

**rightnow** MEDIA

# PSALM 23

**MATT CHANDLER**

**STUDY GUIDE**

# rightnow MEDIA

RightNow Presents Psalm 23  
STUDY GUIDE

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This Study Guide is a tool that helps you unpack a text. But it can be more than that. We're giving you a document full of possibility. Our goal is to provide you with more than enough content to create life-changing reflection and, if you're using it with a group, discussion. So feel free to select only those parts or questions that you feel will best help your study of Psalm 23.

With that in mind, let's preview the guide. The main body of the Study Guide is written as a conversation. When there's a specific question to answer, it appears in bold type. Many of the questions are open for reflection or discussion. In addition, each session has particular sections:

### ► SESSION GOALS

This is the point of each session—the big idea and what we hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of the material. All of the teaching, questions, and reflections ultimately point back to these goals. They're there primarily to help structure your study.

### ► OPEN

This is an icebreaker aimed primarily at group discussion. If you'd like, you can use it as something to ease into the theme of the session and get the reflective juices flowing.

### ► READ & WATCH

We often rush into the interpretation of a Bible passage without really hearing what it says. For this study, we urge you to read the text slowly before you begin the analysis. Drink in the words and images for yourself. Then the video teaching from Matt Chandler will make more sense. You will be able to compare it with your own impressions of the text.

### ► DISCUSS, GO DEEPER, & DUST OFF THE HEBREW

Here's the meat of the Bible study: questions about the meaning of the text. The section usually starts with some "easy-answer" questions that review what the Scripture actually says. But then there are tougher questions about the whys and hows.

Every so often you'll see a Go Deeper or a Dust off the Hebrew section. These features connect you to other Scriptures on certain themes found in the

psalm or present a look at the original language of the text. If you're looking for a more in-depth study of the passage, you'll find it here.

### ► LAST WORD & LIVE IT OUT

This is an opportunity for you to do something with what you've learned. This study guide offers a menu of responses. Any one of them would be a valuable response to the lesson, but consider responding both inwardly and outwardly. Many of us are very good at internal responses in which we treasure the lessons we just learned. But actually talking with a neighbor? Actually helping someone in need? Keep moving toward the more challenging responses.

Every group meeting is an improvisation. No matter how much you prepare, there's always a chance that someone will ask a question you can't answer, or that the discussion will go in an unforeseen direction. Maybe someone in the group has a crucial need you have to address. Maybe the Spirit gives you a new understanding of how a biblical teaching applies to the lives in your group.

If you're new to group leading, you can simply follow along through this Study Guide step by step. Remember that your job is to ask questions, not necessarily to give all the answers. It's okay to let silence stretch its arms as your group thinks through the discussion. As you honor participant's answers—even the half-baked ones—they'll be encouraged to participate even more.

If you're accustomed to doing your own thing, go for it! This guide provides ideas to help you do your job even better. Whether you're a novice or a veteran, read through each lesson in advance. Know your options. Plan out those parts you're likely to use. Develop a game plan.

We've provided handouts to use with each lesson. You'll need to make enough copies for your entire group beforehand so participants can make notes along the way and remember the Scripture used in the Bible study. The handouts also include activities for further study during the week.

### ► A NOTE ON THE OPEN QUESTIONS

Adjust it to the character of your group, but don't skip it for several reasons: First, every group needs some transition time. Second, the people get to know each other. Finally, the introductory questions draw out practical connections between the subject matter and their lives. Don't leave this step out.

### ► A NOTE ON THE GO DEEPER & DUST OFF THE HEBREW SECTIONS

You're welcome to use the sections you think will best suit your group discussion. Go through in advance to see which ones seem most promising to you. Here are some factors to consider:

- » Some people love exploring through the Bible and comparing references. Others, especially those who are rather new to Bible study, may get confused by it. They might not know where to find those other books of the Bible, and they might not be sure what the Gospel of John has

to do with Psalm 23 anyway. In some cases, you could explain what the other passages say, or get individual group members to read the other passages, so the "exploration" is kept to a minimum.

