



## A LIFE IN BALANCE

### PSALM 23

### Group Study Guide

#### SERMON SERIES OUTLINE:

Every day it seems like our schedules are fuller than the day before. The responsibilities of family life, the demands of the workplace, and the constant activities of our community including even our church can be overwhelming. As children of God, we are invited to walk in paths that allow us to thrive – to experience the abundant life. Psalm 23 is a helpful framework for us to consider what a life in balance looks like as we follow the Good Shepherd.

#### Psalm 23 *A Psalm of David (NRSV)*

- <sup>1</sup> The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
- <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;
- <sup>3</sup> he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name's sake.
- <sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—  
they comfort me.
- <sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.
- <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.

#### Calling: Knowing the Shepherd - Psalm 23:1

<sup>1</sup> *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*

Having a clear sense of calling and who deserves our loyalty and sets our agenda brings focus to what belongs in our lives and what is a distraction.

## **Nourishment: Restoring Balance - Psalm 23:2-3a**

<sup>2</sup> *He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; <sup>3a</sup> 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.

## **Listening: Waiting on God - Psalm 23:3b**

<sup>3b</sup> *He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.*

How much of our time, attention and energy are wasted because we are pursuing a path that leads to nowhere, or worse leads to our downfall? God has a path of blessing for us if we will hear his voice.

## **Letting Go: Facing Fear - Psalm 23:4-5a**

<sup>4</sup> *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff -- they comfort me. <sup>5a</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;*

How much of our agenda is driven by our fears? Our worries and anxieties (failure, acceptance, conflict, future) can rob us of energy and joy in our daily lives. Knowing we do not face our fears alone can free us to choose paths that bring blessing and peace into our life.

## **Fruitfulness: Investing in What Matters - Psalm 23:5b**

<sup>5b</sup> *you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

A way for us to evaluate what belongs in our lives or needs to be weeded out is whether these activities are bearing fruit or not – both in a practical and spiritual sense. Sometimes the hardest decision is to let go of something good so that there is room for something greater.

## **Assurance: Eyes on the Goal - Psalm 23:6**

<sup>6</sup> *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.*

Like the first verse – knowing whom we follow - we also need to have a clear understanding of what our ultimate goal and destination is. When our eyes are firmly fixed on the prize of eternity and faithful service to the kingdom of God, then our priorities fall into place naturally.

## **Questions to Consider:**

*What are the two most life-giving things going on in your life right now?*

*What are the two most life-draining things going on in your life right now?*

*What is one spiritual practice in your life right now that helps you maintain a healthy balance?*