

# The LORD is My SHEPHERD

## INTRODUCTION

---

*Congratulations! You have the privilege of serving as a guide for people as they journey with the Good Shepherd. Over the next several weeks you'll witness people getting understanding the Lord as their shepherd, relying more fully on Him for His guidance and resources.*

---

This leader's guide is a companion to *The Lord is My Shepherd* book and its study guide, designed to assist you as you lead your small group. Ideally, each person in your group should have a copy of the book and a study guide. If you're teaching couples, they may share a book if absolutely necessary, but if possible they should have their own study guide since space is provided for personal responses and journal entries. Please keep in mind these general suggestions for the entire journey:

**Pray for your participants.** This journey is much more than question and answer sessions. It's a personal transformation for each member. You'll initially know some of the joys and some of the pains the participants are experiencing; more will be revealed as the journey progresses. Pray that each person has the honesty and courage to complete the trip.

**Prepare for each session.** At the risk of putting pressure on you, please realize as the leader of the group, much of the success of this journey depends on your personal preparation. Don't wait until the night before your meeting to begin preparation. Well in advance of the meeting, personally complete the questions in the study guide for each lesson. Read all of the Scripture verses in each lesson as well as the corresponding chapter(s) in *The Lord is My Shepherd*. Then use this leader's guide to prepare for the actual meeting. *Don't try to cover all of the study guide questions in one meeting*; if you do, you'll be there for hours. Encourage members to complete all of the questions at home. As the leader, pick and choose which questions to bring up in the small group.

**Preside over the meeting.** In any small group, but especially in this emotional journey through life's joys and difficulties, members may drift toward two extremes: some will not "speak up" while others have a hard time being quiet. You'll need the wisdom of Christ to guide members in meaningful, balanced discussion of each verse or phrase. Gently nudge people to either open up or reign in their contributions to the meeting. You have to be a servant leader—this is key. Don't let the group wander off into endless discussion about one question or one person's challenges. If this happens over the course of several weeks, people will stop attending. One final thought here: if someone is sharing sensitive information that's better suited for a one-on-one meeting or a gender-specific group, you may consider graciously making that suggestion.

**Participate in the group.** While you're the leader of the group, you're also a fellow pilgrim on the same journey. Make sure to interject your own successes and struggles along the way. Your participation not only encourages others to do likewise, it also provides an example of how much or little to share in a small group.

With these general suggestions in mind, let's now turn our attention to how this leader's guide is designed. For each lesson you'll be given a corresponding leader's guide section, which consists of these elements:

*Goal of the lesson*

*Suggested introduction or icebreaker*

*Questions to focus on during the meeting*

*Clarification of difficult concepts*

*Encouragement*

You'll notice that the study guide begins with an introductory chapter. You want to carefully read that Introduction several times because both you and the participants should take note of several items.

If you've led a small group through *The Red Sea Rules* book and study guide, you'll notice the lesson format—developed originally by Morris Proctor—is very similar, so you'll have no trouble jumping right in.

First, the principles in *The Lord is My Shepherd* come from a masterful exegesis of Psalm 23, not from the author's imagination. Make sure you have read Psalm 23 and meditated on its contents numerous times before your first meeting. Encourage the members to read it in its entirety each week of the journey.

Next, grasp and communicate the concept of the lesson. We have tremendous blessings in life that we overlook or neglect, as well as challenges in life and we usually initially react with a lack of faith. The encouragement from Scripture, though, is that Jesus is our Good Shepherd throughout *all seasons* of life. If certain sections don't seem to relate to the season of life any particular individual is currently experiencing, remind him or her of two things: first, there are elements of every lesson that apply *despite* what season of life is being experienced. Second, since Psalm 23 is a walk through different "trails" or pasturelands, remind participants that you're sure to come to the trail they're currently on.

Finally, with everything you have in you, encourage the participants to keep a daily journal of their walk with the shepherd. Space for writing is provided in the back of the study guide. Writing will help them clarify thoughts and emotions as well as provide a written testimony of God's goodness they can refer back to for years to come.

**Now may the Lord bless you and keep you as you and your group walk with the Good Shepherd!**

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 1

GOD'S TRIAD OF TRUTH

*Entrust the Good Shepherd with Your Past, Present, and Future*

**Goal:**

To lead participants in committing their past, present, and future to the Good Shepherd.

**Introduction:**

Since this is the first meeting, take note of any new members. If you've started a brand new group, be sure you introduce yourself and allow others to introduce themselves. If appropriate, say something like:

*"Let's take about 30 seconds each telling our name, occupation, and hobby. To get the ball rolling, I'll go first."*

Going first allows participants time to think of an answer.

Thank everyone for participating, then introduce the concept of Psalm 23.

Explain that Psalm 23 is not stationary, but "migratory". It represents not just one snapshot of green pastures and still waters, but a movement throughout different trails, through seasons of life we all experience. Now is a good time to explain that there are elements of each lesson that apply to each individual life, but participants shouldn't be surprised if certain sections speak to the "path" they're on.

Quickly introduce the background behind Psalm 23 (1–2 minutes), also introducing King David as the author. Summarize David’s experience as a boy shepherd and as a grown man his shepherding the nation of Israel as their king. Point out that, surprisingly, David wrote Psalm 23 from the perspective of being a sheep, with the Lord as his shepherd!

At this point, explain that the goal of this small group is to grow to know the Lord as *our* shepherd, and to understand how we as sheep can depend on Him.

Before you proceed further, don’t assume everyone in your group *knows* the Good Shepherd! You might want to say something like this:

*First, I need to ask a very honest question. Do you know Jesus Christ as your savior and Lord? You can’t walk with the shepherd if you don’t know Him in this way. If you’ve never made a commitment to following Jesus Christ, I want to share with you the truth, that we’re all sinners deserving destruction. But I also want to share the good news of His forgiveness and grace, a restored relationship with God. If this is a new concept to you, please stick around after this lesson or let me know you’d like to talk more about this. Nothing would give me greater joy than to introduce you to the shepherd who will be your guide throughout life on into eternity. Psalm 23, after all, begins with **Lord** and ends with **forever**. Don’t be shy to ask me about this!*

This has all been introductory information to lay the groundwork for the study. The “official” trek begins now. Open with an invitation for the group to do a little soul-searching. Say something like:

As we prepare to walk with the Good Shepherd, we need to take an honest look at ourselves. The Lord, as our shepherd, offers His guidance and His blessings throughout every season of life. What season are you in? Do you relate more to green pastures and still waters or dark valleys with enemies surrounding you?

Secondly, how are you responding in the midst of your situation? Are you overlooking blessings, or are you filled with praise? Do you fear and panic, or are you standing firm in faith and confidence? What resources do you feel you need for your “trail”, and where are you trying to find those resources?

If you’d like, take a moment and tell the group: I’ll get us started. Share your own thoughts and personal experience. Again, by going first, you’ve allowed members to gather their own thoughts while providing an example of brevity!

After a few have shared, interject:

We tend to act like the sheep described in Isaiah 53:6, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way...”

We try to find our own way, and we get lost! We spend a lot of our time and energy feeling guilty over the past, worrying over the present, and being anxious about the future. That’s why the first step of our journey is to entrust everything to the Good Shepherd. That includes our past, our present, and the future.

