

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who has been the most influential guide in your life? Why?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

The Lord is my shepherd, I will not be in need. He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Certainly goodness and faithfulness will follow me all the days of my life, and my dwelling will be in the house of the Lord forever. **Psalms 23:1-6 NASB**

**Sermon Insights:**

This Psalm is for all who have fought battles and carry burdens—and who struggle with low self-image. 85% of the world’s population are impacted by poor self-image and most of us have no idea how to deal with it. Four components of self-image are:

- Identity
- Sense of belonging
- Self-confidence
- Feelings of competence

Here is David—who went through many literal battles, experienced every conceivable danger—and his very first two words reflect his keen awareness that it all starts and depends on “The LORD.”

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Through the highs and lows you’ve experienced, have you come to the personal realization that it ALL starts and depends on “The LORD”?

Are you in the 85%?

In your life, what component of self-image is the healthiest? Unhealthiest?

Who do you uniquely impact when it comes to THEIR self-image?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, I need you to be my shepherd, because sometimes I act like a sheep! You put 100 billion galaxies in the universe, and yet you care for me. Guide me to a healthy self-image so that I can better serve you and the people in my life.

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Fill in the blank: “When I am stressed, I make a beeline for the \_\_\_\_\_.”

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. **Isaiah 53:6 NLT**

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Don’t be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.

**Proverbs 3:5–8 NLT**

He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. **Psalms 23:2 NASB**

**Sermon Insights:**

Max Lucado describes God as the unchanging “ungoverned” God. He makes a good point; you and I are “governed.” The weather determines what we wear...our terrain tells us how we travel...gravity dictates our speed...our health determines our strength. But we worship a God who put 100 billion stars in our galaxy and 100 billion galaxies in the universe. David was keenly aware that he needed that kind of a God. How about you?

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Are you allowing the God of the Universe to design your path?

What has your perception of God been more like: performance-obsessed slave-driver or caring and calming shepherd? What do the Scriptures reveal?

David teaches us a very important choice: either we be impressed with our own wisdom, OR we fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Why is fear of the Lord such a critical component to living in faith?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, you have gifted me with the opportunity to be knowledgeable and powerful. Yet, for all my best efforts, I have found paths of failure instead of success. Teach me to humbly trust you, learn your ways, and follow your paths, so that I can receive “healing for my body and strength for my bones”!

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who is your hero, and how have you imitated him or her?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name. **Psalms 23:3 NASB**

Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil. If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. **Ephesians 4:21-32 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

Righteousness is the essence and presence of God. It was the path of righteousness that took Jesus to the cross, paying the debt for and breaking the chains of sin. Have you ever surrendered to Jesus, made a public confession, been baptized into Christ?

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Walk in paths of righteousness is a gift—a lifestyle coming from being changed from the inside out. How does that happen?

- 1) Jesus paid for our sins so God could forgive us.
- 2) Through our willingness (“faith as small as a mustard seed”), the Holy Spirit gives us desire and power to change.
- 3) We continue to trust and obey.
- 4) When we fail, we put our eyes back on Jesus, and then we continue to trust and obey.

Remember: “...throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life” was written TO CHRISTIANS! God doesn’t reject you when you fail...he gives you more grace to live right!

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, sometimes we graze on unhealthy things and wander away. Thank you for being our Good Shepherd. Thank you for restoring my soul and guiding me on paths of righteousness for the sake of your Name.

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Where do you like to travel and/or explore?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. **Psalms 23:4 NASB**

Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him! Fear the LORD, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the LORD will lack no good thing. **Psalm 34:8–10 NLT**

*Jesus’ last words to his disciples after his resurrection before returning to Heaven: Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* **Matthew 28:20 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

When we invite Jesus to be our Shepherd, Jesus will be with us always. Don’t try to dodge the valleys...valleys are fertile territory and provide great time to grow in trust, rely on God, and see HOW he works in and through you. By the time you get to the end of the valley, you will be a different person if you trust God!

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

“Don’t try to dodge the valleys...” Thoughts?

There is a prevalent misunderstanding among many Christian (wishful thinking?) that God protects true believers from difficulty. Why is this a very dangerous and deceptive philosophy?

Where have you seen God’s care and power most in your life—when the waves were calm and sunny, or when your boat was rocked fiercely?

The “rod” was for protection; the “staff” for redirection. At what times have you recognized God using both in your life?

Where in your life can you say *right now*, “even though I walk THROUGH...I will fear no evil, for You are with me”?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for assuring me of your presence in the midst of the difficulties. Thank you that difficulties are not a sign of a lack of faith or a lack of your presence, but rather the environment of life in which I will likely see you most clearly. Teach me to live in peace, love, and joy *no matter what*.

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

What “healing” is more important to you personally: Physical? Spiritual? Mental? Emotional? Relational?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Certainly goodness and faithfulness will follow me all the days of my life, And my dwelling will be in the house of the Lord forever. **Psalms 23:5-6 NASB**

**Sermon Insights:**

Shepherds, at the end of the day, take care of the sheep that have bruised or cut themselves, treat the scratches on heads, the hooves scarred by sharp rocks or sticks, *and rub oil into the wounds.*

This is a powerful image that God wants to tend to us, our wounds, our brokenness, our sin, our poor self-image, our fears, our bruises, our bumps, our damage and our failures. God wants to both heal and anoint AND he has provided that in Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

How has Jesus “tended to your wounds”?

What is an area of your life that could use healing? Have you visited with someone you trust about it?

Oil was used for both healing and anointing—a process where someone in authority gives you a special task or job or responsibility for God and God’s people. Once we are healed, we are freed to help others with their wounds. How is God using you to help others?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for being a God of goodness, faithfulness, and healing. Thank you for not only healing my wounds but also allowing me to be a part of your healing presence in the world so others can be healed and commissioned to be healers as well.