- » Any one of the Go Deeper explorations could become a rabbit trail, leading you away from what you intended to cover. Some groups like it that way, finding new adventures in the comparison of different parts of Scripture, but if you have a clear agenda for this study, keep a leash on the discussion.
- » The Go Deeper cross-references serve as a sort of "elastic" for your meeting. If you're running out of time, you can drop the Go Deeper content and the lesson will still make sense. But if you have plenty of time, these explorations can fill it productively.
- » Dust off the Hebrew sections provide insight into the careful wording used in Psalm 23. A discussion of the original language may help to clarify a sticky issue in the text, so feel free to reference them as you see fit. However, some groups may find the technical analysis overwhelming. As with everything, it's your call.

We recommend that you go through the Go Deeper and Dust off the Hebrew portions in your personal preparation and choose how you will handle them. Even the sections you choose not to use will give you helpful background as you lead the group.

## **ABOUT MATT CHANDLER**

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Matt Chandler serves as Lead Pastor of Teaching at The Village Church in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Under his leadership since 2002, the church has grown from 160 to over 11,000 members across five campuses.

Alongside his current role as lead pastor, Matt is involved in church planting efforts both locally and internationally through The Village and various strategic partnerships. Matt also serves as the President of Acts 29, a worldwide church-planting organization. He is a frequent conference speaker and the author of several books including *Creature of the Word*, *The Explicit Gospel* and *The Mingling of Souls*. Matt and his wife, Lauren, have three children.



# PSALM 23

MATT CHANDLER

## SESSION 1:

SHEPHERD (PSALM 23:1)

### GROUP QUICK START

#### READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

#### PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

#### WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

**SESSION GOALS**

Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

► **MAIN IDEA**

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

► **HEAD CHANGE**

To know that every shepherd other than God is a thief who cannot deliver on the longings of our hearts.

► **HEART CHANGE**

To be comforted by the gracious provision of God regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves in this world.

► **LIFE CHANGE**

To abandon whatever false shepherds tempt us away from following the Lord.

**OPEN**

**Describe a time when you got lost. What happened? How did you lose your way? How did the situation resolve?**

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

**READ**

Psalm 23:1-6

**WATCH SESSION 1**

**DISCUSS**

Few portions of Scripture are more popular than Psalm 23. If you grew up in church, you heard it recited and perhaps even memorized it in its entirety. It’s an encouraging passage to hold dear, but when we grow familiar with certain portions of the Bible, they can often lose their punch. At one time God’s Word jumped off the page, but now the well-known portions begin to feel distant and repetitive. As Matt noted in the session, our familiarity can tempt us to believe they do not even apply to us.

**How familiar are you with Psalm 23? How have you heard it used throughout your life?**

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**As you enter into this study, what do you hope to take away from it? Write down 2–3 ways you hope God will help you grow throughout this series.**

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

In what ways do you find yourself believing the Old Testament is not relevant to your life today? How does that belief influence your view of the Bible as a whole?

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

What do you know about the story of David?

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**GO DEEPER**

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

1 Sam. 17:1–58; 2 Sam. 5:1–5; 11:1–12:23

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

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

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

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

**READ**

Psalm 23:1

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

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

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

How does the idea of God as your shepherd fit into your current perspective of God? In what ways should it change the way you think about God?

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

**READ**

John 10:1-18

What characteristics of Jesus stand out to you the most based on how John describes him in this passage? How do those characteristics compare to the way David describes the Lord in Psalm 23?

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

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

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

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

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

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**Where do you find yourself lacking today? What can you do to pursue Jesus as your provider rather than following another false shepherd?**

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**LAST WORD**

It is only in Christ that we can say, "I shall not want." As much as other shepherds may contend otherwise, they will do nothing more than rob us of the life we desire. Our goal as Christians should be to find ourselves so full in Christ that we, too, can say, "I lack nothing." And that starts with making sure we're listening to and following the right shepherd.

Over the next few weeks, we'll dive into what that looks like on a more practical level, but for now take some time to reflect on where you are spiritually. Which shepherd are you following? Whose voice are you listening to? Can you confidently say that you lack nothing? The Lord is a shepherd who cares for his sheep. If you belong to his flock, then he will provide everything that you require. You need only look to him.

**LIVE IT OUT**

**► MEMORIZE**

Over the course of this study, commit to memorizing all of Psalm 23. This week, focus on verse one reciting it to yourself over the next few days.

**► PRAY**

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

**► RESOLVE**

As you begin this study, resolve to reach the point in your relationship with the Lord that you are able to say, like David, "I lack nothing." Whatever needs, longings, or desires that you have bring them to God and find them met in him.

