

INSTRUCTIONS FOR GROUP FACILITATORS

1. Decide with your partner which one of you is going to read and who is going to write down the prayer requests. The person who records the prayer requests should probably lead the prayer. Develop a signal with your partner to alert each other if one of you begins talking too much. Pray together before meeting with the neighborhood group.
2. After everyone is seated, begin with introductions. Ask if anyone has questions or comments about the weekend so far. Your tone and attitude will set the mood for the group. Remember to breathe and relax.
3. Read aloud, slowly, beginning with *Psalms 23*. Then read *The Shepherd*.
4. Read the first question and let the Peace of silence wash over you. Facilitate by letting the others speak, but do not require anyone to speak. Remember to give your group time to think and to reflect on the question.
5. If you feel you must talk because no one else will, resist the temptation. Pray.
6. Reject the temptation to dominate the discussion, however strong it is.
7. If you find someone else is dominating the discussion, politely reaffirm their point and restate the question asking for others' thoughts.
8. Be mindful of the presence of the Holy Spirit and pay attention.
9. The point of the weekend is for the church members to get to know each other better and grow together, *not* to know you better.
10. Be aware of the time. If the discussion is lively or thoughtful, don't feel pressured to have the group answer all the questions. Bring the discussion to an end with enough time to close with prayer.
11. Thank your group and invite them to attend the remaining events. And thank you.

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 right paths for his name's sake.
- ⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I 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 my whole life long.

The Shepherd

By nature, sheep cannot be calm unless they are free from all fear. Sheep are anxious if they sense danger, if there is tension within the flock, if they are suffering from pests like flies and parasites, or if they are hungry. Only the shepherd can provide relief from all these anxieties. Our modern culture is based on industry and technology. We are not as familiar with some of the farming and animal management practices. Therefore, we need to be reminded there is an active relationship between a Shepherd and his sheep. No one knows the sheep better than the shepherd.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit brings us the sense of the Christ to our fearful hearts. We can go confidently and freely through the world because, with Christ, we can move about with no fear. To think that God in Christ is deeply concerned about each of us as a person immediately gives great purpose and enormous meaning to our journey on earth. He brought us into being. We belong to Him because He deliberately chose to create us as the objects of His affection, and we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What word or phrase in Psalm 23 is particularly comforting for you?
2. When has God given you a sense of relief from anxieties?
3. What would you do if you could “move about with no fear”?
4. Say aloud together with confidence, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” How did it sound?

Close with Prayer