



Sermon Title: Psalm 23 (Part 3) 'He Guides Me'

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. How has the Lord been 'your Shepherd' during this past season?
2. When you were growing up, how did you see decisions around you being made?
3. Describe a time when you were lost? How did you feel?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Review these two stories of David:
1 Samuel 23:7-29 and 2 Samuel 15:13-14, 30-37.
What is significant about David's phrasing in Ps 23:3, 'He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake'?
2. 'He makes me lie down... He leads me beside... he restores my soul...'
(Parts 1 & 2 messages). In this Part 3, Pastor Henry speaks about our response. Briefly discuss the five ways to receive God's guidance as listed in the summary. From the list (sidebar), tag a Scripture verse relating to each.
3. What makes #4 (ask with an expectant spirit) a key link in the process of receiving guidance from the Good Shepherd? What is our usual human tendency? Why do we often fear what God is directing us to? What Bible story or character encourages you to trust God's direction?
4. 'God wants to speak into the issues, the questions and the decisions you are facing.' (Pastor Henry)
In what ways do 2 Tim 3:16 - 17; Hebrews 10:7 and James 1:22 challenge the Christ-follower?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. How has your opinion of God's guidance changed through this message?
2. What issue, question or decision are you facing right now?
Discuss Psalm 119:105 which explains the usual way that God directs?
How has God guided you in the past?
3. Which point expressed in the message do you need to reinforce in your life?
4. How can the group pray for you?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

(This week's writers: Edi Dygert, Gene and Karen Gibbs, Georgia Harrison.)

THE WORD (NIV)

Ex 33:11 (Moses)

¹¹The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend...

1 Sam 3:10-11 (Samuel)

¹⁰The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

¹¹And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle."

Ps 27:11; 32:8; 119:105

Teach me your way, LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors... I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you... Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

Matt 6:22,23

²²"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

John 1:12; 10:3-5; 14:6; 14:26

¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God... ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."... ⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me..." ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Romans 6:23; 8:14; 12:2

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord... ¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God... ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

James 1:22

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Hebrews 10:7

Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.'"



Many of us have experienced being lost: not knowing where we were, not knowing how to get where we wanted to be. Pastor Henry told the story of a hunting trip his father took with several good friends. They parked their truck in a field and then followed the game trails where they led. Then late in the day, as it was getting dark, they realized they had no idea where they were, nor where the truck was. They spent the entire night wandering in the dark before eventually finding the truck, after sunrise. His father was embarrassed, but admitted to a friend that it was actually frightening – no compass, no map, no landmarks, no idea where they were or which direction to go in. Being hopelessly lost in a wilderness is not unlike facing the future without God. Even as we live our life today or tomorrow or 50 years of tomorrows, the future in our life is uncharted territory. Take God out of the picture and we are without points of reference: no guide, no reliable compass, no idea which way leads to safety and hope, which way leads to despair, emptiness, even destruction. The author of Psalm 23 was forced more than once to flee into the wilderness to escape those who sought to kill him. Yet through it all, David had found a friend who loved him eternally and unconditionally, who walked with him through the best as well as the worst times of his life. At some time in his life, David wrote Psalm 23 to articulate what his Lord – Shepherd and Friend – meant to him. David’s Lord was His Shepherd; in Him he found everything he needed. During uncertainty and turmoil, David trusted the Lord to be his rock, his fortress and his shelter. When weary and discouraged, the Lord led him to green meadows beside still waters, made him rest to refresh his soul. In the first two parts of this series we learned that our Great Shepherd rests, restores, and refreshes us.

