

Dealing with Life!

An Integrated Study- Sermon Series

Psalm 23

*1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

- Study 1 Dealing with who I am & who God is**
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1. Dealing with Who I am & Who God is

Ps 23:1 "The Lord is my Shepherd"

Background.

Psalm 23 is possibly the most loved & well-known Psalm in the Bible. It has comforted people dealing with anxiety, busyness, emotional pain, dark days of death, hurt & fear. It has strengthened people going through personal trials, suffering illness, grief & death. For some, the words of this psalm have been the last they have ever heard or said.

David is the author of this Psalm, himself a shepherd, & the son of a shepherd, later to be known as the Shepherd King of Israel. It is a testimony of David. Every verse testifies of the relationship David has with his God. David painted a picture of God as the Great shepherd of his life. What David was to his sheep was what the Lord was to His sheep but even better. This was not unusual thinking, Eastern thought sees the King of the nation as a Shepherd like leader. Yet at the same time, the shepherd's work was considered a servant position often given to the youngest son like David.

Bible Dig

Q1. There are many lords or masters in a persons life. Who or what are they?

Q2. Who is the 'Lord' David is referring to?

Genesis 49:24

Isaiah 40:11

John 10:11,14

Hebrews 13:20

1 Peter 2:25

1 Peter 5:1-4

Some Humbling Facts

The Sun belongs to a galaxy called the Milky Way. Astronomers estimate there are about 100 thousand million stars in the Milky Way alone. Outside that, there are millions upon millions of other galaxies also.

Pick up a handful of soil & there are apparently billions upon billions of micro-organisms. From the most gigantic of galaxies to the most minute microbe, all function as the creator intended.

Q3. What are the credentials of our Shepherd according to Colossians 1:15-20?

- i. C _____ v16
- ii. S _____ v17
- iii. H ___ of the Church v18
- iv. S _____ v19,20

Q4. If the Lord is my ‘Shepherd’ what does that make you?

Generally, sheep are dumb animals, that wander away & so get lost, unable to return. When in danger, the sheep is prey to the wolves & the dangers of the fields. Sheep need a leader, who cares & readily protects them.

Q5. If you don’t see yourself as a sheep how will that impact the way you live?

Q6. Why does David say “My Shepherd”?

It seems to me that David speaks with a strong sense of pride & admiration. It was as though he literally boasted aloud. “Look at who **my** shepherd, **my** owner & **my** manager is!” – “The Lord!”

Q7. Who do you belong to? Who has ownership over you?

You can’t have it both ways. You either belong to the Sovereign Lord or you don’t. You either are under the influence of the Lord Almighty or you are under the influence of the World. You are either committed to His leadership or you are committed to your own direction.

Reflection

Being on the right track!

Do I really belong to the Lord?
 Am I content to allow Him to lead me?
 Am I pleased in the direction My Lord wants to take me?
 What is the one area in my life that I need to change?

** Over this Term let us aim to remember
 off by heart this great Psalm!*

Prayer

Give Thanks & Praise for who God is & what He has done.
 Pray for our Non- Christian friends that they will be lead on the right track & that our church family will stay on the right track.
 Pray for our under-shepherds that they will be faithful & sensitive in leading Christ’s Church.



2. Dealing with Anxiety

Ps 23:1 "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not be in want"

The sheep were kept, not only for food but for wool, milk, and reproduction. In this psalm, David explains that if we follow the Lord and trust Him, He will meet our every need, no matter what the circumstances may be.

Eastern shepherds guarded their sheep; led them; provided food and water for them; took care of them when they were weary, bruised, cut or sick; rescued them when they strayed; knew their names; assisted in delivering the lambs; and in every way simply loved them.

Today a closer translation would be *"I shall not be in need"*

Primarily, sheep need food (grass), water, rest, and a shepherd who knows where to lead them. When God's people follow their Shepherd, they have all that they need and will not lack the necessities of life, otherwise there may be anxiety & worry in our lives.

Bible Dig

Q1. What is the difference between needs & wants?

Q2. What do you think this verse is actually promising?

Q3. What is it like for you to experience God's care?

What are you thankful for?

Q4. Read Matthew 6:28-34. Sometimes we can be anxious & worry about life. Jesus mentions several things that will help us when we are in anxious. What are they?

Q5. What do these passages teach us about our needs & our anxiety?