# PSALM 23

MATT CHANDLER

**SESSION 2:**

**STILL WATERS (PSALM 23:2)**

## GROUP QUICK START

**READ**

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

**PRINT**

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

**WATCH**

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

**SESSION GOALS**

Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

▶ **MAIN IDEA**

*When the Lord is our shepherd, he leads us in to perpetual rest for the restoration of our souls.*

▶ **HEAD CHANGE**

To believe that all promises of rest apart from the Lord are ultimately empty.

▶ **HEART CHANGE**

To feel a tangible sense of rest from the chaos of life.

▶ **LIFE CHANGE**

To repent of whatever false forms of rest we are chasing, and pursue only the promise of rest extended by the Lord.

**OPEN**

**Think back over your week. When did you feel the most rested? What made that moment restful for you?**

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Rest is important. It’s even commanded in the Bible. We started off this study talking about how God is our shepherd who provides for our needs. Today’s study will continue to look at that idea as Matt Chandler talks about how the shepherd leads us into rest.

**READ**

Psalm 23:1-6

**WATCH SESSION 2**

**DISCUSS**

While God is sovereign, all-knowing, and all-powerful, he is also a shepherd who cares for his sheep. When we belong to his flock, we enjoy his tender protection. And the ultimate goal is to find all that we long for in him. Because Jesus is God, we see this attribute of God expressed through the earthly life of our Savior. He is the good shepherd and his sheep follow his voice. But that brings us to an important question we have to consider: Where is Jesus leading us?

Take a minute to reflect back on what you learned from session one. **Over the past week, have you identified any ways in which you find yourself in want? Where are you struggling to agree with David in saying, “I shall not want”?**

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**How have you seen the Lord provide for you over the past week?**

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**How have you followed his voice?**

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Over the next four weeks, we're going to consider where our good shepherd is leading us as we walk with him by faith. This week, we're going to take a look at one of the specific destinations—rest.

**READ**

Psalm 23:2

**What are some images that come to mind when you think about rest? What does rest look like for you?**

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**What grade would you give your ability to rest at this stage of your life? Why?**

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As Matt pointed out in the session, God invites us to follow him out of drought and weariness and in to spaces of rest. It's a perpetual invitation because our need for rest ebbs and flows throughout life, but it will always remain a need this side of glory.

**Where do you find yourself facing weariness? What causes that exhaustion?**

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**What are some ways that you have sought rest outside of the Lord as a response to your exhaustion, either today or at some point in the past?**

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The primary way God invites us in to rest is through his Son, Jesus Christ. Outside of him, there is no true rest because we do not have peace with God. Beneath the surface, it is our separation from God that fuels our feelings of unrest. Being able to breathe out requires a true commitment to Jesus Christ.

**READ**

John 10:7-10

**According to John 10:9, what are the two benefits of following Jesus?**

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**GO DEEPER**

*Read more about peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ in the following verses:*

Gal. 1:3-5; 1 John 3:18-20

**According to Paul in Galatians, what is the basis for our deliverance from “the present evil age” to a place of peace?**

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**LIVE IT OUT**

**▶ MEMORIZE**

Continue working on memorizing Psalm 23. This week, focus on verse two reciting it to yourself over the next few days.

**▶ PRAY**

Spend at least five minutes in prayer each day this week specifically confessing to the Lord the places where you have found yourself in need of rest as a result of this session.

**▶ ENCOURAGE**

If you are currently in a season of enjoying rest in the Lord, look for someone in your life who is struggling and make an intentional effort to encourage them with the truths you learned from this session.

# PSALM 23

MATT CHANDLER

SESSION 3:

PATHS (PSALM 23:3)

## GROUP QUICK START

### READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

### PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

### WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

**SESSION GOALS**

Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

► **MAIN IDEA**

*When the Lord is our shepherd, we receive the righteousness of Christ as a free gift that he extends to us for the glory of his name.*

► **HEAD CHANGE**

To believe that God has counted us righteous not because of our obedience, but because of the obedience of Christ.

► **HEART CHANGE**

To feel free from the need to earn God’s acceptance through our good works

► **LIFE CHANGE**

To repent of any ways in which we are living to build up our name and seek solely to live our lives for the sake of making much of the glory of God.

