



Sermon Discussion Guide

The Rest You Need

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"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters; he refreshes my soul." Psalm 23:1-3a (NIV)

Vacations are certainly important, but unforeseen problems often arise and make them less than perfect. And even the best vacations can't deal with all our internal problems such as needing more energy, more time, or more hope in our lives. Some of us feel afraid, or feel unsure about what to do next, or feel we can't do things correctly. Psalm 23 helps us understand why our souls need rest and guides us toward finding that rest through God. In this discussion we'll listen to what God says to us in Psalm 23 and see what God can do in our hearts to change us through his love for us.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want." Psalm 23:1 (NIV)

1. What does it mean to be "in want"? To avoid wants, we need to be the sheep and depend on God, allowing him to be our shepherd. What does dependence on God look like, and how can we develop that dependence?

"He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters; he refreshes my soul." Psalm 23:2-3a

2. Why might we feel uncomfortable and uneasy about accepting the opportunities God provides in the green pastures and beside quiet waters, refreshing our souls?

"He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Psalm 23:3b (NIV)

3. In Psalm 23:3b, ponder the meaning of righteousness in terms of being in right relationships and taking the right actions. How can we know what path God wants us to take to help us in any situation that arises?

"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." Psalm 23:4 (NIV)

4. What does it mean that God will walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death? Can you share an experience of God's protection on such a walk?

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." Psalm 23:5 (NIV)

5. What is an example of how God has caused your cup to overflow? Can you share an experience where God prepared a table for you in the presence of your enemies? How did it make you feel?

"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." Psalm 23:6 (NIV)

6. Our challenge is to continue living here and now but continually focus on "all the days of my life" and "forever" in this verse. What can we do to create that kind of focus?

Diving Deeper (optional)

1. If we are "in want," Psalm 23:1 tells us that God is not our shepherd. What other kinds of shepherds do people have?
2. In Psalm 23:3b, the Lord is a master of getting us back on track when we've gone off the right path. Name something you need to do in life to get back on the path of peace and rest, such as developing a good habit.
3. How can we find the road signs God provides to walk in the right paths for our lives?
4. Psalm 23:5 tells us that God anoints our heads with oil and our cups overflow. Take turns choosing just one thing in your life and thanking God for it.

Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- Icebreaker: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “sheep”?
- Goal: Encourage group members to apply Psalm 23 in their lives, as it helps us understand why our souls need rest and guides us to find that rest through God.
- Pray: Father, I pray that Psalm 23 be made manifest in this season of my life in a whole new way, as it is written “The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, 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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.