



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE—YOUTH

Year 3—The God Who Pursues Relationship: A Story of God's People

Module 4: God Leads His People

Lesson 5: God is the Shepherd, We are the Lambs—Psalm 23

ENCOUNTER 1—Community Discussion

Read Psalm 23 together out loud as a group. Encourage each person to journal through the passage using these questions. After allowing sufficient time for reflection, invite the group to share their thoughts.

How is this God's story?

How is this others' story?

How is this my story?

How is this the world's story?

ENCOUNTER 2—Community Discussion

(Read the biblical reflection included with this lesson. The questions are designed for your group to enter into a meaningful dialogue about the Word. The bulleted teaching points are taken from the reflection and correspond to the questions.)

GOD'S STORY

What are the truths that stick out to you from this psalm?

- God protects, provides and preserves us, like a shepherd does for his lambs.
- There is no need to want anything when we have everything we need.

What do you imagine are all the things a shepherd provides for his lambs?

- Psalm 23 lists that when the Lord is our Shepherd we will have all we need to experience life, sustain our bodies, enjoy him and be fulfilled spiritually. This may not always translate perfectly in a broken world, but in His future kingdom it will be a constant experience.
- We're given the hope of eternity by our Shepherd so we might dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

How does the Shepherd (God) provide for His lambs when they have to journey through a dark valley with death all around?

- The Lord's doesn't remove His presence during our trials but invests Himself into helping us cross through the darkness and to the other side.
- There is no need to want anything when we have everything we need.

OUR STORY

What does it mean to say, “The Lord is my shepherd”?

- It can be deceiving to say the words, “The Lord is my shepherd” but never actually come under His authority.

How do you identify with the phrase “He makes me lie down in green pastures”?

- For a sheep to lie down they have to not be in a state of fear, not be at odds with others in the flock, not be under attack from flies or parasites, and not be hungry.¹
- God’s plan for your life involves life. Even if you feel you’re in a barren place, you might fight something growing on the side of a rock. He will show you where such green pastures are even when everything around you looks grey.

In what ways has God kept you safe in your life like a shepherd would protect a lamb?

- Lambs and sheep aren’t strategically defensive animals. If danger comes, at best they can run around at a moderate pace. For this reason they need a shepherd to protect them from predators that can kill dozens of sheep in a single night.
- God sees beyond the barren land to where the water is, discerns the difference between healthy grass and poisonous weeds, and even knows the sores under your “wool.”

OTHERS’ STORY

What is it about lambs or sheep that might make them a good metaphor for people?

- “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).
- Most sheep try to assert a streak of independence through stubbornness and blind determination to do what they want. Even if they’ve been under a shepherd for several years, they can question his motives as if he intends to do them harm.

Who are some of the other people in your life who helped “shepherd” you closer to God?

How do you tend to gauge if someone needs tender care or tough love?

- Some people need to be picked up and others need to be pushed. Like a shepherd knows this about his lambs, God knows what we need.
- If we’re in relationship with God, we can become His “rod” or “staff” to another person if we remain in His hands.

THE WORLD’S STORY

How might this psalm help people who have experienced loss?

- The death of a loved one or injury to oneself causes people to think about what will happen after they die. Knowing God is willing to look after us both then and now can be an incredible comfort.

Why might people who have been overtaken by the world’s ideals have to have their souls “restored”?

- According to this Psalm, the path to something rich and vibrant in life and with God may require journeying through dark and dangerous valleys. That alone can cause someone to quit mid-stream.

How do you think the world reacts to a God holding a rod and staff appear to it?

- The rod is like a club that the shepherd uses to ward off predators and discipline the sheep, emphasizing his authority and responsibility.
- The staff is a stick with a crook on the end that is used to manage the sheep, speaking to the shepherd’s caring heart.

1. <http://www.moodymedia.org/transcripts/shepherdandsheep.html>

PRAYER

(Lead your group in corporate prayer.)

*The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?*

*The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?*

*When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.
Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.*

*One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.
For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.*

*Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;*

*at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.*

*Hear my voice when I call, LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, I will seek.*

*Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.*

*Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.
Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.*

*Teach me your way, LORD;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.
Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
spouting malicious accusations.*

*I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.*

(Psalm 27)

WEEKLY PRACTICE

(Read the weekly practice out loud, and challenge your group to practice *missio* beyond today.)

Much of our days are spent at school, with friends, doing homework, or extra-curricular activities. Often we are constantly busy from the time we wake up until our eyes close to go to sleep. Try going to sleep for the next week by reading Psalm 23 out loud. As you close your eyes, get comfortable and replay the psalm in your head, taking note of every detail you can remember. Relax in its truths, then sleep. When you wake up, read Psalm 23 again before you let your feet hit the floor.

BECOMING MY STORY

(Encourage the group to spend time this week in God's Word, allowing it to penetrate their heart and life.)

Micah 5

John 10

Spend time this week reading and journaling through the above scriptures. In the context of Psalm 23, consider the following questions:

Am I living today as if I am the shepherd of my life or God is the shepherd of my life?

What "lambs" are wandering off that God may want to use me to bring back toward him?

Consider other passages you might know related to Psalm 23 and read them this week, journaling as you go.