**OPEN**

**Describe a time when you broke the rules as a kid—the funnier the better. What happened? What were the consequences?**

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Learning—and choosing—right from wrong is an important part of growing up. As Christians, we have a God who will not only show us what it means to do what’s right, but he also enables us to be righteous. Up to this point in this series, we’ve talked about how God is our shepherd, which means he provides for us and leads us to rest. This week we’ll explore what it means that he leads us into righteousness.

**READ**

Psalm 23:1-6

**WATCH SESSION 3**

**DISCUSS**

So far, we’ve studied some pretty spectacular truths about God as well as what we receive by following him. When the Lord is our shepherd, we lack nothing. He leads us into green pastures, beside still waters, and restores our souls. But why? What is the grand goal behind the kindness he extends to us? That’s the topic of our session today.

**READ**

Psalm 23:3

The final half of verse 3 introduces us to one additional benefit of knowing him that we haven’t talked about before—he leads us in paths of righteousness. **What is righteousness? How would you define it according to your understanding of Scripture?**

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**DUST OFF THE HEBREW**

The Hebrew term David uses to describe righteousness is *zedek*. In its most basic sense, the word refers to that which is right or upright. But in the context of Psalm 23, it carries a deeper sense. Certainly, God cares for our physical well-being and often leads us along such paths, but he is far more concerned with the makeup of our hearts. The *zedek* David has in mind here concerns external health, but also internal salvation. So not only does he provide us a place among his flock and grant us the peace we need, but he also extends to us salvation for the sake of his name, which is further made clear through the example of Jesus Christ who laid down his life for his sheep. Psalm 23 may be short, but it overflows with the generosity of our God in heaven.





**LIVE IT OUT**

**► MEMORIZE**

Continue working on memorizing Psalm 23. This week, focus on verse three reciting it to yourself over the next few days.

**► PRAY**

If the Lord revealed to you any ways that you have misunderstood the righteousness he freely gives, confess that to him throughout this next week. Ask that he would free you from false belief in order to walk in the truth of his Word.

**► SERVE**

Identify a need somewhere in your day-to-day routine (workplace, neighborhood, school, etc.) and make an intentional effort to serve that need to make much of the name of the Lord.

# PSALM 23

MATT CHANDLER

## SESSION 4:

THE VALLEY (PSALM 23:4)

### GROUP QUICK START

#### READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

#### PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

#### WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

**SESSION GOALS**

Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**► MAIN IDEA**

*Our hope in times of darkness is the presence of God, not the resolution of our circumstances.*

**► HEAD CHANGE**

To know that God is present with us as we walk through times of suffering.

**► HEART CHANGE**

To feel confidence when facing difficulty based on the comfort experienced through God’s presence.

**► LIFE CHANGE**

To reject any fears we have about suffering while in this world, knowing that our true hope is in God and the comfort he brings.

**OPEN**

**What kinds of things help boost your mood throughout the day?** (Some answers could include: a cup of coffee, a kind text from a friend, a favorite snack, etc.)

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**Why do you think those things have the ability to raise your mood? Why do you think the mood-boost doesn’t always last?**

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Sure, sometimes little parts of our day can make it a better one. But we can also find ourselves in situations that are too difficult for a cup of tea or a walk to remedy. Where can we turn when life is hard? This series has taken us through Psalm 23 where we’ve seen how God is our shepherd who guides us, gives us rest, and provides for us. We’ll learn today how God is who we can rely on through the valley of the shadow of death.

**READ**

Psalm 23:1-6

**WATCH SESSION 4**

**DISCUSS**

In our last session, we revisited the question of whether or not an Old Testament psalm written thousands of years ago by King David applies to us today. One of the ways in which we can be sure that it does is through Jesus’s fulfillment of what Psalm 23 teaches. When the Lord is our shepherd through faith in Jesus, we lack nothing. He provides everything we need.

**Take a minute to reflect on that truth. How has Jesus demonstrated his provision to you over the last week?**

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**In what ways has the Bible been more “real” to your daily life as you have worked through this series?**

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Dark nights of the soul are painful. There's no getting around that. And God does not expect us to enjoy our suffering, but he does have expectations for our focus in the midst of it. In verse 4, David proclaims that he will "fear no evil" while facing the valley of the shadow of death. **Based on your answer above, did your response reflect David's confidence? Why or why not?**

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More than likely, you did not respond to your own suffering with the perfection of Christ. Join the club. We have all fallen short in this area and desperately need help because fearing no evil requires more than simply our own human strength.