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD’S LAND



Remind the group that the Bible was not put together haphazardly, that the Psalms preceding and following are often helpful in understanding the Psalm you’re studying.

**Read or have someone read Psalm 22—24.**

Ask,

*Why does Pastor Morgan, the author, refer to this as a “Messianic Trilogy”?*

Take a moment to discuss the similarities and differences in the subject and setting of each Psalm.

## HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE



This trilogy of Psalms describes Jesus as our suffering savior, as our loving shepherd, and as our reigning king. Morgan suggests this is the answer to our past, present, and future.

**Have someone read Colossians 2:13–14 and 1 Peter 2:24–25.**

Based on Psalm 22, Rob Morgan says “the savior’s cross takes care of yesterday”. How do these Scriptures echo this sentiment?

**Morgan explains that Psalm 23 teaches us “the shepherd’s crook takes care of today”. Have someone read John 10:1–16 and Hebrews 13:20–21, then ask how Jesus’ role as our Shepherd is related to our daily needs?**

According to Psalm 24, Morgan explains, “the sovereign’s crown takes care of tomorrow”. Have someone read verses 1–2, explaining that this points to the greatness of the Creator. Have someone read verses 3–4, explaining that this represents the privilege of coming into His presence in worship. Finally, have someone read verses 7–10 and explain this tells of a nearing day when the King will come to claim His Kingdom.

Ask the group how this impacts them as they think about their own future?

## FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD'S LEAD



Ask the group if they can relate to Rob’s statement that, “Tension comes in three tenses”.

Ask them to share their own emotions towards their past, present, or future. Give them time to truly open up and be honest. Don’t be afraid to share some of your own honest feelings as an example of openness.

Ask participants how these Psalms affect their outlook on their situation.

Challenge your group to commit their past, present, and future to the Good Shepherd. In this spirit, end with a prayer of commitment.

## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS



Remind group members to use the journal space in their study guides. This lesson focuses on truly committing themselves to the Lord as their shepherd, so it represents a true entrance into a closer walk with Christ as their Good Shepherd. Remind them of the importance of this commitment and of keeping a record of the Lord’s guidance and goodness.

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 2

GET TO KNOW THE LORD AS YOUR SHEPHERD

*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want*

---

**Goal:**

To lead participants in understanding The Lord as their shepherd: a powerful, ever-present, personal guide and provider of all their needs.

---

---

**Introduction:**

In this second meeting, if necessary, allow a brief time for introductions of new members. Then quickly review the nature of the study.

---

For the benefit of anyone who may be new, remind everyone that:

As we walk through the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, we're confronted with many different "trails" or seasons of life in which the Lord leads and provides as our shepherd. The first order of business for us personally, though, is to really wrap our minds around what it means for the Lord to be our shepherd, and why that means we shall not "want". How do you perceive the Lord in your life? Is He distant and untouchable? Is He inconsistent as your own thoughts may be?

As the leader, feel free to share your own tendencies to misunderstand God's nature and role in your life. Encourage others to

share their struggle to understand the Lord as their shepherd.

Wrap up this discussion with a conclusion like this:

I think the Lord gave us this Psalm because He knows we have trouble understanding how an all-powerful God like Him could possibly lead us as people loaded down with burdens and sinful tendencies. The great news for us is that the Lord truly is our shepherd. Let's look at what that means.

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD'S LAND



Remind participants that this lesson is based on chapters 1—3 in *The Lord is My Shepherd*. This will be the only lesson that will cover more than one chapter in the book.

Ask participants to turn to Psalm 23. While they turn, remind them quickly of the author of this Psalm and the reason David had particular insight into the nature of sheep and shepherds.

**Have someone read Psalm 23:1 out loud.**

Point out as Pastor Morgan does in the book that David refers to “The Lord” using the Hebrew word *Yahweh*, the proper and personal name of God.

Coupled with the word “my” in verse 1, ask someone to explain the significance of these three words of the Psalm: “The Lord...my”.

If no one picks up on this, explain that King David understood that the God of the universe is also a personal God who deals with us individually!

Explain that, in the original language of the New Testament, Jesus Christ is given the title “Lord”. Ask: how does this impact our understanding of Psalm 23?

Be sure the group understands the relationship between Psalm 23 and Jesus Christ as our Good Shepherd.

Ask the group, “What tense (past, present, or future) is verse 1 written in and why is this significant?”

Concerning the phrase, “I shall not want”, for clarity read Pastor Morgan’s quote: “Of course, the word *want* is used in its archaic sense here. It doesn’t mean that if the Lord’s our Shepherd we’ll have everything we *want*. It means we’ll not *want* for anything we *need*.”

With this in mind, ask someone in the group to volunteer to rephrase “I shall not want” in their own words.

## HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE



Remind the group that David’s Psalm is a personal reflection on the nature of God.

*Ask someone in the group to read Philippians 4:8.*

Ask:

*Why is this a difficult command to follow in our culture?*

The significance of the little word “is” conveys the continual presence of God. This is also seen in passages like: Genesis 28:16, Exodus 15:2, Deuteronomy 33:27, Psalm 27:1 and 46:1, Habakkuk 2:19, 1 Corinthians 1:9, 25; 3:17, Romans 8:31, 2 Corinthians 9:8, John 6:35, 8:12, 8:58 10:9, 10:11, 11:25. You will not have time to deal with all of these. Before the meeting, select the example(s) you’d like to share and lead the group in understanding the significance of God as ever-present.

Point out that Psalm 23 teaches us that the Lord isn’t just *a* shepherd; he’s *my* shepherd. Take a moment to read Psalm 23, emphasizing all the personal pronouns that refer to God (He, my, I, your, you, etc.) in Psalm 23:

*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 shall follow **me** all the days of **my** life.*

*And **I** will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

How does this inform and impact your relationship to the Lord as shepherd?

**Have someone read Isaiah 53:6 and Matthew 9:36.**

Ask,

*How do we tend to be like sheep in a negative way? How does a shepherd change that paradigm?*

**Choose one or more of the following scriptures before you meet with your group: Matthew 6:32–33, Psalm 34:9, 84:11, Philippians 4:19, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Psalm 84:11. Using one of these Scriptures, discuss Morgan’s suggestion that Psalm 23:1 could also be written, “Because the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack anything”.**

Note that Rob Morgan says the Lord, as our shepherd, provides for our –ternal needs: our external needs (food, clothing, etc.), our internal needs (comfort, peace, love, etc.), and our eternal needs (relationship with God, salvation, heaven, etc.).

You might ask members to write their own paraphrase of “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want”, or to share their own experiences of the Lord’s provision in their lives.





Summarize by explaining that we've learned the importance on meditating on who God is; we've understood the present reality of Jesus as our shepherd; we've seen how personal the shepherd is; and we've explored our role as sheep and the role of Jesus as leader and provider—as our shepherd.

Now let's put these ideas into practice.

