

A good shepherd guides his sheep along right paths, not just for the sake of the sheep, but for the sake of his own reputation as a shepherd. In the land of Israel where David was a shepherd, the terrain was rocky and treacherous in many places. For sheep to be able to graze in the green pastures we read about last week, the shepherd had to know the lay of the land and lead the sheep to a specific place along a certain path. In the same way, God has a path laid out for each of us that will lead us to walk in ever increasing righteousness, both for our good and for His glory.

Read: Psalm 23:2-3

What does the world tell us about the paths available to reach God?

What can we infer about the other paths available to us, when we contrast them with “paths of righteousness” or “the right paths?” Where do those other paths lead?

Think of a time when you were not walking a right path. Where was it leading you?
How did God lead you to a right path from there?

Read: John 10:2-5; John 10:27

What do we see is critical for the sheep to recognize and follow the shepherd?

How do the sheep get to know their shepherd's voice so intimately?

Do you know your shepherd so well that you can distinguish between His voice and a voice trying to lead you astray, or even between His voice and your own voice?

Read: Proverbs 3:5; Romans 8:38-39

What difference does intimacy with God make when walking through a dark or painful period in life?

What dark valley have you walked through with God? How did maintaining intimacy with Him impact you, and what did God teach you in the process?

Live it out:

What will you do this week to more deeply familiarize yourself with the Good Shepherd's voice?

(questions continued on back)

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What path is the Good Shepherd calling you to walk?
What path is He calling you to leave behind?

Pray Psalm 139:23-24 each day this week, and take note of any differences you notice at the end of the week.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for your intimate guidance in our lives. Help us to know your voice so well that we recognize it immediately, and give us the courage and obedience to follow, no matter where you may lead. We know that anywhere you lead us, you've already gone before, and we can trust that any dangers we encounter will not destroy us when we're walking hand in hand with you. Thank you for caring for us. In the name of Jesus, amen.

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.

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