

Psalm 23 The Lord Is My Shepherd

A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

⁴Even 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.

Psalm 23

From Shadows to Shelter

Psalm 23 is the best-known psalm in the Bible. As we explore this well-known passage, we'll discover afresh how God faithfully guides his people through life's darkest valleys and into the safety of his love. No matter the struggles we face, our Good Shepherd provides rest, renewal, and unwavering care. Join us as we journey from fear to trust, from shadows to shelter.

Sermons

I Lack Nothing Psalm 23:1-3
I Will Fear No Evil Psalm 23:4
I Will Dwell Forever Psalm 23:5-6

How to Use This Guide

This guide is not meant to replace the Sunday sermon but is designed to help you apply the Biblical teaching given on a Sunday in your Life Groups. We don't want our Life Groups to feel like another 'mini-sermon', but rather to be places where we learn to obey what God says in Christian community. You can find our latest sermons here https://oasischurch.com.au/audio/

Church Services

Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church. There is space for you to take down notes during the sermon as well.

Life Group

Use this guide during life Group each week. There are Life Group questions for each sermon in the series, and space to write down prayer points that come from the discussion that week or prayer requests from the members of your group.

Personal Devotions

Although this guide is primarily designed for Life Groups, it can also be used in personal devotions. After you have heard the sermon preached on the Sunday, go through this guide and use it to apply what you have learnt. It may be more natural to go through these questions with your family. There are also leader's guides available that give additional information to aid leaders in arriving at Biblical answers. Leaders use these to help them lead the group but you may find one beneficial in your personal devotions. If you would like a copy of a leader's guide please email ben@oasischurch.com.au

Guidelines for Discussion

Your group needs to be a safe place for all people to share and to enter the discussion. This means, all members of the group need to follow a few guidelines:

We lead with grace

We respond to one another in light of what Christ has done for us, understanding that we are all in need of His grace, compassion, and mercy.

We treat each other with respect

We can wrestle with ideas and disagree with one another without judgement, personal attack, or dismissal. We don't laugh at others when they've shared and no putdowns of any kind. These are the actions that make others withdraw and feel uneasy about sharing.

We are here to support one another, not 'fix' one another

Jesus does the 'fixing'. Give encouragement, speak truth, and point to Jesus. Don't try to solve or fix each other.

We commit to confidentiality

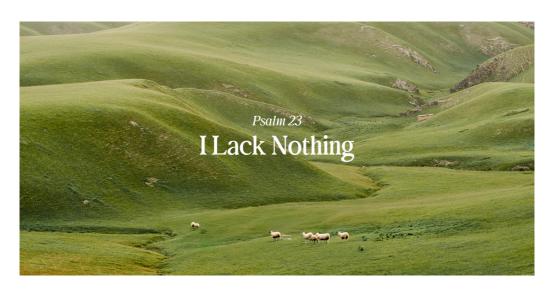
What is said in the group should stay in the group unless permission is given to share it elsewhere. This is not to create a dysfunctional group that keeps unhealthy secrets. Instead, it is to create a culture of safety where everyone feels safe to share thoughts and feelings and knows that others will not find out.

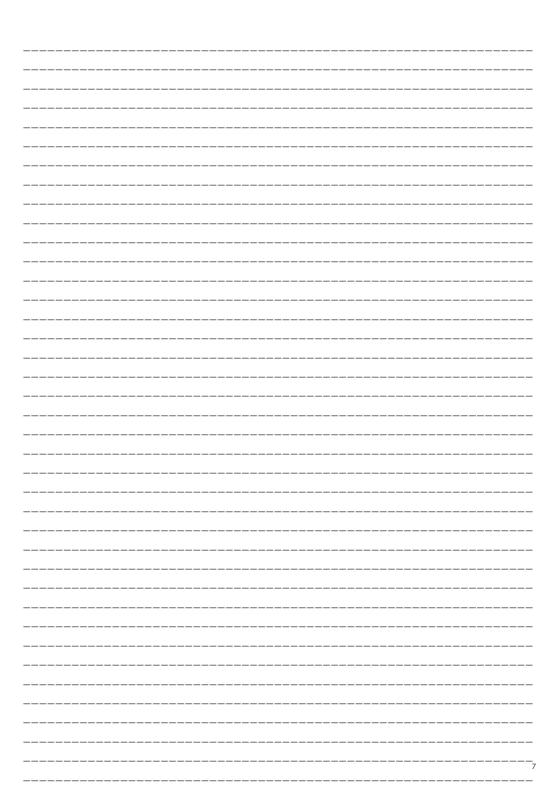
We do not crosstalk

Crosstalk is a conversation during discussion time that leaves others out and can be hurtful. Each person should be free to express his or her feelings without interruptions.

Your group needs to agree with one another that you are committed to providing a safe place to be encouraged and challenged by the word of God and to let Him do a healing, sanctifying work in your lives.

If you have any concerns, you should speak to your group leader or get in contact with our Community Pastor, Ben Fien (ben@oasischurch.com.au).





