Small Group Questions
“The Shepherd”
Psalm 23

Previous message summary: Psalm 22 has been called the fifth Gospel because it points to the cross of crucifixion and vividly paints the picture of what we see as Jesus dies for the sin of the world. This prophetic psalm clearly details Jesus’ cry of abandonment, the mocking that he endures, the piercing of his hands and feet to the cross of crucifixion, the soldiers gambling for his clothing, and Jesus’ final words when he says, “It is finished.” We clearly see Jesus in Psalm 22, but if we only see Jesus in Psalm 22, we miss God’s word to us in those times when we feel abandoned and attacked. We too, like David, cry out to God with desperate cries when we feel abandoned and attacked. But like David, we too need to be reminded that God is still God and he can still be trusted, and he is still worthy of our praise, even in the midst of the trials and difficulties of life. May we, like David, stand in the midst of the congregation and praise God, glorify him, and be in awe of him. We understand that God is working all things together for good in his perfect timing.

What we learned: When it seems like God is distant, or in those times when we feel like we are under attack, may we know that God has not abandoned us nor has he forsaken us. Because of what Jesus has accomplished through the cross, we can know for certain that God is with us and he can be trusted to deliver and rescue us. God has answered us and has provided for us in the area of our greatest need – we have salvation through the blood and body of Christ!

Introduction
1. Under what circumstances would you be willing to surrender your desire to lead and submit yourself to follow someone else? Would it be easy to follow?
   a. Would you rather lead or follow? Why did you answer the way you did?
   b. Describe a good leader. What qualities does it take to lead well? Who has demonstrated great leadership and gained your trust as a follower?
   c. Describe a good follower. What qualities must a good follower demonstrate? Who has been an example to you of being a good follower?

Discussion Questions
Read Psalm 23

2. This is one of the most popular psalms in the entire book of Psalms. Have you heard this psalm before? If so, where have you heard it read or preached?
   a. What are some characteristics of sheep? Do they need a shepherd? What happens to them if they are left alone?
   b. What are some characteristics of a shepherd? What are shepherds good at? Why are they needed?
   c. Who is the author of this psalm? What did the author know about being a shepherd? Read 1 Samuel 16:1 & 6-13.

3. Who is the Shepherd described in this psalm? What is the name of this Shepherd? Read Exodus 3:13-14. What did Jesus say about himself in John 10:7-11? What does this tell you about Jesus and his desire to lead you?
   a. What does the Shepherd do for the sheep?
   b. Have you ever been in want? How does the Shepherd settle you and calm you when you struggle with contentment?
   c. Have you ever needed rest? What happens when sheep lie down in green pastures?
   d. Have you ever needed replenishment or restoration? Where does the shepherd lead those who need to be filled? What does the shepherd

e. Which path does the Shepherd lead those who will follow him? Have you ever walked the path of unrighteousness? If so, where did it take you?

4. What is the “valley of the shadow of death”? Have you ever walked in that valley? If so, what was that time in your life like?
   a. What does the Shepherd provide as his sheep walk through the valley of death? Read Psalm 23:4.
   b. What happens to fear when the shepherd is with his sheep?
   c. What does a shepherd do with his rod and staff? What do the shepherd’s rod and staff provide for the sheep as they follow?
   d. Why, or how, do the shepherd’s rod and staff bring comfort?

   a. What picture comes to mind of a banquet table prepared for the sheep? Read Matthew 26:26-29. Does this picture give you hope and strength? If so, why?
   b. When have you needed to be reminded of the victory that awaits you at the end of this life? How can a glimpse of future victory give you strength and peace in the midst of the trials that you face today?

   a. When Jesus was about to be crucified, what message did he tell his disciples that pointed them to a future hope? Read John 14:1-3.
   b. What is it about heaven that compels you to follow the Lord and submit to him as your Shepherd?

Challenge: Everyone follows someone or something and listens to a voice that leads and directs their paths. The question is this: Who are you following? Who are you listening to? Who is your shepherd? The great, ever existent “I AM” who is the Lord God of all creation wants to be your shepherd. He wants to give you rest. He wants to give you victory. He wants to give you a place to call home and be with you for eternity. Like David, call upon the Lord as your shepherd today and allow him to lead you.

Action: One area of my life where I struggle to follow God as my shepherd is: _____________________________. I will surrender this area to the Shepherd and obediently follow him this week.

Next Steps:
☐ Because God is my Shepherd, I will follow him.
☐ Because God knows what is best for me, I will trust him.
☐ Because Jesus laid down his life for me, I will surrender my life to him.
☐ Because God has prepared a place for me, I will be devoted to him.