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## A SONG FOR THE FEARFUL (37)

June 7, 2026

Psalm 23:1-6

### PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst  
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships  
To participate in God's mission to the world

### GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

#### Discussion Question

- What is your favorite piece of prose or poetry?

### WORSHIP 10 MIN

#### PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

#### RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Psalm 95

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;

**Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!**

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

**Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!**

For he is our God,

**And we are the people of his pasture,**

**and the sheep of his hand.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

#### Psalm 23:1-6

*<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 paths of righteousness*

*for his name's sake.*

*<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,*

*I will 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*

*forever.*

## BIBLE STUDY Summary

40 MIN

This passage is one of the most beloved in all of Scripture, and likely there are some members of your group who have a great deal of familiarity with it. In discussing the familiarity of this text, the Old Testament scholar Derek Kidner once wrote that “depth and strength underlie the simplicity of this psalm. Its peace is not escape; its contentment is not complacency: there is readiness to face deep darkness and imminent attack, and the climax reveals a love which homes toward no material goal but to the Lord himself.”

David wrote this psalm out of hard-won experience. Having spent his early years as a shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11; Psalm 78:70-71), the images he reaches for should not be thought of as merely decorative but drawn from his intimate knowledge of what sheep need and what a faithful shepherd provides. By casting himself as the sheep and the Lord as the shepherd, David does not diminish the Christian but instead confesses the truth about the human condition that we are creatures who need to be led, fed, rescued, and kept.

The psalm traces a movement from provision to protection to abundance, and at no point does the shepherd leave the scene. When the paths of righteousness wind their way down into the valley of the shadow of death in verse 4, the shepherd does not step aside. The rod and the staff wielded by the shepherd there carry distinct functions. The staff retrieved sheep from danger, and the rod drove off predators and corrected wandering. Both of these (the rescuing and the discipline) are named as comforts. God’s corrective hand is not a contradiction of his care but is one of its most important expressions.

Verses 5-6 find the sheep moving from field to table, with a banquet prepared, a head anointed with oil, and a cup overflowing, finally closing with the final destination of the house of the Lord forever. This is the trajectory Christ fulfills. In John 10, Jesus declares himself the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep by name, laying down his life for the flock. What David expresses in the language of pastoral care Jesus enacts in history. The Shepherd becomes the Lamb, passing through the valley of the shadow of death in our place, so that his sheep might be seated at the Father’s table forever.

### 1. Looking at the Bible

- Share with the group some key phrases or ideas that stood out to you from the passage.

### 2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Every passage not only points to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- In John 10, Jesus says his sheep know his voice, and he knows them by name. What does that kind of personal, intimate knowledge from a shepherd mean to you? What does it cost him to provide it?

### 3. Looking at our Hearts

- Read Hebrews 12:6 and James 1:2-3. How do they help you understand the comfort David finds in the rod and staff in verse 4?
- We tend to experience discipline as the opposite of care. Where in your own life have you been able to look back and recognize God's corrective hand as an expression of his love?

### 4. Looking at our World

- Psalm 23 doesn't promise that enemies disappear, but it does promise a feast prepared in their presence. What might that image say to a culture that can tend to believe that peace is only possible once conflict is resolved or opposition defeated?
- Looking back at our time in Romans 12-15, what have we learned about living faithfully in the presence of enemies that might help us answer this question?

**PRAYER**  
**15 MIN**

**Pray for each other:** Share any prayer requests you have.