

Psalm 23

Lesson 6

He Leads Me in Paths of Righteousness for
His Name's Sake

Leader Guide

A Bible Study to Accompany
“A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23”
by Phillip Keller

Leader Guide Bible Studies

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Lesson 6, Psalm 23, A Psalm of David He Leads Me in Paths of Righteousness for His Name's Sake

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. *Matthew 16:24*

Prayers

Luther's Morning Prayer

Thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Read Psalm 23

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ 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.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Discuss

Sheep are creatures of habit, destructive habits. When left to their own, sheep habitually follow one another to over-graze the land to the point of desolation, pollute their water with their own waste, and become infested with disease and parasites. No other class of livestock requires more careful handling and direction than sheep. Care for both the sheep and the land dominates the shepherd's decisions. A wise shepherd moves the flock from pasture to pasture with deliberation along different paths to protect his land and flock.

1. What parallels do you see between sheep and people in this short story?

The parallels to our own lives are unmistakable:

Stubborn, require intensive care and correction

Behavior self-destruction to themselves and their environment

Follow blindly, habitually, stupidly

Pride and self assertion "we insist we know what is best for us despite the disastrous results self evident, we cling to the same habits that we see ruin our lives

Pr 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

2. What are some of the consequences of each of us following our own way, "We all like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6). Each man does what is right in his own eyes, despite the disastrous results to others and themselves.

Broken homes, broken hearts, broken relationships, prideful self-centered and selfish character personalities.

3. Our stubborn, willful pride and self-assertive habits leave scars on us and those around us. Against this backdrop of brokenness and confusion, Christ enters as the "way, truth, and life" and offers "life to the full" (John 10:10). Pastor Keller observes that way to a full life in Christ is an unexpected way. Just as the shepherd leads his sheep along new paths, Christ leads us to paths of righteousness by telling to "take up our cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

We wrestle with the meaning of the command to take up our cross and follow Christ because the way of the cross is death. Is Jesus telling us to suffer and die to follow him? No, not literally, but in a sense, yes. Paul expressed it best when he wrote in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Pastor Keller listed seven characteristics of a person willing to crucify their willful pride and take up their cross to follow Christ. Review the following verses and define the cross-bearing behavior.

1. A person willing to take up their cross is willing to **love Christ and others.**

Mt 22:36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

2. A person willing to take up their cross is willing to **set themselves apart from the world and seek to renew their minds and desires through the Holy Spirit.**

^{1 Peter 2:12} Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

^{Jn 15:19} **If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.**

^{Eph 4:22} You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ^{Eph 4:23} to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ^{Eph 4:24} and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Romans 12:2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind

3. A person willing to take up their cross is willing to **put aside their pride and be humble and look out for the interests of others.**

^{Mk 8:34} Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself

^{Phil 2:3} Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

^{Eph 4:2} Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

4. A person willing to take up their cross is willing to **take on the role of servant and makes time to meet the needs of others.**

^{Jn 13:13} "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

^{1 Peter 4:10} Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

^{Ro 12:1} Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

5. A person willing to take up their cross lives with an attitude of **gratitude, thankfulness, and joy.**

^{1 Thessalonians 5:18}, Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:17, And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Hebrews 12:28, Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.

Psalms 118:24, This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

6. A person willing to take up their cross learns to **trust in God and is willing to be led**

Proverbs 3:5, Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

Romans 8:28, And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Philippians 4:6-7, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

7. A person willing to take up their cross **follows Christ's example**

1 Peter 2:21, For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

1 Corinthians 11:1, be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Matthew 10:38, And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

4. Which aspects of cross-bearing do you have the easiest or most difficult time doing?

1. Loving others
2. Putting off your old self
3. Being joyful
4. Serving others
5. Being grateful and thankful
6. Trusting God's direction and management
7. Following Christ's example

5. Reflect on how Christ has led you on paths of righteousness. Share with the group how have you experienced any one of the following:

- a. Loving you neighbor
- b. Sacrificial love
- c. Unconditional forgiveness
- d. Spiritual rebirth and renewal

- e. Loving devotion to the Father
6. A good shepherd always plans how and where to move his flock for their welfare and benefit the land. What would the Good Shepherd do to move you onto fresh ground?

Closing, The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.