Bible Reading

Psalm 23:1-3

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

Context

It contains just 7 verses, yet it beautifully paints a picture of God. David shows us that we can always run to God, the Good Shepherd, and that He will guide us along the right paths, for His name's sake.

Study Objective

The purpose of this passage is to show us that God is gracious and gentle to us. Even when we feel like we are drowning, we can rest in our God and know that He will refresh and guide us.

Share Together

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

- What has God been teaching you lately?
- How has God been stretching you?
- Where have you seen God working in your life?

Pray Together

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

Pursue God

Do you have a place where you like to relax and unwind, somewhere that you can get away from the pulls of the world and refocus your mind? It may be something like the beach or a mountain, or a spot with special significance for you.

Read Psalm 23:1-3

What does it mean for God to be David's Shepherd?

As sheep are totally dependent on their shepherd for food and water, we are dependent on God for even our basic needs. Do you tend to live with this mindset? Why?

Think on the following words of Jesus in Matthew 6. How has God been your Provider in your life so far? Think of some times, even small ones, where you can see God's hand at work and, if you are comfortable, share them.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:25–27,33–34)

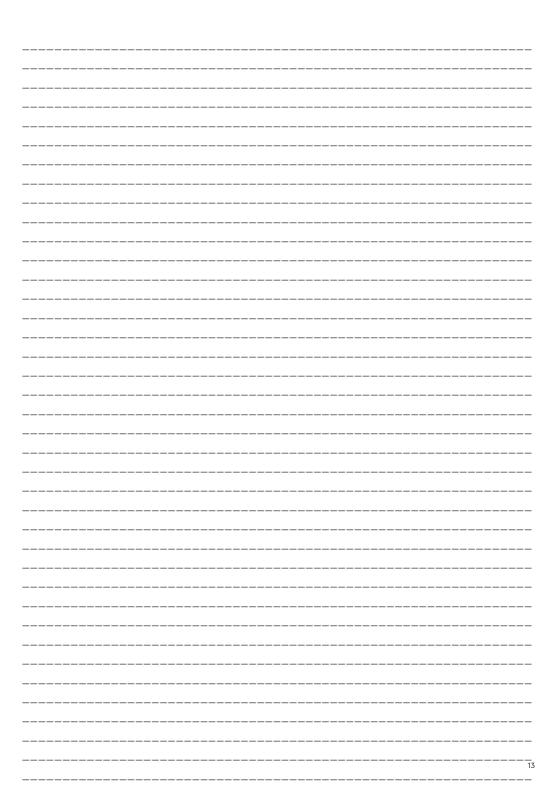
5 "I lack nothing" is a serious statement that David makes. What do you think he means by it?

- "He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters." This wording creates a gentle and peaceful image in our minds; a place filled with all that sheep might need. When your heart is restless, do you go to God trusting that He can bring peace to your soul? If so, how do you do this?
- "He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake." God is not passive in our lives, He leads us as our Shepherd, and He also refreshes our souls. Wherever He leads us, we can be sure that it is on the path that He has laid out for us. The reason? For His name's sake. How does knowing this shape how we view our current, and past, circumstances?

Live it Out

A psalm is a song or poem used in worship. The Bible is filled with songs of praise to God, and reminders of His goodness to us. Songs are great tools to focus our minds on God throughout the week, especially when you sing, or hum along too. What are some songs that encourage you and remind you of God's goodness and glory? Share some with the group – listen for songs you may not have heard before and give some a listen. Spend some time this week (preferably at least once a day!) listening to some Christian music. Take note of how you feel afterwards and share with your group next week.





Bible Reading

Psalm 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.

Context

After talking about God as the Shepherd who refreshes him, David shows where the divine Shepherd leads him next in verse 4. The Shepherd takes him through the darkest valley.

Study Objective

The purpose of this study is to help us grapple with the reality of suffering and death in the light of God's presence, protection and providence.

Share Together

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

- What has God been teaching you lately?
- How has God been stretching you?
- Where have you seen God working in your life?

Pray Together

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

Pursue God

Sometimes the dark valleys of life drive us to prayer, and we grow closer and more reliant on God. Of course, the opposite experience is true for some people. If you're comfortable, share how some of the dark valleys of your life have influenced your relationship with God?

In the pastures of verses 1–3 David talks *about* God. In the dark valley of verse 4 David talks *to* God directly. Why do you think this is?

In verse 3, David speaks of how his Shepherd guides him along the right paths. Then in verse 4, David finds himself in 'the darkest valley'. Consider the following quote and share how it strikes you:

"The unexpected development in the story of Psalm 23 is that the good shepherd's paths of righteousness sometimes include the valley of the shadow of death. If I find myself in the valley of deep darkness, it is because he has led me there." – **David Gibson**

- A Note the word 'through' in verse 4. This word is deeply encouraging, because it reminds us that whatever valley we find ourselves in, the Lord has not decided that will be our final destination. The valleys of suffering are part of our journey as believers, and we will come through them in God's timing. Have you ever been in a valley that you thought would never end, eventually to come out the other side? Elaborate if you're comfortable.
- Have you ever witnessed a believer face the final 'valley', death, with peace because they knew their Shepherd would lead them through it? If you have had this privilege, share how it affected you.
- David is comforted by the presence of God in his dark valley. What implications might this have for us when we care for one another in times of suffering?