Encourage your group to spend at least 15 minutes this week in meditation on who God is. Give them two suggestions: ask them to write down the reference 1 Timothy 1:17 for meditation. Give them a second option, Psalm 23:1. Demonstrate reading the first phrase out loud one word or word group at a time, with emphasis on differing words and pausing to meditate:

***The Lord** is my Shepherd, I shall not want*

*The Lord **is** my Shepherd, I shall not want*

*The Lord is **my** Shepherd, I shall not want*

*The Lord is my **Shepherd**, I shall not want*

*The Lord is my Shepherd, **I** shall not want*

*The Lord is my Shepherd, I **shall not** want*

*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not **want***

Tell the group:

Rob Morgan says in the book that Psalm 23 is "...not a promise to claim, but a reality to experience. Our Lord is a Shepherd whose presence is instant, immediate, and accessible every day, every hour, every moment".

Thinking of your present situation, how can you live out this truth today and this week?

If you have enough time, end by asking members of the group to share how they've been provided for in the past week by the Lord as their shepherd.

## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS



Remind the group to write a journal entry in their study guide. Point out that this week is essentially the thesis of Psalm 23: that "because the Lord is my shepherd, I have all I need". Be sure they take time to ponder and write about their own interaction with this truth, as it lays important groundwork for weeks to come.

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 3

HIS PEACE IN LIFE'S MEADOWS

*He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters*

**Goal:**

First, to help the group identify and praise God for the blessings He's given and, second, to encourage them to incorporate meditation on God's Word and reliance on the Holy Spirit into their routines.

**Introduction:**

As the group gathers, if you have new members make any necessary introductions and briefly review the purpose of this study, recapping the first two weeks. Use this time of review to encourage members who have been participating so far.

As you transition into this lesson, tell a personal story about someone in your life who faithfully fulfilled an important role. It may be a mother who always lent a listening ear, a teacher whom you could count on to guide you through a difficult subject, or a pastor or church leader who was ready with wisdom and encouragement. Make a statement like this:

*Because this person was my \_\_\_\_\_ (teacher, pastor, mother), I knew I could count on him/her for \_\_\_\_\_ (the help this person provided).*

Stop and ask if another member had a similar experience with someone who fulfilled an important role in his or her life. Tran-

sition by saying something like:

*In the same way, we've learned so far that because the Lord is our shepherd, we have **everything** we need.*

*Psalm 23, verse 2 is a pivotal verse for our study! Now we're following our shepherd's lead into various territories! We'll learn how to more fully lean on His leadership and resources as we take this journey together.*

Verse 2 begins with a serene word picture of the Lord's leading you, his sheep, into green pastures and beside still waters. Ask:

Even if you're dealing with difficulty, what areas of your life would you characterize as peaceful?

After some have answered, ask a rhetorical question:

*I want you to think about the answer to this question. How are you reacting to the peace and provision in your life?*

Let's walk together through this picture of the meadows of life and learn how the shepherd leads us in seasons of peace.

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD'S LAND



Ask someone to read Psalm 23:2.

Read the question Rob Morgan writes: "...while these four words in verse 2—green pastures, still waters—conjure up a beautiful scene in our minds, what exactly is the meaning of it?"

Tell the group that Rob suggests three levels of meaning. Review these points:

### **1. This is a Picture of Provision: Our Needs are Met**

Ask the group how they think Rob came to this conclusion based on the verse. Be sure they understand the green pastures and still waters represent the meeting of essential needs.

Ask what the significance of "lie down" is in verse 2. Again, ensure they understand this is a picture of fulfillment. Note that God abundantly provides for our essential needs.

### **2. This is a Picture of Peace: Our Minds are Content**

Ask how these words paint a visual image of peace.

### **3. This is a Picture of Nourishment: Our Souls are Fed**

Say something like:

*Notice the two main adjectives in verse 2: "green" and "still". How do these words impact the picture in our minds?*

Be sure they understand the nourishment provided by this lush landscape of vast provision.

Transition into the next section by saying something like:

It maybe easy for us to assume that David as a great king enjoy peace and fulfillment, but does Scripture echo the same truths that apply to us as followers of Christ thousands of years later? Let's find out...

## HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE



Have someone read **John 10:9–11**.

Ask:

*What is Jesus referring to when he promises that His sheep will find pasture?*

If they don't pick up on the meaning here, help them see that Jesus' promise of "pasture" is His promise of abundant life.

**Ask someone to read Matthew 6:25–33.**

Say something like:

*Think of the physical need you worry most about. Does this Scripture cover that need with a promise to provide? Feel free to share your answer.*

Point out that, as Rob Morgan notes, we need more than just physical nourishment; our souls need to be fed also.

**Have someone read Jeremiah 3:15, 23:10, and 23:16–22.**

Ask,

*What kind of "pasture" does the Lord desire His sheep to enjoy?*

Read Pastor Morgan's quote: "Meditation is the practice of chewing on a verse we've previously read, memorized, or studied until we digest it. It's the process of masticating a Scripture until it's broken down and assimilated throughout our souls."

**Before the meeting, read the following passages and choose one or two to share, concerning meditation on the Word of God: Genesis 24:63, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1, Psalm 49:3, Psalm 119:15, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99.**

Ask a rhetorical question:

*Is meditation currently incorporated into your daily routine?*

End this section by noting that Pastor Morgan makes a correlation between the "still water" and the Holy Spirit we need for illumination and guidance.

**Again, choose one of the following passages before group time to read: John 7:37–38, 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:12, and Psalm 119:18.**

Ask the group how the selected Scripture looks in our own personal lives as we walk with the shepherd.

## FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD'S LEAD



Say something like:

*The Lord leads us to green pastures and still waters, providing for our needs and granting us peace and nourishment. However, in the busy-ness of our lives, it's easy to overlook His provision. Let's take a moment to recognize the green pastures and still waters available to us.*

What blessings in your life can you identify as God's provision?

Read pastor Morgan's quote:

Instead of reminding yourself of what you crave, remind yourself of what you have. Build some quiet zones into your routine. Learn the sound of silence. Make time to rest your weary mind and body. Take time for prayer and contemplation. Reduce your wants. Increase your joys. And be thankful.

Then ask:

*How can you put this exhortation into practice in your life?*

Challenge members to take a moment to jot down a plan to incorporate meditation and a reliance on the Holy Spirit into the coming week's routine.

## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS



Remind the group to use the journal space provided in their study guide. Remind them that their life may not feel peaceful, but the Word of God offers peace in the midst of uncertainty. Tell them, also, to carefully contemplate their lives, looking for areas of peace and blessing they may be neglecting or overlooking, and to use the journal space to write out prayers of thanksgiving.

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 4

HIS POWER IN LIFE'S TRENCHES

*He restores my soul*

**Goal:**

To encourage members who feel “cast down” to turn to the Lord for restoration.

**Introduction:**

Now that you've been through three lessons, take a moment to check in with people and ask how they're doing on this journey, how the journaling is going, etc. As the leader, you want to be mindful of the progress of each member. Remember to facilitate contact during the week between members as possible, so they can encourage one another. Keep in mind that some things are better discussed in one-on-one settings rather than the group environment.

As you begin the next lesson, open with an example from your personal experience. Something like this (but make it personal to you):

*I often talk with Christians who feel like they've been so beaten down by life or by their own struggles that they just can't pick themselves back up.*

*What situation are you currently facing that makes you feel this way?*

If no one shares, or if they're timid to do so, feel free to offer an example of a time in your life where you felt this way.

