

TRANSFORMATION



Fingerprints of God Small Group & Individual Study Guide for Weeks 1 and 2

Week 1

The Shepherd: His grip on your life.....His Provision

The Divine Shepherd

Introductory Reading

Psalms 23 from Matthew Henry's Commentary

“God is the believer's shepherd, and they may call Him so. Time was when David was himself a shepherd; he was taken from following the ewes great with young (Ps 78:70-71), and so he knew by experience the cares and tender affections of a good shepherd towards his flock. He remembered what need they had of a shepherd, and what a kindness it was to them to have one that was skilful and faithful; he once ventured his life to rescue a lamb. By this therefore he illustrates God's care of his people; and to this our Savior seems to refer when he says, I am the shepherd of the sheep; the good shepherd, John 10:11. He that is the shepherd of Israel, of the whole church in general (Ps 80:1), is the shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognizance, Isa 40:11. He takes them into his fold, and then takes care of them, protects them, and provides for them, with more care and constancy than a shepherd can, that makes it his business to keep the flock. If God be as a shepherd to us, we must be as sheep, inoffensive, meek, and quiet, silent before the shearers, nay, and before the butcher too, useful and sociable; we must know the shepherd's voice, and follow him.

The great confidence which believers have in God: "If the Lord is my shepherd, my feeder, I may conclude I shall not want any thing that is really necessary and good for me." If David penned this psalm before his coming to the crown, though destined to it, he had as much reason to fear wanting as any man. Once he sent his men begging for him to Nabal, and another time went himself begging to Ahimelech; and yet, when he considers that God is his shepherd, he can boldly say, *I shall not want*. Let not those fear starving that are at God's finding and have Him for their feeder. More is implied than is expressed, not only, I shall not want, but, "I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and, if I have not every thing I desire, I may conclude it is either not fit for me or not good for me or I shall have it in due time." (Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

Some possible introduction questions based on Matthew Henry's Commentary

What are your sheep-like character traits? Why is it difficult for believers to submit to our Great Shepherd?

In what ways and circumstances have you been able to say and believe “I shall not want”?

What are the areas in your life that still express “want”?

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Week 1

The Shepherd: His grip on your life.....His Provision

Week 1 His pursuit (...I shall not want...) His provision for all our needs

Outline

Psalms 23

Salvation - (...the Lord is my Shepherd)

Leaving the 99 to seek the lost 1.

Luke 15:3-7 Seeking after the least and the lost

Loving those who He misses the most

Provision - (...He guides to green pastures and still waters)

Psalms 23:4, 5; Mathew 6:11

Providing peace and comfort, restoration, guidance

Food & sustenance in the midst of clear and present danger

Week 1

Scripture Reading and Questions to consider

Reflect and review the sermon. What were the highlights that stand out to you? What were the key takeaways?

Read Psalms 23 out loud at least 3 times. Even vary with different translations if possible.

What impact does this chapter have on your life at this present time?

Share how you have been encouraged by a specific verse related to a circumstance/situation in your life.

What promise in this chapter is the most meaningful to you? Which has challenged your faith the most?

Read Luke 15:3-7 out loud at least 3 times. Vary with different translations if possible.

How does this passage relate to your salvation experience or salvation story?

What meaning do you get from the illustration of leaving the 99 to seek the 1 who is lost?

How does this parable describe God's love?

Read again Psalms 23. Reflect on the promises of God's provision for your life.

What promise gives you the most encouragement? Has that promise been true in your life?

How should we live out our faith based on the promises in Psalms 23?

Pray together for the areas of need and ask God to fulfill in your life the promises in His Word.

Week 1

Going Deeper

Tweener Time

For your personal devotion time; Read then write your reflections

The Shepherd: His grip on your life.....His Provision

Week 1 His pursuit (...I shall not want.) He provides

Day 1 Read Psalms 23, then go back and reflect on v.1

Day 2 Read Psalms 28, then go back and reflect on v.9

Day 3 Read Psalms 80, then go back and reflect on v.1

Day 4 Read Isaiah 40:1-11, then go back and reflect on v.11

Day 5 Read Ezekiel 34:7-16, then go back and reflect on v.15&16

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Week 2

*The Shepherd: His **grip** on your life.....His Provision*

His protection (...and no one shall snatch them out of My hand)

Introductory Reading

From Psalms 23:4

[Thy rod and thy staff] It may not be easy to mark the difference between these two words; but they would seem probably to refer, the latter to the "staff" which the shepherd used in walking, and the former to the "crook" which a shepherd used for guiding his flock. The image is that of a shepherd in attendance on his flock, with a staff on which he leans with one hand; in the other hand the "crook" or rod which was the symbol of his office. Either of these also might be used to guard the flock, or to drive off the enemies of the flock. The "crook" is said to have been used to seize the legs of the sheep or goats when they were disposed to run away, and thus to keep them with the flock. "The shepherd invariably carries a rod or staff with him when he goes forth to feed his flock. It is often bent or hooked at one end, which gave rise to the shepherd's crook in the hand of the Christian bishop. With this staff he rules and guides the flock to their green pastures, and defends them from their enemies. With it also he corrects them when disobedient, and brings them back when wandering."

