



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Through the Bible

May 26 - June 1

Psalm 23

Things to Know

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

*Reminder. Seek to understand and apply God's word, **not** rehash the sermon.*

Sermon Recap

1. You don't need to be the shepherd when you've got the Shepherd.

Stop trying to lead your own soul to peace—He already knows the way. He's not just in charge of the path; He is the path.

2. The valley isn't proof He left you—it's proof He's close.

The shadow only shows up when the Light is nearby. Don't let the dark fool you. You're not alone, you're accompanied.

3. God's goodness doesn't trail behind you—it tackles you.

Mercy's not limping to catch up—it's running full speed. His love chases you down like a Shepherd sprinting after a wandering sheep.

Discussion Questions

1. Psalm 23:1

Question: What does it look like to live as if “The Lord is my shepherd”? How does that truth challenge your daily worries or your desire for control?

2. Psalm 23:2–3

Question: In what areas of your life do you feel spiritually exhausted or off-course right now? How might God be trying to lead you to “green pastures” and “paths of righteousness”?

3. Psalm 23:4

Question: Can you recall a time you experienced God's presence in a personal way during a difficult season? How did His "rod and staff" comfort you?

4. Psalm 23:5

Question: What does it mean for God to "prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies"? How has He shown you favor even when life felt like a battlefield?

5. Psalm 23:6

Question: What would change in your mindset if you believed God's goodness and mercy were actively pursuing you? How does that impact the way you see your future?

Read

Read Psalm 23 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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Scripture

Psalm 23

The Lord Is My Shepherd

A Psalm of David.

23 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

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.

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

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

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Psalm 23

Living on Mission In Community

Psalm 23 doesn't invite us to admire the Shepherd from a distance—it calls us to follow Him with trust and surrender. If the Lord truly is your Shepherd, that changes how you walk through the green pastures and the dark valleys. You don't have to carry the weight of control, the fear of the unknown, or the pressure to provide for yourself. He leads. He restores. He walks with you. The question isn't whether He's doing His job

—it's whether we're staying close enough to hear His voice. So here's the challenge: If Jesus is your Shepherd, are you actually letting Him lead?

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
 2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
 3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*
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Leader Resources

1. Session Overview

Main Idea: Psalm 23 shows that peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of the Shepherd.

Theme: God's intimate, faithful care through every season of life—both green pastures and dark valleys.

Gospel Thread: Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11), walked through death to bring us home, and now leads us with goodness and mercy.

2. Opening (Prayer & Icebreaker)

Leader's Opening Prompt:

Ask your group to break into pairs or groups of 3 and answer:

“Is there any way we can pray for our personal walks with God this week?”

Lead by example with a personal answer.

Icebreaker Question:

“What's the most peaceful place you've ever been? What made it feel safe or restful?”

Opening Prayer:

“Lord, thank You for being our Shepherd. Open our eyes to Your care, guidance, and grace. Lead us in truth and grow our trust in You today. Amen.”

3. Scripture Reading

Read Psalm 23 aloud together.

Encourage participants to listen not just with their minds, but with their hearts. Then ask:

- “Which verse stood out to you and why?”

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

Verse 1: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

- God is not a shepherd; He is my shepherd—personal and near.
- “I shall not want” doesn’t mean life is easy; it means God is enough.

“The sweetest word in the whole psalm is that monosyllable, ‘my.’” – Charles Spurgeon

Verses 2–3: Provision, Peace, and Restoration

- “Green pastures” and “still waters” are images of peace in an anxious world.
- God restores what life wears down—our soul. He leads us not in confusion, but righteousness.

Verse 4: Presence in the Valley

- The valley of the shadow of death (Hebrew: tsalmavet) means deep darkness.
- God doesn’t always pull us out of valleys—He walks with us through them.

“It is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of the Shepherd that eliminates fear.” – Adrian Rogers

Verse 5: A Table in the Wilderness

- In a hostile world, God throws a feast. He honors us in the face of our enemies.
- Oil = anointing, favor, welcome. Overflowing cup = abundance beyond survival.

Verse 6: The Long Pursuit and the Long Home

- “Surely” is not wishful—it’s certain.
- “Follow” = pursue, chase down. God’s mercy isn’t passive; it’s relentless.
- “Dwell in the house of the Lord forever” points to eternity with Christ.

“Jesus does not drive His sheep. He goes before them. And having gone through death Himself, He now leads us home.”
– Joby Martin

5. Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to you that God is your Shepherd, not just the Shepherd?
2. In what areas of your life do you need soul restoration right now?
3. When have you experienced God’s presence in a “valley of the shadow” season?
4. How does it change your view of suffering to know God prepares a feast in the presence of your enemies?
5. What do you think it means that God’s goodness and mercy pursue you?

6. Application Points

- Reflect: Where do you struggle to trust God’s guidance right now?
- Confess: Are you trying to shepherd your own life without following Him?
- Rejoice: Thank Him for a time He walked with you through a dark valley.
- Respond: Follow Jesus as the Shepherd, even when the path feels unclear.

“He is no hireling, but the Good Shepherd who bled to make you His own. If you can trust Him with eternity, you can trust Him with today.”

7. Closing Reflection and Prayer

Invite participants to reflect quietly for 2–3 minutes on the question:

“What is one step of trust you can take this week in following the Shepherd?”

Then close with group prayer, inviting volunteers to thank God for His nearness and ask for His leading.

8. Memory Verse

Psalm 23:1

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

Encourage the group to memorize this verse this week as a prayer of trust.

9. Leader’s Notes

- Pace the session to allow space for vulnerability. If conversation goes deep in verses 4 or 6, let it linger.
- Model honesty in prayer and reflection—especially about fear or need.
- Create a shepherded environment by affirming and listening well.
- If time allows, consider ending by reading John 10:11–15 as a New Testament echo.