Note that we're prone to attempt to "pull ourselves back up", but tell the group that Psalm 23:3 has a different approach that relies on the Lord as our shepherd, and it's found in this little phrase in the third verse of Psalm 23.

Let's look at how the Shepherd restores us.

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD'S LAND



Have someone read the first phrase in Psalm 23:3, "He restores my soul", perhaps a couple of times for emphasis.

Ask:

*Considering the imagery of Psalm 23, what situation might a sheep find itself in that would require it to be restored?*

After allowing an answer or two, proceed by asking:

How might a shepherd restore a sheep that's been cast down?

Remind the group that Pastor Morgan suggests three ways in which the Lord restores us:

1. *He Restores from Sin*
2. *He Restores from Stress*
3. *He Restores from Sorrow*

Transition by saying something like:

*Scripture helps us understand how the Lord restores us in these ways, so let's dig a little deeper into this idea.*

## HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE



Have someone read Psalm 119:176.

Ask:

*What roles are described here in terms of the sheep and the shepherd?*

**Ask someone to read Ezekiel 34:11.**

Ask:

*Can someone describe the role of the Lord in this passage?*

**Before the meeting, choose one or two of the following passages to read: Micah 7:19, Psalm 103:12, Colossians 2:14, Job 14:17, Isaiah 1:18, 38:17, 44:22. Read the selected passage(s), then ask:**

Rob Morgan suggests we, like sheep, are often cast down because of sin. Why should we, as believers, refuse to allow past sins continue to haunt us?

Again, before the meeting, read Psalm 119:25, 37, 40, 88, and 107, selecting one or two to read to the group.

Then say:

*Not only sin, but stress often casts us down. In what ways does the Psalmist ask the Lord to “revive” (NKJV) him?*

Finally, deal with the issue of sorrow.

**Before group time, read Read John 14:1–3 and 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 and select the text to read to the group. Then engage them with these thoughts:**

Sorrow often weighs us down as members of the Lord’s flock. How does our shepherd restore us through seasons of sorrow?

## FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD’S LEAD



Transition into the application section of the lesson by saying something like:

All of us need seasons of restoration in our lives. Sometimes it means having the burden of guilt over our sin lifted. Other times it means enjoying a reprieve from life’s stress. Still other times we need relief from the sorrows that accompany this sinful world.

Feel freedom to stop the group time and pause for a few moments of silent prayer, saying something like this:

If you feel burdened by the guilt of past sins, first take a moment (if you haven’t already) to repent, to plea the blood of Jesus Christ to cover your transgressions, and to accept His forgiveness and grace.

Secondly, if possible before group time, create a printout with the full text of the following Scriptures:

*Micah 7:19*

*Isaiah 1:18*

*Psalms 103:12*

*Colossians 2:14*

*Job 14:17*

*Isaiah 38:17, 44:22*

Challenge the group to choose one or more to memorize in the following week.

Ask the group if anyone is feeling overwhelming stress or sorrow. If so, collect these as prayer requests and personally pray for these requests throughout the week as their leader. Send these members an email or call them, letting them know you’ve lifted these burdens up to the Lord, and encourage them to continue laying them at the shepherd’s feet.

End your time together with a prayer for those in your group who have shared concerns. If there’s time enough left, ask volunteers from the group to choose a request to pray for. This way, the group is given the opportunity to minister to one another in prayer, involving themselves in others’ burdens.





## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS

Once again remind the group that journal space is provided. Tell them to focus on the particular area, whether sin, stress, or sorrow, that burdens them most. Encourage them to write vivid emotions and prayers as they journey through this step.

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 5

HIS PLAN FOR LIFE'S PATHWAYS

*He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake*

**Goal:**

To encourage participants follow the lead of the Good Shepherd by applying Scriptural principles.

**Introduction:**

*Note: you may want to ask members to bring their study guide, as this week will focus heavily on Rob's "steps" for following divine guidance, which are detailed in the study guide along with blank spaces for writing.*

As you begin the meeting, you may want to take a moment to remind attendees that you're coming to the halfway point of the journey. Check on their progress: journaling, emotions, lessons learned, etc. Allow people to share any breakthroughs they may have experienced.

As you transition into the next step, ask an opening question like this:

*Have you ever followed someone who had absolutely no clue where they were going?*

Allow some responses. Have a humorous story of your own to get the group laughing and loosened up a bit. Then transition by saying:

*The problem with sheep is that they have no clue what path to take without a shepherd to guide them. The problem with us is that we're exactly like sheep in that way, as we attempt to walk through the paths of life. We need a shepherd who will **lead** us!*

Ask a rhetorical question, then transition into the lesson:

*Are you certain that your current path is both right and righteous, both providential and pleasing?*

Let's look at both our guide and our path together.

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD'S LAND



Ask someone to read Psalm 23:3, focusing on the last phrase, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake".

Ask:

*Is the scene in Psalm 23 stationary or an excursion? What leads you to this conclusion?*

Point out that the author, Rob Morgan, makes a few suggestions as to the leadership skills required of a biblical shepherd:

*Foresight*

*Advance planning*

*Negotiating skills and diplomacy*

*Geographical skills*

*Business savvy*

*Stamina*

*Quality control*

*Hard work*

*Motivation*

*Emergency*

*Humility*

If available, write these out on a whiteboard or chalkboard. Ask which qualities also describe God as our shepherd. If possible, use a specific color of chalk or marker to circle responses.

After you receive responses, re-read the same qualities and ask which qualities Jesus displayed in His life and ministry. If possible, use a different color of chalk or marker to circle responses.

This is a good opportunity to point out how understanding Jesus as the fulfillment of Psalm 23, as our Good Shepherd, introduces an important element to our understanding and application of the passage!

Transition into the next section by saying something like:

*Let's look at how other Scriptures describe the Lord's leading.*



## HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

**Before the group meeting, read the following passages and choose a few to read aloud: Proverbs 3:5–6, Psalm 32:8, 37:23, 48:14, 73:24, 139:16, Isaiah 48:17, 58:11. Then ask:**

What do these passages teach us about the relationship between God's leading and our own paths.

This lesson is probably the most application heavy, since Rob lays out an excellent plan of action to help us follow the Good Shepherd down life's pathways. With this in mind, go ahead and transition into the application section by asking:

*What decisions lie ahead of you right now in which you could really use the Lord's guidance?*

Share your own situation first to help the group open up and to allow them time to gather their thoughts.



## FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD'S LEAD

Tell the group:

This lesson is going to focus a lot on application. Pastor Rob shares a method that will help us walk through decisions in life.

In the study guide, I mention that I find Rob's labeling a tad cheesy. He invites readers to "sail the seven C's of guidance". Some groups will simply find this witty, but others may find it a bit silly. As the leader of your group, you can decide whether or not to label this "The Seven C's of Guidance". If it will help draw attention to the "c" words, then by all means, use the analogy. If it will distract your group from the true wisdom of these steps, I would suggest bypassing the label, and simply sharing the steps.