David tells us about the Lord, his Shepherd, who wants to lead and guide us along the right paths when we do not know which way to go or which decision to make. The reality of life is that it is a series of choices with consequences, for us and for others. We often face life-altering decisions: whom to marry, what to study, where to work, where to live, when to leave a position or stay, to lead a group or step out and serve. The good news is that we are not left on our own to sort out which way to go. Our God knows where we should go, and how to get us there. He is ahead of us on the path He has prepared for us, saying “Come, follow me.” While God knows the right path for us, He rarely shows it all to us at once. We may want a crystal ball showing us future; God promises a lamp for our feet, a light on our path (**Ps 119:105**). As a flashlight lights up only part of a dark path, so God promises us what we need – light to see the next step. We don’t need to see the future for we have God’s assurance He is with us, ready to give us what we need when we need it. If we are to receive God’s guidance, what is our responsibility to receive it; what must we do to receive it?

1. We need a personal relationship with the Lord. As David says, The Lord is **MY** shepherd. We have to belong to God, to be a child of God, give Him our trust and faith to hear Him when He speaks through Scripture or whispers.
2. We need to submit wholeheartedly to His leadership in our lives. When David says, “I lack nothing,” he is saying that when he focuses **ON** and entrusts his life **TO MY** shepherd, he has everything I need. When we look elsewhere and lose focus, we shall be confused and unsure. Jesus uses an apt metaphor (**Matt 6:22**) – Our eyes are the lamp of the body; healthy eyes bring light into the whole body. We need more than a casual friendship with the Great Shepherd; we need constant interaction with Him. God does not have a routine, ritualistic ‘safe’ relationship in mind for us. God wants us to become a close personal friend, not just a person interested in religiously keeping up appearances.
3. We need to spend quality time in the Scriptures, the Word. There are two Greek terms for the “word:” **LOGOS** – the word of God to everyone, and **RHEMA** – the word of God to you personally. The Bible contains God’s Word, the Logos – God’s General Will – for all people, in all places, at all times. By this, we know that if the Bible says something is wrong, we can be sure that God will not lead or guide us to do what is wrong. David explicitly states that God guides us along the **RIGHT** paths. God never tempts us or leads us to what is contrary to His written word. Also, at times, God will give us a Rhema (a personal word) through the Scriptures: a verse or phrase that leaps off the page as you have the inward sense that God is speaking directly to you personally. This implies we need to be in the Scriptures often and regularly so that we can remember, allowing the Holy Spirit to teach and remind us what Jesus has said to us.
4. We need to ask in a spirit of expectancy. As much as we want guidance, we also resist it. We are called to have a teachable spirit and be open to God’s direction. But we love to be in control. We want to plan our life, and fear that asking for God’s guidance may lead to something we are not prepared to do. We pay dearly for this – missing God’s very best for us (**Romans 12:2**) - when we hesitate or refuse to seek His face and guidance in our lives. The Bible has many examples of God communicating with people and even speaking directly to them. Jesus told his disciples that they were His friends. God calls us friends; He not only hears us but He will also respond. So we ask, expecting to receive.
5. We need to do what He calls us to do. Don’t ask God for guidance unless you are prepared to act on it. Like the duck in the story repeatedly asking for grapes, repeatedly being told **NO**, and finally threatened with having his feet nailed to floor if he asked again – when we don’t like His answer, we don’t listen - our minds are already made up. When Jesus was on earth, He chose to live in humble dependence on His heavenly Father. He had come to do the Father’s will and He heard the Father’s voice clearly and perfectly. Jesus loved His friends and His people, but His first priority was doing the will of His heavenly Father. Therein was His peace and joy. Success in His ministry was not based on the size of the crowds or the faithfulness of the followers. Success for Jesus was being faithful to His heavenly Father. No one and no power can keep any one of us from fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives. The only one who can walk away from God’s calling and the very best for me... is **me**.

The men and women of God who answered His call were not especially gifted people. But all had one thing in common – they **knew** the Lord their Shepherd, faithfully **did** what God called them to do - and God **worked** in them and through them to change the course of history. Today, this same God is eagerly waiting to speak into your life to make a difference in His kingdom, to lead and guide you day by day into the greatest adventure possible.