



A LIFE IN BALANCE

PSALM 23

Group Study Guide

Nourishment: Restoring Balance

Psalm 23:2-3a

² *He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; ^{3a} he restores my soul.*

What are the things that nourish and sustain us? What brings life and what is sucking the life out of us? When we eat and drink from the right sources, we will be refreshed, strengthened and restored.

Sermon Notes:

Isaiah 55:1-2 *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy?*

What are green pastures? Not verdant meadows... small green shoots among the thorns, rocks, and dust.

- need to know where there is adequate feed for flock... there is food for today... tomorrow elsewhere

Why are we to lie down there? Stop and stay a while... sheep chew on cud – need to digest for growth

What are the still waters? Emphasis on the quality of the life-giving water – not muddy or stagnant

- in a desert environment, the shepherd knows where good water sources are – wells/streams

How is my soul restored by food, water and rest?

Balance brings Resilience... the ability to rebound from stresses, having margin, dealing with challenges

What does that look like in our spiritual life? Spiritual nutrition, Living Water, Peace...

Isaiah 55:11 *so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

“Emotionally Healthy Spirituality” – Peter Scazzero suggests two powerful spiritual practices

Daily Office –more than devotions once a day - not filling up something – but being with Someone

- act of offering self, prayers as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God though the day

- rhythm eliminates division of sacred/secular - stopping, centering, silence, Word

Sabbath - set aside our tasks – stop our labours, rest by doing things which replenish, delight in

creation and God’s good gifts, contemplate in worship and feast on God’s presence together

Establishing nourishing and refreshing rhythms of taking in Word and Presence of God will restore us.

Isaiah 55:13 *Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

Additional Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 55, John 6:1-13,26-59

Discussion Questions:

1. Our physical health is intimately linked to what we eat and drink. This same principle applies to our spiritual health and wellbeing. Thinking of food as metaphor, which foods best describe your current spiritual diet? What keeps you coming back to these things? (*e.g. my spiritual diet is like chocolate cake because...*)

2. There are few lush pastures in the land of Israel. Shepherds are constantly leading sheep to where adequate food and water can be found. Where are some of the places that God has led you recently to find sources of life-giving food?

3. As mentioned in the sermon, sheep need to rest and relax to chew their cud so they can properly digest the nutrients they have taken in. What is something that you've been chewing on for a while and trying to digest in your spiritual life? What would it look like for you to take the adequate time to rest or make space to do that kind of digesting?

4. In Isaiah 55 verses 11-13, the prophet promises that God's Word will accomplish its life-giving and restorative purposes in our lives. How has this been part of your own experience? Take time to share some stories of spiritual restoration with your group.

5. In the text from John 6, Jesus speaks of himself as the "bread of life." As you read this text, how might you see yourself as one of those just looking for "manna from heaven?" How has the presence of Jesus in your daily life made a difference in finding balance?

Action Steps:

1. Pick one thing which is spiritual junk food, empty calories, robbing you of nutrition and rest...
 - What does it look like to submit this aspect of my life to the Rule of Christ?
 - Talk to someone about it, pray over it, ACT on it...
2. Consider introducing the rhythms of the Daily Office to something you already do several times a day, such as prayer before meals. Instead of quick prayer, take five minutes to sit with God.
 - **Stop** and choose to become present to the moment.
 - **Center** yourself by dismissing intruding thoughts.
 - Wait in **Silence** to become aware of God's presence.
 - Allow the **Word** to speak to you (through reading a psalm).

Consider sharing your experiences with your Life Group or discipleship partner during your Sabbath time.