

Small Group Guide
THE SHEPHERD WHO SATISFIES
Cleary Baptist Church, January 30, 2011, Psalm 23

Connect...

Start your time together by sharing the reasons for your confidence in the Lord. *Try to give personal and honest answers that apply to your everyday practice of placing confidence in the Lord.* Give only one reason at a time so others get the opportunity to share also.

Study the Text . . .

In life there are events we experience and truths we learn that contribute to our understanding. Often it is easier or even more effective to express our understanding with images. Sometimes we even use the same images that we gained the understanding from in the first place. In Psalm 23 David is clearly expressing His confidence in the Lord, but don't miss the thanksgiving and praise wrapped up in his expressions of confidence. As you read and study the Psalm, reflect on the images used and the depth of the meaning they convey. Consider the images as they applied to David personally and their general meaning to the culture he lived in.

Read Psalm 23

Psalm 23:1-3

In the first three verses of this psalm David issues a general proclamation of his confidence in God. David claims that the Lord is his shepherd and he continues to describe the way this is true with what he says *about* God *to* the listener.

- The central image that David uses to describe how the Lord relates to him is as a shepherd to a sheep. Jesus also chose this image in John 10:11, describing himself as the Good Shepherd. What is implied in such an image of relationship?
- David specifically uses images of lying down in green pastures and leading beside still water. These images convey the ideas of peaceful rest and guidance.
- David immediately reiterates the same concepts with more clear words in v.3. The implied "rest" of v.2 is connected to restoration of the soul and the implied "leading" is connected to righteousness, specifically for the glory of God.

Psalm 23:4-6

In the later portion of this psalm David transitions from speaking *about* God to speaking *to* Him. His praise and proclamation seem to lead him back to personal praise directed toward his Shepherd. As he speaks to his Lord, David demonstrates confidence in three aspects of personal relationship.

- In verse 4, he sings of his confidence in the midst of danger. David knows the Lord is *his Protector*, and he celebrates his presence.
- In verse 5, his “cup overflows.” David knows the Lord as *his Provider*. Even through whatever pressures are weighing on him, the Lord gives every need and more.
- In verse 6, David speaks of being pursued by goodness and mercy, and he rejoices that his position in the Shepherd’s fold or “the house of the Lord” will last forever. His confidence is in the Lord, *his Pursuer*.
- Did David speak of the same reasons for confidence in the Lord as your group listed before studying the Psalm? Where did you overlap? Did he speak of areas you did not?
- What is the significance of the shepherd and sheep image when it comes to needs and God’s/your ability to meet them?
- Do you find yourself proclaiming your confidence in the Lord more to Him or to others?
- What are the specific ways in which you speak or act that fail to acknowledge your need for (or dependence on) your Shepherd?
- If we follow David’s pattern of proclamation and praise, what affect should we expect on our lives? On others lives around us?
- How can you be more faithful to practice praise in the way you live your life with God and before others?