Each step in the book has been converted into an "action" step. Walk your group through each. At this point, ask them to open their study guide to the appropriate page. If any particular step requires more time than is available, ask them to complete the step later. If they've already completed this section of the study guide, walk through these steps, asking them to share their own personal situation. If not, take this time to lead them through the 7 steps, using the blank space in their study guide. If someone does not have a guide, it may be prudent to have handouts with the following steps prepared along with blank spaces.

- 1. Write out a prayer, committing your decision to the Lord.*
- 2. Rob urges us to open the covers of the Bible and seek Scriptural direction. Have you sanctioned off a portion of each day for reading the Scriptures? If not, write down a daily time you can commit to doing so.*
- 3. What person (or people) in your life could offer you wise counsel? Read Proverbs 15:22 and write the name(s) down, committing to contact them with your concerns.*
- 4. Read Ruth 3:18 and Exodus 2:4, then answer the question: how are the circumstances leading?*
- 5. Take a moment to search yourself to see if an inner conviction has begun to develop. Record your thoughts.*
- 6. Take some time to contemplate the issue. Use your God-given logic to weigh pro's and cons.*

7. *Commit yourself to be content with the way God leads. Write a prayer, submitting yourself to obeying however He leads.*



## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS

---

Encourage your group not to get “journal fatigue”. Ask them to spend a few moments this week looking back at old journal entries. This may encourage them to continue the process, as we quickly forget what we’ve learned, and we’re also quickly encouraged when we’re reminded!

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 6

HIS PRESENCE IN LIFE'S VALLEYS

*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.*

---

**Goal:**

To teach participants how to be comforted in the midst of life's difficulties.

---

*\*Note that this section is a bit longer than some of the others, and thus more ground is covered. You might need to take some time and prayerfully consider whether it's best to remove some of the questions and instead teach the points or if there's another way to shorten certain sections to allow enough time.*

---

**Introduction:**

As the group comes together, check in with participants as to their progress. Continue to drive home that their journey should primarily progress in three ways: (1) growing in their knowledge, love, and relationship with the shepherd, (2) following His leading by faith, and (3) relying on the resources He provides.

---

Take a moment to review the progression of Psalm 23. Remind the group that it's not a static image, but a migration, as the Psalmist walks through different seasons of life.

If you're currently experiencing a "valley" in life, take a moment to share openly and honestly. Ask a few others to do so. Then ask:

In your valley, how are you responding? Our typical reactions are panic, fear, depression, anxiousness, or stress. But Psalm 23 has a very different approach to life's valleys. Let's look at it together.

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD'S LAND



**Ask someone to read Psalm 23:4. Then say something like:**

Notice the first word of Psalm 23:4: "Yea". In the book, Robert Morgan points out this means "yes" and connects verse 3 to verse 4. What's the significance of linking these two verses together as one unified idea?

They should note that being led in paths of righteousness sometimes means being led through difficulty. Ask if anyone can think of a biblical example. If needed, provide the example of the temptation of Jesus, who was, as the Scripture says, "led" or "driven" into the wilderness in Matthew 4, just after God declared "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (3:17).

Ask if anyone has felt like their difficulty, though not necessarily *caused* by God, was obviously *used* by God for their benefit, and if so, to share their experience.

Ask:

*What's the significance of the word "through".*

Point out that this verse comes right in the middle of the Psalm, and in the middle of the study; dark valleys are by nature transient. Be sure they understand, as Rob points out, that to Christians trials are always temporary and blessings are always eternal (whereas the reverse is true for unbelievers).

Ask:

*Do you notice a shift in the personal pronouns between verses 1–3 and 4–6? Many of us may not remember all our English grammar, so another way to ask is this: how does David refer to the Lord in verses 1–3 that's different from 4–6?*

The group should realize David switches from referring to "The Lord" and "His", to directly referring to God in a personal way, saying "you" and "your" rather than "he" and "his". Ask why this is significant.

Finally, note the rod and the staff. Remind them of Rob's words:

*I am reassured by the shepherd's equipment. He isn't ill prepared. He has a rod to drive off predators and enemies. He knows how to club the foes that attack me. He also has a staff with the crooked or curved top, so He can snag and snatch me if I get too close to the edge of a precipice. He knows how to restrain my footsteps, how to protect me even from myself and my missteps.*

Ask:

*Do you feel that you're more in danger from the world, or from yourself and your own temptations and struggles?*

After some share, transition to the next section with something like:

*The Lord can be our shepherd through life's valleys because Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, endured the darkest possible valley.*

## HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE



Remind the group:

*Pastor Morgan teaches that many speculate that the Wadi Kelt was the specific gorge in David's mind as he penned this line of the poem. He explains this as the route Jesus would have taken in biblical times as He left Galilee.*

*This gorge is the setting of the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–37.*

Ask someone to read this passage, then ask:

*What kind of visual image does Jesus draw of this place?*

Be sure they understand this is a place of danger and difficulty. Point out that Rob notes this stretch of the route to Jerusalem from Jericho was called “the Way of Blood” due to the treachery of bandits and wild animals.

Have someone read Matthew 20:17–19, 29 and explain that this was the route Jesus travelled on the way to Jerusalem just before His crucifixion. At this point, if time allows, you might ask questions that prompt participants to explain the significance. However, it may be more fluid to simply teach this point. Explain that Jesus Himself passed through the exact valley we presume David was referring to on His final trip to Jerusalem, where He knew He would face death on the cross. *He passed through the valley on our behalf!*

Ask:

*Have you ever been hit by the shadow of a plane passing overhead or a bus passing by? Did it hurt?*

Adding this element may lighten the mood for a moment, but also gives you an opportunity to drive home an important point:

*This isn't the valley of death. It's the valley of the shadow of death.*

Remind the group of Rob's words on this subject: “The locomotive force of the wrath of a holy God hit Jesus Christ as He hung on Calvary's cross on Good Friday... The Good Shepherd laid down His life for his sheep and bore our death full force. As a result, we're hit only by the *shadow* of death.”

If enough time remains, ask someone to read John 11:25–26 and John 14:19 and explain how they coincide with Rob's remarks.

**Ask someone to read Acts 7:55–60, then ask:**

*Stephen, facing death, in his dying moments reflects the phrase “I will fear no evil”. What other Biblical characters or events mirror this sentiment?*

Use this opportunity to point out that, while death certainly still affects us, its power over us has been removed, and as a result Christians should be less fearful of death than anyone else in the world.

Transition into the final section by saying something like:

*We're certain to face valleys in this life, but we've learned a great deal about God's presence, His provision, and His protection, not to mention the temporal nature of difficulty.*



## FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD'S LEAD



Ask:

*How does this verse affect your outlook in your own "valley"?*

Ask the participants to write down, on a piece of paper, a sentence or two describing the "valley" they're currently facing. After they've finished tell them:

I want you to write next to your problem, in big, bold letters, the word: **TEMPORARY**. Use this slip of paper this week to pray over your own problem, and as a reminder that it's not a permanent valley.

To close out your time together, ask if anyone who hasn't would like to share a brief summary of their current "valley". Close with a prayer over these requests.

## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS



Take this week to remind everyone of the therapeutic nature of journaling. Explain that in life's valleys, journaling can provide needed release and a place to record openly and honestly.



