

Is He A Good Shepherd?

October 29-November 4, 2023



MAIN POINT

When the Lord is our shepherd, we lack nothing of what we truly need in life.

HEAD, HEART AND LIFE CHANGE

- To know that every shepherd other than God is a thief who cannot deliver on the longings of our hearts.
- To be comforted by the gracious provision of God regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves in this world.
- To abandon whatever false shepherds tempt us away from following the Lord.

INTRODUCTION

Describe a time when you got lost.
What happened?

How did you lose your way?

How did the situation resolve?

No one likes being lost. It's much better to know where we're going—or at least know someone who can lead us in the right direction. We're about to dive into one of the most popular psalms in the Bible: Psalm 23. The psalm begins by comparing God to a shepherd who guides, provides for, and cares for his sheep. We'll hear teaching from pastor Matt Chandler from The Village Church in Dallas, Texas. He'll explain that, when God is our shepherd, we lack none of what we truly need in life.

READ [PSALM 23:1-6](#).

Show Session 1: Psalm 23:1
RightNow Media
Psalm 23, Matt Chandler (6 minutes).

DISCUSSION

Few portions of Scripture are more popular than Psalm 23. If you grew up in church, you heard it recited and perhaps even memorized it in its entirety. It's an encouraging passage to hold dear, but when we grow familiar with certain portions of the Bible, they can often lose their punch. At one time God's Word jumped off the page, but now the well-known portions begin to feel distant and repetitive. As Matt noted in the session, our familiarity can tempt us

to believe they do not even apply to us.

How familiar are you with Psalm 23?

How have you heard it used throughout your life?

As you enter into this study, what do you hope to take away from it?

Write down 2-3 ways you hope God will help you grow throughout this series.

Many times, readers of the Bible find themselves divided between the Old and New Testaments, believing only the “new stuff ” applies to their lives because everything else came before Jesus. But Matt made it clear that not only does this psalm apply to our lives, but all of Scripture—including the Old Testament—does as well.

In what ways do you find yourself believing the Old Testament is not relevant to your life today?

How does that belief influence your view of the Bible as a whole?

Whether or not you have a background in church, you’re likely familiar with the story of David—the shepherd boy who slew Goliath with a stone and became king of Israel. But he was much more than that. David was a human being just like the rest of us and had his fair share of both highs and lows.

What do you know about the story of David?

GO DEEPER

Read more about the highs and lows of David’s life in the following verses:

[1 Samuel 17:1-58](#) and

[2 Samuel 5:1-5; 11:1-12:23](#)

What did you learn about David from these passages that you did not know before?

In what ways do they help you relate to David as a human being?

How could a deeper understanding of David’s life shape the way you relate to his words in Psalm 23?

Like all of us, David had moments spent on the mountaintop as well as those traveling through the valley. Because of that, Psalm 23, along with all of the psalms David penned, directly applies to how we think about life today. In verse 1, the psalm begins by describing God with a title we may not often think about: “Shepherd.”

READ [PSALM 23:1](#).

When you think about God, what are some of the titles for him that immediately come to mind?

How do you typically describe him to others?

What comes to mind when you think about the term “shepherd”?

Many times, we think about God in awe-inspiring terms. He is creator, sovereign, Lord, and so on. But as Matt pointed out, “shepherd” does not inspire awe so much as nearness and care. It communicates a level of intimacy that God has with his people.

How does the idea of God as your shepherd fit into your current perspective of God?

In what ways should it change the way you think about God?

Like Matt said during the session, Psalm 23 is not messianic, meaning it is not specifically talking about the Messiah, Jesus Christ. But Jesus described himself as the “good shepherd,” which creates a natural connection between the two passages. Even more, Jesus is God in the flesh, so we should expect him to display all of the characteristics listed in Psalm 23.

Read [John 10:1-18](#).

What characteristics of Jesus stand out to you the most based on how John describes him in this passage?

How do those characteristics compare to the way David describes the Lord in Psalm 23?

One of the characteristics Matt pointed out is that the sheep that belong to Jesus hear his voice and follow wherever he leads. But Jesus is not the only voice we hear in our world today. There are many different things vying for our attention. Matt specifically mentioned three examples: our personal desires, culture, and relationships.

What are some examples of ways your personal desires have led you astray from following Jesus? What about culture? Relationships?

As Matt said in the session, regardless of how enticing they may seem, these other shepherds are little more than thieves and robbers. What kept you from remaining focused on Jesus in the times when you were led astray? What did you desire from those other “shepherds” that you did not think Jesus could supply?

David begins Psalm 23 with a profound statement describing the effect of having the Lord as his shepherd: “I shall not want.” Other translations render it even more explicit, reading, “I lack nothing” or “I will not lack for anything.” Either way, the point is simple—when the Lord is our shepherd we find everything we need in him.

Think back to the times when you’ve followed shepherds other than Jesus. Were you ever able to say to them, “I shall not want”? How did they fail to supply your needs?

Where do you find yourself lacking today?

What can you do to pursue Jesus as your provider rather than following another false shepherd?

LAST WORD

It is only in Christ that we can say, “I shall not want.” As much as other shepherds may contend otherwise, they will do nothing more than rob us of the life we desire. Our goal as Christians should be to find ourselves so full in Christ that we, too, can say, “I lack nothing.” And that starts with making sure we’re listening to and following the right shepherd. Over the next few weeks, we’ll dive into what that looks like on a more practical level, but for now take some time to reflect on where you are spiritually. Which shepherd are you following? Whose voice are you listening to? Can you confidently say that you lack nothing? The Lord is a shepherd who cares for his sheep. If you belong to his flock, then he will provide everything that you require. You need only look to him.

APPLICATION

Commit to memorizing all of Psalm 23. This week, focus on verse one reciting it to yourself over the next few days. As you begin this study, resolve to reach the point in your relationship with the Lord that you are able to say, like David, “I lack nothing.” Whatever needs, longings, or desires that you have bring them to God and find them met in him.

PRAY

Set aside some time to ask the Lord to reveal to you any of the ways you are following false shepherds. As he does, boldly turn away from them in order to commit yourself fully to following God alone.