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From John 10:28

They cannot be kept from their everlasting happiness; it is in reserve, but he that gives it to them will preserve them to it. (a.) His own power is engaged for them: Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. A mighty contest is here supposed about these sheep. The Shepherd is so careful of their welfare that he has them not only within his fold, and under his eye, but in his hand, interested in his special love and taken under his special protection (all his saints are in thy hand, Deut 33:3); yet their enemies are so daring that they attempt to pluck them out of his hand - his whose own they are, whose care they are; but they cannot, they shall not, do it. Note, Those are safe who are in the hands of the Lord Jesus. The saints are preserved in Christ Jesus: and their salvation is not in their own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator. The Pharisees and rulers did all they could to frighten the disciples of Christ from following him, reproving and threatening them, but Christ saith that they shall not prevail. (b.) His Father's power is likewise engaged for their preservation, v. 29.

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

What truths stand out to you based on the above readings? How has God used His rod and staff in your life?

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Week 2

The Shepherd: His grip on your life.....His Provision

Week 2 His protection (...and no one shall snatch them out of My hand)

Outline

John 10:11-14 and 25-30

Staff of comfort

Providing peace and comfort, restoration, guidance

John 6:35

Rod & staff of discipline for comfort while in the shadow of the valley of death

Food & sustenance even in the midst of clear and present danger,

Seeking after the least and lost

Rod of discipline

Discipline for a moment is painful

Hebrews 12:11

Discipline is needed while in the shadow of the valley of death

Week 2

Scripture Reading and Questions to consider-

Reflect and review the sermon. What were the highlights that stand out to you? What were the key takeaways?

In John 10:27 Jesus says "My sheep listen to my voice." In your own experience what has it meant to listen to his voice and to follow him? Do you have a true sense that no one can snatch you out of his hand? Or out of the Father's hand? Explain your answer.

Read John 6:25-35-

Jesus preached about the "bread of life" following his feeding of the 5000. He makes the transition now from physical bread to spiritual bread. Are you more interested in having your immediate earthly needs met than in being fed spiritually by Christ?

Where is the struggle in your life in this area?

Do you find that your prayers consist mostly of asking that needs be met for yourself and your friends and loved-ones? Are you treating God as the keeper of a warehouse full of "goodies" which you are trying to get access to? What ways has this changed for you?

What life experiences have helped you get your priorities focused more on eternal things rather than just your temporal needs?

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Week 2

*The Shepherd: His **grip** on your life.....His Provision*

Read Hebrews 12:1-11-

What is God's purpose in allowing difficult circumstances to come into your life? What examples are you willing to share?

Explain why a true son or daughter is disciplined by a parent and why lack of discipline might be a sign that the child is illegitimate. (See vs. 7 and 8).

Give an example of God exercising discipline in your life by "drawing you back" as a shepherd would use the crook on the end of his rod to pull a sheep back into the flock.

Why is discipline needed more than ever when we are in the "valley of the shadow of death?" In the heat of battle which troops stand a better chance of prevailing, the disciplined ones or the undisciplined? Discuss why.

Discuss "no pain -- no gain" which you often hear whether it be athletics or academics. Does this idea carry over into the realm of walking with God? Does moving ahead to spiritual maturity come with a cost? What are some examples in your life or in the life of another believer that confirms this truth of spiritual growth.

Give examples of how you deal with self-discipline in your walk with the Lord. For instance, how do you deal with "I don't have time for my devotions this morning--I'll just skip them?" What has been a victory in your own self-discipline as you walk with the Lord?

Pray together for the need for accepting discipline from God as each of you seeks to grow in Christ.

Week 2
Going Deeper
Tweener Time

For your personal devotion time; Read then write your reflection

*The Shepherd: His **grip** on your life.....His Provision*

Day 1 Read Micah 5:1-5, then go back and reflect on v. 4

Day 2 Read John 10:7-30, then go back and reflect on v.11, 14, 27-30

Day 3 Read 1 Peter 2:11-25, then go back and reflect on v. 25

Day 4 Read Hebrews 13:1-17, then go back and reflect on v. 12-15

Day 5 Read 1 Peter 5:1-11, then go back and reflect on v. 4