The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 7

HIS PROVISION ON LIFE'S TABLELAND

*You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies*

**Goal:**

To teach the group how to enjoy God's provisions while enduring their enemies.

**Introduction:**

As members gather, ask if anyone has taken action steps of faith since the last gathering. Check in on the "valleys" your members shared the previous session, and ask how the study has impacted them.

As you move into this lesson, recount the story that Pastor Morgan tells. You can portions of it from chapter 8 that you've prepped, or summarize similar to this:

Pastor Morgan opens chapter 8 with a story about Donald Britt, a veteran of World War II, who was once captured by German forces along with some of his fellow soldiers. After their capture, someone read the text of Psalm 23 aloud, which had a calming effect on all of them. As Christmas Eve approached, they sang Christmas Carols, hoping the guards would be moved by them. Their plan worked, and the guards gave them water served out of helmets. Morgan writes, "...the hearts of frightened boys were calmed by Psalm 23, read in the presence of their enemies, and...by God's grace their thirst was quenched when their helmets overflowed on Christmas Eve."

Ask a rhetorical question:

*We may not all be in constant danger from an opposing army, but we all have enemies. Who or what is the biggest enemy you face right now? I want you to have this enemy in your mind.*

Then invite a response to this follow up:

*What do you feel you need most as you face this enemy?*

Allow a few answers, then remark:

*We've heard a few examples, but we have enemies of various kinds. In spite of these enemies, what we learn in Psalm 23 is that the presence of enemies doesn't thwart the provision of our shepherd!*

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD'S LAND



Ask someone to read the first statement in Psalm 23:5: “You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies”.

Ask if anyone remembers, according to Pastor Morgan, what is the significance of the word *table* in this verse.

If some answer that it represents God's provision, they're correct in a sense. Be sure to affirm this answer. But point out that, also, Morgan suggests that this is a reference to the “tablelands”, which were areas of pasture shepherds would lead sheep to during a different season. They were rich with nutrients, but could also be dangerous with predators.

Ask:

*What kind of enemies face sheep?*

Simple answers (wolves, foxes, etc.) will likely be the response. Don't prolong the question; instead quickly follow up with something like:

Exactly. Harsh, predatory animals who wanted to completely obliterate the flock. That's the unfortunate life of a sheep—someone's always out to get them. Do you ever feel the same way as a Christian? If so, explain what you mean.

Some may share that culture seems increasingly vehemently opposed to Christians, while others will point out specific personal situations. Encourage these responses, and then transition with something like this:

Let's take a look at what kind of enemies we face and how Scripture teaches us to deal with them.

## HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE



Remind the group that Pastor Morgan points out three categories of enemies that oppose us:

1. *We Have National Enemies*
2. *We Have Personal Enemies*
3. *We Have Demonic Enemies*

Ask:

*When I asked you earlier to have your enemy in mind as we study, what group did this enemy or group of enemies fall into?*

Before the group meets, read through the following passages and choose one or more to briefly discuss. These deal with personal enemies: Matthew 5:33–48, Proverbs 19:11, Hebrews 12:15, Romans 12:18–19. Read your selected passage(s) and ask:

*How does the Scripture impact your outlook on your own personal enemies?*

Again, before the group meets, read through these passages and choose one or more. These deal with spiritual enemies: Ephesians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 15:25, John 10:27–29. Read your selected passage(s) and ask:

*How does the Scripture impact your outlook on spiritual enemies?*

**Read Isaiah 53:7 and John 10:15 (or, if time, ask someone to read them).**

Then ask:

*Why does Jesus take this posture towards His enemies?*

Before the meeting, choose 1 Corinthians 15:25, Revelation 11:5, 19:6, and then ask:

*Why does Jesus, in this / these passage(s) take a different posture towards His enemies?*

The follow up with:

*Which posture do you think Jesus takes towards your enemies right now? In the future?*

Transition with something like this:

Psalm 23 and other Scriptures should not only be interesting study, it should change the way we cope with the presence of our enemies.

## FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD'S LEAD



Ask:

*If the enemy you listed at the beginning of this lesson is personal, what steps will you commit to taking this week to love him or her?*

Remind the group that Romans 12:18–19 tells us to live at peace with everyone “as far as it depends on you”. Say:

*Sometimes it doesn't depend on us, and enemies will remain what they are despite what we do. If this is the case with you, think about your situation. Can you identify how the Lord has prepared a table for you despite your enemies? If so, share with us.*

Then say something like:

*If the enemy you identified is spiritual, explain how you feel the Lord has equipped you to deal with them, and what steps you can take this week to fend them off.*

Close by encouraging the group with something like this:

*I realize we've spent a lot of time talking about our enemies, which isn't necessarily the most uplifting topic. But hopefully you've gleaned some insight as to how the Lord equips us to deal with them. But I want to end this week by reminding you of the table the shepherd sets before you. It doesn't matter what enemies you face, the picture here is of the Lord preparing food and setting it before you, asking you to enjoy it despite those who oppose you. Remember what the Good Shepherd said: “Take heart, for I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).*

## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS

---



Tell the group that one of the frustrating things about enemies is that we're often in a corner in our ability to talk to them because they oppose us. Journaling is an excellent way to express our thoughts and feelings about our situations, as well as an important facet of placing these burdens before the Lord.

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 8

HIS POTION FOR LIFE'S HURTS

*You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over*

---

**Goal:**

To lead students to a deeper dependence on Jesus through seasons of hurt and a deeper understanding of the power available to them through the Holy Spirit.

---

---

**Introduction:**

As the group gathers, ask how they've been able to deal with personal and spiritual enemies in their lives since the last lesson.

---

After allowing time to share, recap the walk you've taken so far with the shepherd, pointing out the different paths / seasons of life. Then ask:

*Do you notice a predominant theme running through each season?*

Emphasize that the shepherd is always leading and always providing, despite whether the sheep are experiencing blessings or difficulty.

Ask the group:

*On a scale of 1–10, how sure are you that the Lord is both with you and providing for you? Explain your answer.*

It's likely that someone in the group will mention the difficulty they're currently facing. If not, share your own experience with the Lord's leading through difficulty, then transition to introduce the current subject matter with a statement like:

We're coming to the next season of life, where we learn how the Lord cares for us during seasons of hurt. We've dealt with dark valleys and the presence of our enemies, but let's take a moment to share openly about how these things affect us. What situations in your life are causing you pain, and how are you dealing with that pain?

You might take this opportunity to summarize the story at the beginning of chapter 9, where Rob tells the story of a shepherd with his sheep that didn't trust him until the sheep was hurt. After tending to the sheep, it grew to completely trust the shepherd. Then say something like this:

Rob points out in the book that troubles in life have a way of driving us to the Lord. It's through life's hurts that we bond with the shepherd all the more. Let's look at how this plays out in Scripture and in our lives.

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD'S LAND



Ask someone to read the last two phrases in Psalm 25:5: "You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over".