Matthew 6:9-15

Isaiah 40:11

Philippians 4:6

1Peter 5:7

Reflection

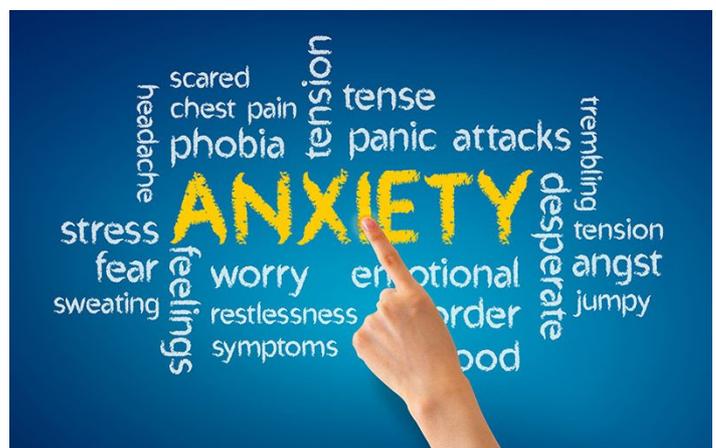
What is your greatest need?

What makes you anxious? Why?

Prayer

Give thanks for what you have & do not have.

Pray that your hearts & minds will be open to everything our good shepherd gives.



3. Dealing with my Busyness

Ps 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

Like sheep we don't readily rest, we tend to wander aimlessly being busy with things that are not really important. The Good shepherd knows his sheep, He finds green pasture & quiet waters which helps his sheep to rest.

Bible Dig

Q1. How & why do people keep busy?

When can our busyness be aimless & godless?

Q2. When was the last time you experienced emotional & spiritual rest?

Q3. What are the green pastures & still waters God leads us to?

Q4. Read Matthew 11:28-30. What makes you weary & burdened?

Like little children Jesus wants us to humbly do 3 things:

What do each of these 3 commands mean?

i. C _ _ _ to me

ii. T _ _ _ my yoke

iii. L _ _ _ _ from me

Q5. What are the promises Jesus makes with each of these commands

Q6. Ps 23:3 provides *refreshment for our souls* & Matt 11:29 Jesus speaks of *rest for your souls*

What do these phrases mean?

Q7. How can these verses help you relax in the Lord?

Psalm 139:14 **R**

Hebrews 13:5 **E**

Exodus 20:9,10 **L**

Romans 12:18 **A**

John 7:37, 38 **X**

Reflection

**What helps you rest & relax: Physically
Emotionally
Spiritually?**

**Close your eyes & picture yourself besides green pastures & quiet waters!
What do you see?**

Prayer

Give thanks that we can find rest in the Lord.
Pray that we will never be too busy for our relationship
with our Lord & our brothers & sisters.



4. Dealing with my Emotions

Ps 23:3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

When God refreshes, restores, enlivens or revitalizes David's soul, David is more likely talking about our psychological state or an emotional state of being. Paul says in *1 Thessalonians 5:23 May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*. The spirit being that part of us that connects with God, our bodies which is self-explanatory, and our souls is that part of us that feels & thinks.

David wasn't immune to being on an emotional roller coaster, many times he felt despair, abandonment, stressed & depressed because of what was happening in his life.

Bible Dig

Read Psalm 13. It was probably written when King Saul was pursuing him, a low time for David.

Q1. 13:1,2 What are David's feelings?

13:3,4 What is David's prayer?

13:5,6 What is David's faith? *BUT*

David vented his emotions to God **but** was driven by his faith & trust in His Lord.

Q2. When are you personally emotionally drained or damaged?

Q3. If we are not living under God’s guidance nor living for His glory where can that leave us?

Conversely, what do you think living under God’s guidance & living for his sake will do for us?

Q4. What are the things that can cause hurt or damaged emotions:

Psalm 38:4 **G** _ _ _ _ _

Psalm 31:9 **G** _ _ _ _ _

Ephesians 4:31 **G** _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Q5. What can happen to straying sheep who don’t follow their good shepherd?

Q6. Many of us can identify with sheep who stray. What fears or beliefs make it difficult for you to seek & follow God’s guidance at times?

Reflection

When we forget who we are in Christ, when we allow anxiety or busyness to take priority in our lives, when we are not living under God’s guidance or for His sake, our emotions can take control of our lives. **Discuss**

Despite the importance & value of truth, many people still make decisions on how they feel. **Discuss**

Prayer

Give thanks that we can be truthful about how we feel to God.
But pray that we will always make decisions on the basis of the Word of God & not our emotions.



5. Dealing with my Dark Days

Ps 23:4 Even 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.

Sheep are defenseless. They can't protect, feed or fully care for themselves. Sheep need constant protection by the shepherd. When sheep needed to pass through deep dark valleys, the shepherds were particularly close to protect their sheep from danger. Sheep lack good vision & are easily frightened in dark circumstances.

Bible Dig

Q1. We as sheep go through dark valleys in our lives explain & discuss the following statements.

