

**The Book of Psalms**  
**Praying Our Fear**  
**Psalm 23**

**Ice Breaker**

**Option 1**

Spend a few minutes—preferably with a partner or two—catching up on your growth as a disciple this past week. How did you do with your personal action steps from last week? Which step did you choose? Meet with someone from the group? What worked? What are you learning? What kept you from taking steps?

**Option 2**

Think of a time when you've been afraid. Maybe it was when you were a kid and, as you look back, your fear seems irrational. Maybe your experience was more recent and more of a big deal. Whatever the case, what caused you to be afraid? How did you process your fear?

**Understanding the Psalm**

1. What stands out to you about Psalm 23? What questions do you have? What particular lines or images stand out to you?
2. What does it mean to say “the Lord is my shepherd”? What all does this metaphor suggest to you about who God is and what he does for you?
3. What does it mean not to “want”?
4. What are the specific ways that God leads and restores?
5. How does David describe God's presence in the midst of fear, trial, and attack?
6. What promise does the psalm offer?

**Gospel Connection**

Read John 10:1-21, where Jesus describes himself as the “Good Shepherd.” In what specific ways does Jesus fulfill Psalm 23? How does the gospel describe the sheep and shepherd relationship?

**Processing and Applying God's Word**

As you reflect on Psalm 23, consider the following sets of questions. Share your responses as you feel comfortable with at least one other person in the group.

1. Psalm 23 challenges us to consider the true source of our provision, security, and future. What does it mean for you personally to live as though you don't want or even need anything outside the scope of God's love for you? How can the group help you think through the true state of your current reality? What is it that you're afraid to release to God?
2. The psalm describes God as taking action—making us lie down, leading us, preparing a table, etc. What do you honestly believe about the reality of God doing this *for you*? In what ways are you getting in the way of God taking action in your life? Living life our way, according to our own will and desire, as David Benner describes, “appears to be the hardwired default option for all of us.” Think of a recent situation in your life that has challenged you to transfer your

trust to God and allow Him to lead. How can the group help you process how God is working in you to trust Him more? Share with someone in the group what it might look like for God to truly be leading and for you to truly be following?

3. Psalm 23 ends with one of the most beautifully written promises in all of the Bible. What scares you about the future? Think about both the short term and the long term. What seems to be the source of your fear? How do you process your fear? Do you stuff it or ignore it? Do things to compensate or dull the pain of it? Share it? Pray through it? Think about the promise at that you will dwell with God forever. How can the group help you think about your fears? How might the group help you see the reality of God's presence in the midst of our fears?

### **Action Steps (See bulletin insert)**

*Commit to take one or more of the following spiritual growth steps this week.*

1. Read Psalm 23 then pray this prayer out loud once each day this week: "Lord, you are so good to me. You give me all that I need and take care of my present and my future. Help me to always see you and feel your presence. Amen."
2. Read Psalm 23 three times. Pray for those who are in physical, emotional, or spiritual need. Pray for those who are following their own voice. Pray for those who struggle with temptation or addictions. Pray that we have the desire to share God's abundance with those who persecute us. Pray for those who have not yet allowed God's mercy to flow over them.
3. Repeat Step 2 above, but this time take a different physical posture of prayer. Kneel on the floor, lie on your back, or walk around your neighborhood while you pray. Even try doing something different with your hands. You might hold your palms up and place one hand on top of the other. Or you might raise your hands up in the air while you pray. Of course there is no "right" way to pray, but changing up our posture often allows us to give new focus and meaning to our prayers and our times of listening to the Holy Spirit.