**According to verse 4, what is the reason for why David fears no evil?**

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**How does God's presence remove our fear of evil? In what ways would a deeper focus on God's presence have changed the way you responded to difficulty in the past?**

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While suffering is never enjoyable, one of its benefits is that it shows us when we are following false shepherds. Matt specifically mentioned the "shepherds" of health and wealth. When we place our confidence in our bank accounts, what happens when we come up short one month on our mortgage? Or can't afford groceries? When we place

our confidence in our health, what happens when we get sick? Or find ourselves on the other end of a freak car accident? These are false shepherds and cannot provide for us the way Jesus can.

Continue to reflect on the suffering you have faced in the past or may be facing presently. **How has it revealed to you the ways in which you might have followed false shepherds? Where did you place your confidence?**

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**What were you looking for in that false shepherd that it could not provide?**

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Dark nights of the soul drive us to whatever we think will save us. And when the Lord is our shepherd, he will always remain with us providing every step of the way. But David takes the truth of God's presence a step further. Not only is the Lord with us in our suffering, but he also comforts us.

**How might they demonstrate the ways God cares for his people in times of suffering?**

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# PSALM 23

MATT CHANDLER

SESSION 5:

TABLE (PSALM 23:5)

## GROUP QUICK START

### READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

### PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

### WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

**SESSION GOALS**

Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

► **MAIN IDEA**

*God does not just accept those who surrender their lives to Christ—he delights in them as children adopted into his family*

► **HEAD CHANGE**

To know that God is pleased with us based on the perfect righteousness of Christ.

► **HEART CHANGE**

To feel the Lord’s delight not because of what we have done, but because of what Christ has done on our behalf.

► **LIFE CHANGE**

To reject any behaviors or habits in our lives where we are trying to earn God’s acceptance and instead rest in the acceptance he has freely given to us through faith in Christ.

**OPEN**

**Think back to your middle school or high school days. What’s the silliest thing you’ve ever said or done to impress someone you had a crush on? Did your words or actions work in your favor?**

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We can do crazy things for the people we like. Through our study of Psalm 23, we’ve learned about God, our shepherd, who cares for us no matter where we are in life. We’ll see this week how much he likes us, how he expresses his delight in us, and how we did nothing to deserve it.

**READ**

Psalm 23:1-6

**WATCH SESSION 5**

**DISCUSS**

Let’s start this session by reviewing what we’ve covered so far. Digging in to Psalm 23 has meant slowing down and revisiting a portion of the Bible that has become overly familiar for many. We’ve refreshed ourselves in the truth that with the Lord as our shepherd we lack nothing. He provides us with rest, righteousness, guidance, and protection. But before we go any further, we need a reminder from session three.

**Take a look back at your notes. What did Matt refer to as the “gravitational pull” of Psalm 23?**

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**READ**

Psalm 23:5

Don’t forget this important point. God doesn’t provide us with all of these gifts out of a sense of obligation. He does it “for his name’s sake.” In other words, he does it because it further displays his glory to the world when we find all of our needs met in him. God provides for us by drawing near out of a sense of deep love for all of his sheep.

**How do you tend to think about God? Is he more of a distant king in your mind? Or do you picture him as a caring shepherd?**

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Throughout this session, Matt emphasized the point that God genuinely loves you right here, right now. **How does that truth sit with you? What feels come to the surface when you reflect on the idea that God actually likes having you near to him?**

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That’s where we’re going to focus most of our attention in this session, on the truth that God delights in those who belong to him.

**READ**

Psalm 23:5

**How does the picture of God throwing a feast fit into your typical view of God?**

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Even more, David writes that God does this “in the presence of my enemies.” **How does a very public display of God’s affection for his people fit into your typical view of God?**

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As if this weren’t already enough, God continues his display of extravagant care by anointing David with oil and filling his cup to the point that it overflows.