- What do the Shepherd's 'rod' and 'staff' represent? How were they used?
- Why might these tools of the divine Shepherd be a comfort to David?

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How does the following quote strike you?

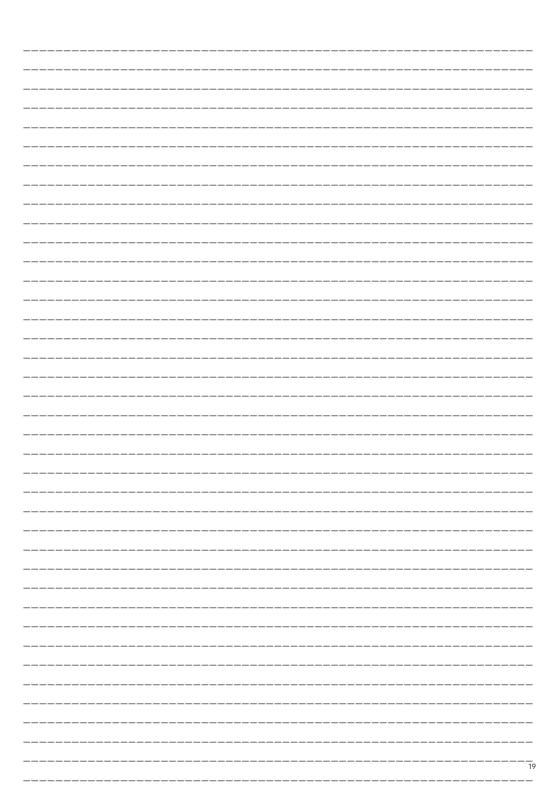
"Jesus Christ, our Shepherd, is no emaciated weakling. Our Shepherd is a warrior, as shepherds had to be. No one can snatch his sheep out of his hand (John 10:28). The muscles of his arm are flexed to defend his flock; he doesn't carry a club for nothing. He is obviously enough for whatever the valley throws at us." - Dale Ralph Davis

Live it Out

10

Is there someone you can care for who is going through a dark valley right now? Choose to do something for them before your next meeting and share this with the group.





Bible Reading

Psalm 23:5-6

- 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.

Context

Psalm 23:5-6 reflects God's abundant provision, protection, and faithful presence even amid adversity. David envisions God as a gracious host, preparing a table and anointing him with oil, symbolising honour and blessing. The Psalm points to Jesus, ending with the assurance of God's goodness and eternal fellowship in his house.

Study Objective

The objective of this study is to highlight God's personal care of, abundant provision for, and faithful presence with his people, even in hardship. This study aims to help cultivate confidence in God's goodness and his promise of eternal fellowship with him.

Share Together

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

- What has God been teaching you lately?
- How has God been stretching you?
- Where have you seen God working in your life?

Pray Together

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

Pursue God

Why is it special when a friend or family member invites you to a meal at their home rather than a meal out? Is being in their home a more relaxed or stressful setting for you? And why?

Being invited to a friend or family member's house to share a meal, and especially a feast of sorts, can be so much better than eating out. Generally, someone's home is a more relaxed environment. You're not constantly worried about someone stealing your valuables or making sure your kids don't get kidnapped. Also, if someone else is hosting you, then, generally, you don't have to pay for food, and the amount of food you can eat can sometimes be way more than what you'd pay for if you were eating out, too! You can be a lot safer and more satisfied when you are being hosted in someone's home. How much more so when we are being hosted by Jesus for the rest of eternity!

Read Psalm 23:5-6

2 How do the opening words of verse 5 reflect the character of the Shepherd/King?

"This King is constantly with us and caring for us in the fields and in the valleys as a shepherd. But he also seats us at his table and in his house (v. 6). He has brought us from the fields, through the valley, and into his home! Here we are both safe and satisfied."

J. Josh Smith and Daniel L. Akin, Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50

What is the significance of this taking place before David's enemies?

"This says something both to us and to them. We can be confident we will lack nothing we need when we are walking in the paths of righteousness in complete trust and dependence on our Shepherd-King. To our enemies this is a witness, a testimony, to the favor of God in our lives and his faithfulness to his sheep, his children. They would harm us, but God protects us. They would starve us, but God feeds us and honors us."

J. Josh Smith and Daniel L. Akin, Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1-50

- 4 How does the second half of verse 5 show God's goodness towards his people?
- While often used at funerals, how does this Psalm point us to life instead of death?
- 6 How does verse 6 contrast with verse 5?

"Instead of being pursued by your enemies who angrily watch you feast at a great banquet prepared in your honor (v. 5), it is the "goodness [tob] and faithful love [chesed]," the loving-kindness of our Shepherd-King, that constantly run after you."

J. Josh Smith and Daniel L. Akin, Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1-50.

7 How does verse 6 give hope for the future?

8 How do these verses point us to Jesus?

Live it Out

9 What can you do this week to remind each other of God's generosity towards us?

10 What is at least one area in your life that needs to change in light of these verses?