Mention that Pastor Morgan says this phrase points out the "tending" ministry of the Lord as our shepherd. Ask:

*In your hurts, have you noticed the Lord "tending" to you? If so, explain.*

Then point out the "oil" in this verse. Ask:

*What does anointing with oil have to do with tending literal sheep? What's the implication in our lives as believers?*

This question could have a couple correct answers. Morgan mentions that, to sheep, oil is a healing balm. He notes later on that, in Scripture, oil is symbolic for the Holy Spirit. Be sure to emphasize both and encourage both answers, then mention that the Lord "tends" to our hurts by the power of His indwelling Spirit!

Ask:

*What's the significance of an overflowing cup to a sheep? How does this affect your understanding of what our Good Shepherd offers us?*

Pastor Morgan rephrases Psalm 23:5 in this way:

*God's blessings have been poured out into my life so greatly that they overflow. I can't contain all of them. I can't absorb all the mercy and goodness that He has given me. I may not understand all it has cost My shepherd to provide such blessings, but I live in constant thanksgiving that my trough overflows. Goodness and mercy are certainly following me all the days of my life.*

Ask someone to offer their own rephrasing of this part of verse 5.

Transition to the next section with something like this:

Verse 5 is just a snapshot of the Lord's tending ministry. Let's dig a little deeper to see what other Scriptures have to say about this.



## HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE



Ask someone to read **Isaiah 40:11** and **Ezekiel 34:11–16**.

Then ask:

*What does this teach us about what shepherds do for their sheep and what the Lord does for us?*

The following Scriptures are important in helping the group understand the connection between the “anointing oil”, the Holy Spirit, and the ministry of Jesus Christ. If your group has been completing the study guide before each lesson, this might be a good session to ask them to bring their guide with them to share their answer to this particular question. Otherwise, you might want to create a handout with the following Scriptures so everyone can look over them at the same time. Or, simply read them (or selections from the following) and discuss:

### **Isaiah 61:1–3**

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,  
Because the Lord has anointed Me  
To preach good tidings to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives,  
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,  
To console those who mourn in Zion,  
To give them beauty for ashes,  
The oil of joy for mourning,  
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
That they may be called trees of righteousness,  
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.*

### **Psalms 45:7**

*You love righteousness and hate wickedness;  
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You  
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.*

**Isaiah 11:2**

*The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,  
 The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
 The Spirit of counsel and might,  
 The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*

**Matthew 3:16**

*When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.*

**John 3:34**

*For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.*

After looking at these Scriptures, ask the question:

*Pastor Morgan writes, “In the Bible, the words Christ and Messiah mean the ‘Anointed One’”. Based on the passages we’ve looked at, what “oil” was Jesus anointed with?*

Point out that, because the Lord is our shepherd, we’re offered the same “oil”!

**Choose one or more of these Scriptures to read or have someone read aloud: John 14:16–17, Galatians 5:16–18, Romans 14:17.**

Then ask:

*How do these verses suggest that we, as Christ’s sheep, experience the anointing of His Spirit?*

In the same way, choose one or more of the following Scriptures: John 4:14, John 7:37–38, Romans 15:13.

Then ask:

*Can someone describe, in your own words, the “overflowing cup” offered to us by Christ.*

Transition into the application section with something similar to this:

*Not only does the Lord offer to tend to our hurts personally, He empowers us with the very Spirit of Jesus Christ as we deal with circumstances in our lives. Our problem is that, when we feel hurt, we often also feel alone. Let’s look at some ways we can put these Scriptures into practice.*

## FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD’S LEAD



Encourage the group to write down their current hurts. Ask:

*If anyone feels comfortable sharing we’d be glad to listen.*

After a few answer, say:

*How does understanding the anointing and empowering role of the Holy Spirit affect your approach to life's hurts?*

Mention Rob's quote: "The Christian life is the overflowing life, and there's an important implication to that. As laborers in the Kingdom, our *work* for the Lord is simply the overflow of our *walk* with Him." Then say:

Many of us attempt to deal with our hurts on our own. What steps can you take to improve your daily walk with the Lord?

## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS



This week is another good opportunity to point out the therapeutic effect of journaling, as well as the true power of the omnipotent God when we pray, even if we pray in written form. Be sure the group is committing at least a slice of time each week to journaling.

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 9

HIS PROMISES FOR LIFE'S JOURNEYS

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life*

**Goal:**

To encourage the group with the truth that the Lord pursues us with His goodness and mercy throughout life.

**Introduction:**

As your group gathers, take a moment to check in from the previous few weeks, since the previous three lessons have been the most intense in dealing with life's difficulties: dark valleys, the presence of enemies, and life's hurts.

So begin the study with a lighthearted story about your favorite dog, if you had one. Highlight the characteristics of loyalty, faithfulness, and friendship if you had such a dog. Whether or not you had a dog, get the group loosened up and talking with something like:

Did anyone here grow up with, or currently have, a faithful dog that you can always count on to be around, waiting for you?

After sharing a few stories, transition with something like:

In Psalm 23, we've come to the point where David's thoughts "go to the dogs" so to speak. You'll see what I mean as we dig

deeper into Psalm 23.

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD'S LAND



**Ask someone to read Psalm 23:6 aloud, focusing on the first statement: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”.**

Begin this section by asking:

*As we've made our way through Psalm 23, what has been hunting us?*

Someone may point out that (based on this verse) goodness and mercy are pursuing us. If so, affirm this answer, and talk about how these promise to follow us “all the days of my life”, and are much more persistent than other enemies.

Another valid answer is that the enemies mentioned in previous verses are the culprits. Affirm this answer, and say something like this:

That's right. Even in luscious tablelands, we have the presence of our enemies. But the good news is that there's something that is much more persistent than our enemies. It's the Lord's goodness and mercy!

Note that Pastor Morgan suggests several other synonyms for “follow”. Ask if anyone remembers what these are. Be sure they understand this can mean: “pursue”, “chase”, or “hunt”.

Then note that Pastor Morgan suggests David is thinking of sheepdogs when he mentions “goodness” and “mercy”. Then ask:

How does it affect your thinking to imagine goodness and mercy as sheepdogs, hunting and pursuing you, surrounding you no matter where you turn?

Then say:

*Notice that this idea starts with the word “surely”. What impact does this word have on the text and its implications on your life?*

Remind the group that Pastor Morgan says: “Goodness represents all He bestows on us that we *don't* deserve. Mercy represents all He withholds that we *do* deserve”. Ask the group:

*If you were trying to explain God's goodness and mercy to someone else, how would you explain these concepts?*

Ask:

How does the phrase “all the days of my life” impact the meaning and application of this verse?

Transition, saying something like:

*Let's look at how these concepts play out in other Scriptures.*

## HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE



Note that the word “surely”, as Rob explains, “has the basic meaning of ‘no doubt; this is absolutely true; this can never be

doubted; it can never fail...The Bible is full of terminology that conveys the confidence we should have in our Lord and His Word.”

**Before this lesson, choose from the following passages, a few verses to share to emphasize this concept: Romans 8:38–39, Job 19:25, 2 Corinthians 2:3, 5:6–8, 1 John 5:13–14, Romans 4:16–22.**

Then say:

*Do you ever struggle with having confidence in the Lord and His Word? How do these Scriptures impact you in that struggle?*

Remind the group again of Rob’s definitions: “Goodness represents all He bestows on us that we *don’t* deserve. Mercy represents all He withholds that we *do* deserve”. Then ask:

*How do goodness and mercy find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep?*

This point is *critical*. Your group should understand that God’s wrath was poured out on Jesus Christ so that we could receive mercy. They should also understand that, because Jesus was the lamb who was slain on our behalf, that we’ve been invited into the fold and thus receive the goodness of God.

