

## LEADER AS SHEPHERD | Leader's Guide

### *How leadership requires a Good Shepherd*

#### Note

This sketch focuses on the leader as Shepherd. It focuses on two primary passages that describe Jesus as our shepherd. Jesus learned his shepherding from the Father, as we learn our shepherding from Jesus.

#### Scripture Context

This is perhaps one of the most recognizable Psalms. David describes our relationship with God through a well-known Middle Eastern picture of a shepherd and sheep. Sheep are uniquely helpless in many ways. While they can survive for long stretches at a time without food and water, sheep lack direction and need to be led to safe places to graze. They are also defenseless and vulnerable to attacks from predators.

#### Read Together: Psalm 23

#### Discussion Questions

1. How does the shepherd provide for the sheep (v1-4)?
  - *Makes me lie down*
2. What does that imply?
  - *Coercion — the sheep don't lie down when they need to.*
3. What is the shepherd's role in ensuring the sheep get green pasture?
  - *Sometimes involves meeting needs in ways they don't know. The sheep aren't the superintendents of their own needs.*
  - *In fact, sheep don't lie down unless their needs are met — not if they are hungry, fearful.*
  - *This is a picture of a satisfied, after-dinner type sheep.*
4. What does this say about the manner of provision?
  - *For his name's sake: the shepherd's reputation is on the line, so you can trust him.*
  - *The shepherd is with the sheep*
5. How are the "rod and staff" comfort?
  - *Necessary for leadership, protection, prodding, fighting off wild beasts. Shepherds will injure sheep so that they cannot run if they are prone to scatter or leave the flock.*

#### Mid-Study Summary

If we were to put this psalm in modern language, what would this be? A commercial for the shepherd! He is using persuasive imagery to communicate the great goodness of his shepherd above any other possible choices. "Do you lack something? Try my shepherd! You'll lack nothing! You'll have rest, protection, and lots to give!"

What do verses 5-6 add to our understanding about God's shepherding of his people?

- Overflowing, lots to give
- Whole life long, not temporary
- Living in the house of the Lord

- Provision and security in the midst of danger (a full meal, not a drive-in McDonald’s meal. “Excuse me, enemy, I’m not finished with my dessert. You’ll just have to wait.”
- “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me” lit “pursue,” “hunt me down”

How many of us have felt that about God—we run away and his mercy hunts us down?

What is our normal relationship to goodness and mercy? We pursue it all of our days, perhaps maybe one day we will get it.

He begins by speaking about God, but ends by speaking to God. Why do you think this happens? He is caught up in worship. He is so powerfully aware of the truth of his remarks about God that he is inspired to turn in worship to God.

Summarize the benefits of God as shepherd:

- Lacking nothing: all needs are met
- Green pasture
- Still waters (not dangerous, steep cliffs)
- Leading in right paths, a sense of purpose & guidance
- Restoration
- Fearless because of his protection
- Comfort of rod and staff
- Full table in safety
- Oil & comfort, overflowing cup = lots to give
- Goodness and mercy following me

### Read Together: John 10:1-15

#### Discussion Questions

1. How is Jesus both a gate and the shepherd? Why does he use both images?
  - *Either metaphor by itself is incomplete: Jesus is both the way into salvation and the one we follow there. We cannot be the gate (for others) but we can be shepherds to others, pointing them to the gate. Jesus is the prototype of all good shepherds, but he is the unique gate into salvation.*
2. Focus on the three contrasts. What do you learn about shepherding from each?

| Contrasts  | Good Shepherd   |
|--|---|
| Stranger:<br><i>Sheep do not know his voice</i>  | <i>Sheep know his voice; He calls them by name</i>  |
| Thief and robber:<br><i>They come to kill and destroy</i>  | <i>He comes to bring a generous life</i>  |
| Hired hand:<br><i>Survival is his top concern</i><br><i>The sheep aren't his</i><br><i>They flee in danger</i> | <i>He lays down his life for the sheep</i><br><i>He owns the sheep; He is invested in them</i><br><i>He protects the sheep and doesn't flee</i> |

3. How do thieves steal the sheep?
  - *Carry them off—separating them from the flock.*
4. How would “the shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” have sounded to Jesus’ first hearers?
  - *The good shepherd puts his life on the line—he risks his life. (Post resurrection we can understand this with greater significance, but to these people, they would still hear this as the risk of a loyal shepherd.)*
  - *The loyalty of the sheep for a good shepherd is well placed—he will not leave.*
5. What is the danger of the wolf?
  - *Snatches one, but scatters the rest. That is the real danger. Once the sheep are scattered, they are in trouble. They become wolf-bait. Even four or five sheep are still no match for a wolf.*
  - *Results of bad shepherding: the sheep flee, scatter, die*
6. How do we come to know Jesus’ voice? What has this looked like for you in your relationship with Jesus up to this point?
  - *Scripture—Jesus does speak through his words in Scripture.*
  - *Prayer—There are some sheep who are Jesus’ sheep, who know his voice and won’t be led astray. Yet some of Jesus’ sheep will be endangered by wolves, etc.*
7. How would you classify your leadership at this point? What makes you say this?

**Application:** If time allows, talk through the case studies.

### Case Studies in Shepherding

| Description of a Shepherd  | What is the issue? What could be done alternatively to shepherd more faithfully?   |
|--|--|
| <p>Nancy signs up and Nancy (student leader) feels a sense of victory in having gotten someone who's not very connected to the community to join in for something like a retreat. At small group the week before the retreat, Nancy says she can't come any more because she's too busy. Leslie asks why she can't make it and Nancy admits to having felt very stressed and overwhelmed with her schoolwork. Leslie tries to convince Nancy to just bring her homework and when she gets annoyed, drops it. At the retreat, Leslie is disappointed because the Bible studies address something she knows Nancy is wrestling with. Leslie wishes Nancy had been able to make it.</p> | <p><i>Leslie wants Nancy to go to the conference not for what Nancy will get, but for what Leslie will get—affirmation from others.</i></p> <p><i>Instead of being honest, Leslie is manipulative.</i></p>   |
| <p>Over time Sarah noticed that Ken, her partner in the small group they're building together, has a problem keeping commitments he has made. This is more obvious to Sarah than to others, because it has affected her consistently. More than once Sarah has thought about mentioning it to Ken, but each time has held back.</p>  | <p><i>Sarah fled the "danger" of a confrontation with Ken. Sarah hasn't cared for him by asking how he is really doing while simultaneously building up frustrations towards him for not following through.</i></p>  |
| <p>Cindy is a member of Luke's small group. Cindy opens up to Luke about her uncertainty about God's work in her life. As Luke takes initiative with Cindy to help her understand and feel God's presence, he begins to have feelings for her. Soon he asks her to dinner. She is confused but flattered by his attention.</p>   | <p><i>Luke looks at Cindy and sees only a person who can meet his social needs.</i></p> <p><i>Luke equates the intimacy of his offer of friendship to Cindy as a prologue to romance, when his priority should be to shepherd her as a member of his small group vs. a romantic partner.</i></p> |