**DUST OFF THE HEBREW**

Most English translations render the Hebrew term *dashan*, which David uses in verse 5, as “anoint.” While technically it isn’t an incorrect translation, the context of the psalm suggests otherwise. When we see the term “anoint” in Scripture, it often indicates an act of initiating someone into royalty. However, that’s not at play in Psalm 23. The form and context of *dashan* here gets more at the idea of God’s hospitality. Bearing that in mind, a better translation would be to “refresh,” which reiterates God’s care for his people. Proverbs 15:30 is a helpful parallel. The same term is used in that verse to describe the refreshing effect of good news. God provides for his people abundantly preparing a feast, filling our cups to the point of overflowing, and offering the refreshment we need.

As Matt pointed out in the session, all of verse 5 builds to an overwhelming vision of God’s delight in his people, one we often struggle to incorporate in to our own views of God. It’s easier to think of God as a distant judge—one who gives us rules to live by and who doles out punishment when we come up short. But that’s not the picture of God we receive here in Psalm 23. If you belong to the Lord’s flock, he delights in you today.

**In what ways could this picture of God change your view of him?**

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**How would you describe you spiritual life currently? Are you in a season of feeling like God is distant? Or are you in a time of feasting?**

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**What can you do practically to rest in God's acceptance this week? What do you need to surrender to him in order to do so?**

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**LAST WORD**

God delights in you. Let that sink in for a moment. It's no small truth. The God of the universe, the one who exists in all places at all times, who knows every secret hidden in the shadows, rejoices over the fact that you belong to him. There is no sin too great for him to forgive and he welcomes us when we return home to him in repentance.

It's easy to drift from a biblical view of God. Picturing him as a caring shepherd—let alone a loving father—can be a difficult task, but that is the God we deserve. Wherever you find yourself today, whether you are surrounded by enemies or enjoying a time of refreshment, trust him. Chase after him. Expect that he will care for your needs.

**LIVE IT OUT**

**► MEMORIZE**

Continue working on memorizing Psalm 23. This week, focus on verse five reciting it to yourself over the next few days.

**► PRAY**

Ask the Lord to help you see him as he truly is and to more fully believe in the richness of his love for you.

**► JOURNAL**

Take out a small piece of paper and write down 2–3 specific ways that God has demonstrated his delight in you at various points in your life. Then, put it in a place where you will see it at the start of each day this week. Each time you read it, reflect on God's kindness to you and thank him for it.

# PSALM 23

MATT CHANDLER

SESSION 6:

DWELL (PSALM 23:6)

## GROUP QUICK START

### READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

### PRINT

Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

### WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

**SESSION GOALS**

Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

► **MAIN IDEA**

*The ultimate hope of our Christian faith is to dwell with God forever, and that is a promise for those who belong to his flock.*

► **HEAD CHANGE**

To know that even in difficult days, God is giving us his goodness and mercy.

► **HEART CHANGE**

To feel strengthened by the truth that God’s mercy can overcome any and all of our sin.

► **LIFE CHANGE**

To pursue God’s presence as the solution to our longings rather than freedom from our temporary circumstances.

**OPEN**

**When you look back over your walk with God, what aspect of his character has been the most encouraging to you? In what ways has knowing that aspect of his character helped you grow?**

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We can always know God better. In this series, we’ve unpacked several aspects of his character—his love, presence, provision, strength, and righteousness. This final session wraps up the series and examines God’s goodness and mercy towards us.

**READ**

Psalm 23:1-6

**WATCH SESSION 6**

**DISCUSS**

We have spent the last six weeks slowing down and working through a very familiar psalm in the hopes of seeing it anew. As Matt said in session one, when biblical truth becomes commonplace, it can be easy for us to overlook its significance—even taking it for granted at times. But despite its brevity, Psalm 23 delivers some astounding truths about our God and what it means to belong to him. So let’s start off this week by reflecting on where we have come.

In week one, you listed two or three ways you hoped the Lord would help you grow as you worked through this series. **How has God answered your prayers for growth? In what ways has he met you as you have studied Psalm 23?**

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**How has your understanding of God grown throughout this study?**

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**How has your understanding of yourself grown over the last few sessions?**

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Matt has challenged each week our tendency to view God incorrectly. All too often, we fall into the trap of believing that he is a distant God, constantly observing our moral efforts and ready to punish us when we go wrong. But that simply is not the image of God we receive in the Bible and we are going to close out our study by challenging that misunderstanding one last time.