**Before group time, choose some of the following passages to read aloud: John 10:10–11, Psalm 21:3, 34:10, 84:11, 100:3, Matthew 7:11, James 1:17, John 1:16, Ephesians 1:3. Then say:**

Scripture is full of references to the goodness and mercy poured out on us by God. Morgan notes “This theme in the Bible has literally changed my personality”. How do these Scriptures affect you, and your outlook on the path you’re currently on?

Then note:

*Rob points out this verse as one of the Bible’s great “all”s. Explain how verses like this one and Romans 8:28 can possibly be so extensive in their application.*

Transition into the next session with something like this:

*As we near the end of our journey through the various seasons and pathways of life in Psalm 23, we’re introduced to a vivid truth, that we’re being hunted, pursued, chased—not by an enemy, but by goodness and mercy. We’re told this will remain true throughout our lives!*

## FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD’S LEAD



By this point in the study, the group should be more adept at understanding how to *apply* what they’ve learned. Simply end by asking a series of open-ended question, prompting as needed.

Ask:

*How does this imagery impact your approach to life’s difficulties?*

Then, ask:

*If you tend to worry about your future, describe how the words “all the days of my life” can counteract your worries.*

Then do this exercise with the group if time allows:

Now we’ve spent a lot of time hearing the joys, pains, and difficulties of others. If you remember or have been praying for someone here, I want you, right now and out loud, to apply this verse to that person. I’ll start...

*For example: “John, I know you’ve had a hard time finding a job. But I want to remind you that while you’re searching for a job, goodness and mercy are hunting you down! Pursuing you. The Lord will have His way with your life.” Or, “Jill, I can’t imagine*

*the joy you must have with this new little baby. But I want to remind you that this isn't all the good God has for you. I will keep praying for you, and want to encourage you that the Lord will continue to bless you!"*

If the group has a hard time with this exercise, simply provide a couple of examples as you address members, then encourage them to write each other a similar note or to call other group members throughout the week with these encouragements!

## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS

---



Remind your group that journaling God's goodness and mercy is one of the best ways to be sure we don't forget them!

The  
LORD  
is My  
SHEPHERD

LESSON 10

HIS PALACES AT LIFE'S END

*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*

---

**Goal:**

To encourage students to anticipate and appreciate our ultimate destination: heaven.

---

**Introduction:**

If this study isn't a regular Sunday School, lifegroup, or weekly gathering, but instead is a special one-time study, this session may be bittersweet. But it's the most encouraging truth Christians have. Be careful that time doesn't slip away, but ask open-ended questions like these:

---

*How has God changed you since the first lesson?*

*What's the most significant truth you've learned about God and His resources for you?*

Be sure to encourage the group for "sticking with it" during the study, and more importantly through so many different "seasons" of life.

As you transition into the primary discussion, insert a statement like:

As we near the close of our journey together with the Good Shepherd, we certainly don't want to miss this last truth! Our jour-



ney with the Good Shepherd does have a final destination, and it's an eternal one. Psalm 23 starts with "The Lord", but ends with the word "forever".

## SURVEY THE SHEPHERD'S LAND



Typically, we focus more on Psalm 23 in this section "survey the land". However, in this lesson, we need to immediately help the group understand that the "house of the Lord" describes the dwelling place of the Lord, and ultimately heaven. Other Scriptures are essential in surveying the "house of the Lord" as our final destination. We'll bring in Hebrews 11 in the next brief section and the application portion of the lesson in order to make the connection to Christian living in light of our destination.

**Ask someone to read the last statement in Psalm 23:6: "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever".**

Use this chance to do a review snapshot of Psalm 23 with this:

*Pastor Morgan reminds us that in Psalm 23 we see:*

*Beside Me: My Shepherd*

*Beneath Me: Green Pastures*

*Near Me: Still Waters*

*Ahead of Me: Righteous Paths*

*Within Me: Restored Spirits*

*Against Me: My Enemies*

*For Me: His Rod and Staff*

*Around Me: A Tableland*

*Upon Me: Anointing Oil*

*Above Me: Overflowing Blessings*

*Behind Me: Goodness and Mercy*

*Before Me: My Father's House*

Let's look at this final step together:

**Before your time together, read the following passages and choose a few: Psalm 27:2, Psalm 92:12–13, Psalm 122:1, Exodus 23:19, 1 Samuel 1:7, 24, 1 Kings 7:41, 8:11. Then say:**

As we "survey the land", let's look at a few other biblical passages concerning this phrase "the house of the Lord".

Read your selection(s), then ask:

*In these passages, what is the "house of the Lord"?*

**Read Acts 17:24 aloud, then ask the simple question:**

*Is the "house of the Lord" a description of a physical building, or does it refer more to the dwelling place of God?*

If you wish, have someone read the following passages aloud, or you may prefer to have them look them up.

Ask:

*How does Revelation 21:3 describe the tabernacle (dwelling place) of the Lord?*

*How does Jesus describe this place in John 14:1–3 and Luke 23:43?*

Before class, read Revelation 21 and 22, then choose some select verses to have someone read aloud. Then ask:

*In your own words, what scenery stands out in your mind?*

Transition with something like this:

*Rob points out that Psalm 23 begins with “The Lord” and ends with “forever”. Yet it’s sometimes difficult for us to understand how the Lord expects His sheep to live with an eternal perspective. Hebrews 11 offers us some guidance here.*

## HEAR THE SHEPHERD’S VOICE



**Ask someone to read Hebrews 11:1–16. Then ask someone to rephrase verse 16 in their own words. Encourage their response.**

Then say:

*Now put Hebrews 11:16 in personal language as it pertains to your own life as the shepherd calls you to a life of faith. I’ll go first...*

Start with your own situation.

*For example: “I have trouble right now with trusting the Lord through this difficult economic time. It’s hard for me to pay for things and to save enough, but without faith it’s impossible for me to please God. I will believe that He is who He says He is, and that He will reward me if I will continue to seek Him diligently!”*

## FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD’S LEAD



Ask:

*How does it affect you in the current season of life you’re in, to reflect on these truths?*

Then ask:

*What steps can you take to live with the wholehearted expectation and anticipation of a heavenly destination?*

End your time together by saying:

*I think it’s appropriate, here at the end of our time together, to pause and take a moment to reflect on the house of the Lord as our*

*ultimate, eternal destination. After a brief moment of silence, let's allow our meditation to flow into a prayer of praise to God as our Good Shepherd. He will lead us in all seasons of life until we're with Him in eternity.*

## REMEMBER THE SHEPHERD'S GOODNESS

---



As you close, encourage participants to record their reflections on this journey and its ultimate destination.

As this meeting closes, feel free (if time allows) to reflect once more on specific testimonies of the Lord's work in individual lives. Remind them that seasons are constantly changing, and to keep turning to Psalm 23 and especially to the Good Shepherd.