Valleys are: i. Inevitable

ii. Unpredictable

iii. Impartial

iv. Temporary

v. Purposeful

Q2. What are possible dark valleys in your life?

Q3. How are we to respond to dark valleys?

i. **R** _____ to the Discouraged

I will fear no evil,

ii. **R** _____ God is with me

for you are with me

How?

iii. **R** _____ on God's protection

your rod & your staff, they comfort me

iv. **R** _____ shadows are not the end

we walk in the valleys of the shadow of death

Q4. The Shepherd's rod is a weapon of defence against predators. What is God's rod for us?

Q5. Read Psalm 34. What added light can this give to our verse today?

Q6. Read Isaiah 40:9-11, 25-31. How does God comfort us?

Reflection

Why are children afraid of the dark?

Can you remember such times yourself when you were afraid?

How do you want to be comforted in the dark times of your life?

Is that something you can do for others when they are experiencing difficulty?

Prayer

Spend some time thanking God for being a comfort & for being in control of our dark days.

Pray that as sheep we won't scatter when we are afraid, but will stay with the flock under the good shepherd.



6. Dealing with my Hurt

Ps 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows

The Shepherd prepares food & drink because of his great care for his sheep. God wants no less for us than the very best spiritual food & drink. Sometimes our hurt or pain can make us doubt God's care & love for his people. Sometimes we can act out of despair in ways that are self-destructive, filling our lives with things that do not satisfy.

Bible Dig

Q1. How does God provide for our needs?

Q2. Who are our enemies & how does God protect us from our enemies?

Q3. Read Isaiah 55.

God calls back the exiles to return & be restored by receiving spiritual food & water.

What does Is. 55 tell us about God?

Is. 55:1 Who is invited to "Come"

Is.55:2. How do our enemies tempt us with things that do not satisfy?

Is 55:7 Describes God's mercy & forgiveness. How is this being spiritually fed?

Is 55:12 What is the connection of joy & peace & being cared for by God?

Q4. Read Isaiah 61:1-3

Anointing someone's head with oil was often a sign that God had chosen someone to do something very special, like Kings, prophets & priests. Sometimes special guests were anointed with oil as a gesture of honouring that person. Thirdly, people who were sick were anointed with oil to bring them healing. In Psalm 23 the shepherd used oil for medicinal purposes. Oil protected the sheep from insects, cuts & wounds.

Similarly God can replace our ashes of grief & despair with the oil of gladness.

Q5. What are the before & after images of v3?

What NOT to do when you are hurt.

- Don't i. Ignore
 ii. Run
 iii. Hide
 iv. Worry
 v. Resent

But Come to the Good Shepherd

Let Jesus S _ _ _ _ _ the score *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*

Let Jesus S _ _ _ _ _ my wounds *You anoint my head with oil.*

Let Jesus S _ _ _ _ _ my needs *my cup overflows.*

Reflection

How do you feel & what do you do when you are sick?
 How do you respond when you get better?

Share with the group how God has brought either physical, emotional or Spiritual healing!

**Prayer**

Use the Sick & Sad in the News sheet to pray for the Physically sick
 Pray for those who are emotionally not well through grief or anxiety etc.
 Pray for one friend you know who is spiritually lost.

7. Dealing with my Future

Ps 23: 6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

David looked back over his long life and came to this conclusion. In spite of his sins and failures, he had been followed by goodness and mercy, which is the Old Testament equivalent of Romans 8:28. “Surely” means “only.” As David looked ahead, he knew he would be in heaven—the Father’s house—forever.

Some Christians have different perspectives of their future. For some, they see despair in the present & never look into the promises of God. For others they see hope, that even despite the difficulties in life, they will be blessed by God’s goodness & love.

Bible Dig

Q1. When does the first part of this verse take place?

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life

Q2. How have you seen this goodness & love in your life?

Q3. What does the Bible say about his sovereign control over your life?

Psalm 145:20

Romans 8:28

Genesis 50:20

Q4. When does the second part of this verse take place?

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

What might inspire you to think about you eternal future with the Lord?

Q5. Read John 14:1-6

How does Jesus encourage his disciples?

What awaits their immediate future?

What does Jesus say about himself?

Q6. Read Philippians 3:20

How do we balance the idea that we are citizens of heaven & yet we still live in this world?

Q7. Read Revelation 21:1-8 & 22:1-5

How does this encourage you?

Reflection

Why can we sometimes grow to be negative towards life?

If you spent more time thinking about your destiny how will that effect your life here & now?

Prayer

Give thanks for the many blessings God has blessed you with & will continue to bless you with.

Ask God to help us keep this life in perspective with our eternity with the Lord.

Are there any wayward or lost sheep you can pray for?