**READ**

Psalm 23:6

Matt said that if we could distill all sixty-six books of the Bible in to a single phrase, it would be “God with us.” **When you think of that phrase, what are some examples that come to mind of God being present with his people?**

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**We have wrestled with this question previously, but what makes it difficult to believe that God desires to be with you? How has your perspective on God’s presence changed as you have worked through this study?**

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This final verse of Psalm 23 presents us with two ideas, the first being that goodness and mercy follow those who call the Lord their shepherd. The Bible contains plenty of commands that we are expected to incorporate into our lives for the sake of obedience.

**How do you tend to respond to being told what to do? Specifically, when it comes to the commands of the Bible, how do you respond to the ways in which it calls you to obedience?**

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As Matt pointed out, part of misunderstanding the character of God is also misunderstanding his intention for our obedience. He is not looking for begrudging submission. Rather, his commands are intended to bring us joy because they bring him glory and help us live in the way he designed the world to function.

**When you think about obedience, is “goodness” something that you imagine it leading you toward? What situations make it difficult to believe that God wants good things for you?**

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Inevitably, no matter how faithfully we pursue obedience, there will be times in which we fail. That’s true in every area of life. We will come up short before God, in our marriages, in our jobs, in our friendships, and so on. That’s why the second characteristic that chases after those who follow the Lord is so significant.

**What is mercy? How would you define it?**

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How do you tend to respond to your own failures? In what ways do you find it difficult to believe that God would respond to them with mercy rather than punishment?

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Matt argued that we misunderstand mercy “following” us because we don’t truly understand the righteousness of God given to us through faith in Christ. **Where are you in need of mercy today? How should the truth that God’s mercy follows you through faith in Christ meet you in that need?**

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If you belong to Christ, it does not matter where you find yourself today—if you have given in to temptation, missed a deadline at work, spoken careless words to your spouse, or failed in any other way, goodness and mercy still follow you. Even more, God has extended to you the invitation to dwell with him forever, which is the ultimate hope of our faith.

**GO DEEPER**

Read more about dwelling with God in the following verses:

Ps. 27:3–4; 42:1–2; 63:1–7

**What is David’s consistent request in each of these passages?**

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What does it say about his perspective in difficult times?

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**How should David’s example in these verses change the way you pray when facing suffering?**

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Clearly, David longs to dwell in the presence of God. More than deliverance from his temporary circumstances, David pleads to be with God. **In what ways do you crave to be near God like David? How is that craving reflected in your prayer life?**

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**Based on what you have learned from this study, what could you do to be more intentional about pursuing God’s presence in the days ahead?**

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As we draw this series to a close, we'll do so by considering the two questions Matt ended the session with. Thoughought these past six weeks, we've seen that when the Lord is our shepherd we lack nothing. He provides us with rest, righteousness, protection, comfort, feasting, goodness, mercy, and an eternal dwelling in his presence. All other shepherds are little more than thieves seeking to kill and destroy (John 10:10).

**Which shepherd are you following? Are you listening to the voice of the good shepherd? Or are you being drawn astray by another?**

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**How are you orienting your life around the presence of God? What can you do to find spaces throughout your day to make yourself aware of his presence? To soak up his Word and spend time in prayer with him?**

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**LAST WORD**

What a thought: when we belong to God, his goodness and mercy chase after us all the days of our lives. No other shepherd offers such a promise. So the crucial question we have to ask ourselves is which shepherd are we following?

The world is filled with shepherds, but only the Lord can provide what we need. Following him requires intentionality. We have to seek his presence throughout our day, but he has made himself more than available to us. And he has made us righteous through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. Take heart today. You belong to the flock of a loving shepherd, one who loves you, delights over you, and will one day bring you into your eternal home with him.

**LIVE IT OUT**

**► MEMORIZE**

Continue working on memorizing Psalm 23. This week, focus on verse six reciting it to yourself over the next few days.

**► PRAY**

Each morning this week, before you start your day, take a moment to invite God into whatever you have planned (work, errands, school, etc.). Ask him to help you sense his presence as you go about your day.

**► JOURNAL**

Set aside some time this week to evaluate your spiritual life. Consider whether you are orienting your life around God's presence, like Matt said. After doing so, make a plan with practical steps toward a more intentional pursuit of the Lord in the days ahead.