

Devotional: Psalm 23 closes not with a sigh of relief but with a declaration of eternal certainty. Goodness and mercy are not occasional visitors. They are described as faithful companions that follow the believer all the days of life, leading ultimately to a dwelling place with God forever. Revelation 21 fills in what that forever looks like: no more death, no more sorrow, no more pain. Every loss you have grieved, every prayer that felt unanswered, every suffering that seemed without purpose, will one day be seen in the full light of the glory that Romans 8:18 promises is coming. The best is not behind you. It is ahead.

Personal Reflection: How does the certainty of eternity with God change the way you view your current circumstances, losses, or fears?

Practical Application: Write out Psalm 17:15 by hand and place it somewhere you will see it daily this week. Let it serve as a reminder that for the believer, the final word is not grief or uncertainty, but the satisfied joy of waking in the likeness of God.