



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 4

July 17th & 18th, 2010

Small Group Warm-Up

Have you gone to <http://yourfamilyzoo.com/> to see which animal you are? If so, share it with your group. If not, go there this week!

Opening Prayer

Father God, thank you for being an amazing Shepherd to me. Help me to let go of my stubbornness, my fears and my insecurities. I want to trust you and follow you as you lead me through the valleys and to the mountaintops.

Discussion Questions:

Begin by reading through Psalm 23.

Have you experienced any frustration or confusion recently? Welcome to the real world! We all experience those feelings when things don't go the way we want or expect. We may not understand why God "*makes me lie down,*" or why we seem to be hitting a fence when we want to run free, but we can trust that God is the Good Shepherd and has our best interests at heart.

- What was your most frustrating moment this past week? Were you able to resolve it? If so, how?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

Pastor Mike reminded us that we can expect God to lead us individually, taking into mind our unique weaknesses and limitations. "*...he will not let **you** be tempted beyond what **you** can bear...he will also provide a way out...*" We learned that the way out is to Do The Right Thing.

For personal reflection:

- Where are you most vulnerable to temptation?
- What is the right thing to do when you face that temptation?
- If you feel comfortable, share your reflections with your group.

Psalm 23:3 says, "*...he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness...*" This is an expression of who God is and what he does. He is in the restoration business. Unfortunately, many people think God is primarily looking to judge us or condemn us.

- Describe the differences between a spa (where we go for rest and restoration) and a courtroom (where we go to be judged).
- How will it impact our lives if we view God primarily as a judge rather than a Good Shepherd?

Read Proverbs 3:5-7

One of the primary responsibilities of a shepherd is leadership. Pastor Mike reminded us that we can expect God to lead us clearly, not leave us wandering and confused. We can find his will for our lives when we simply obey what we already know. He will guide us forward one step at a time.

- What is your next right step?

This weekend we learned that when we are following the Good Shepherd every valley will lead to a mountaintop. We can let go of our fears, because even "*the valley of the shadow of death*" cannot destroy us. Jesus has conquered death. God has prepared an eternal home for us. We will live with the Good Shepherd forever.

- Do you need to let go of some fears and anxieties today? Commit them to the Good Shepherd and allow him to guide you out of the valley and to the mountaintop.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, thank you for knowing us personally and for guiding us faithfully. Help us to take our next right step as we trust you and follow you this week.