
CBC WEEKLY RESOURCES



I. [Sermon Recap](#)

II. [Study Guide](#)

III. [Devotional Material](#)

IV. [Small Group Resources](#)

NOVEMBER 23, 2025
COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC 28741

I. SERMON RECAP

Pastor Gary welcomed everyone, especially new visitors, to embrace the Christmas spirit within the community. His sermon centered around the practice of praying the scripture, underscoring its significance in aligning one's prayers with the Word and will of God. By drawing from Psalm 23, he suggested that this practice could invigorate the congregation's spiritual lives, particularly as they prepare for the New Year. He emphasized that praying scripture not only fortifies one's faith but also increases the likelihood of experiencing God's presence and answers to prayer.

Highlighting the poignant context of Psalm 23, Pastor Gary shared how King David, in a state of distress being pursued by his son Absalom, found solace in God as his shepherd. Pastor Gary used this imagery to convey the comforting truth that God sings over His people with songs of deliverance, much like a shepherd singing over his flock. He revealed how this divine melody of liberation and hope can sustain believers through their own times of emotional and spiritual hardship, encouraging the congregation to embrace this divine comfort and guidance.

In conclusion, Pastor Gary invited the congregation to not only memorize scriptures but to cultivate a deep relationship with the Author of those words. He emphasized the importance of allowing God's voice, often as gentle as a whisper, to console and direct them amidst life's trials. Through a compelling story, he illustrated the difference between merely knowing scripture and genuinely knowing God, urging everyone to trust in His steadfast love and to be assured that goodness and mercy will accompany them throughout their lives.

Chapters

Chapter 1: The Power of Praying Scripture

We are introduced to the practice of praying Scripture as a powerful tool for spiritual growth, using Psalm 23 as a model for prayer during times of distress and uncertainty.

Chapter 2: The Shepherd Who Provides and Protects

We explore the meaning of God as our Shepherd who feeds, guides, shields, and sings over us, meeting our needs even when we lack the capacity to pursue them ourselves.

Chapter 3: Still Waters and Soul Care

We examine the necessity of quieting ourselves by still waters for soul restoration, learning that God speaks in whispers rather than matching the volume of our stress.

Chapter 4: Walking Through the Valley Without Fear

We discover that even in the valley of the shadow of death, we need not fear because God's rod and staff comfort us, His presence surrounds us, and His anointing empowers us.

Chapter 5: Dwelling in the House of the Lord

We conclude by learning to dwell on truth rather than fear, to link people with Scripture in prayer, and to know not just the words but the Author of Psalm 23.

II. STUDY GUIDE

Key Points:

- Praying Scripture means praying the will of God, which leads to answered prayers
- God sings songs of deliverance over us like a shepherd sings over his sheep (Zephaniah 3:17)
- We must delight ourselves in the Lord first, then He gives us the desires of our hearts, not the reverse
- God sometimes does most of the work in our lives, especially when we're too weak or overwhelmed to function
- We live in a culture of instant gratification and constant hurry, but God calls us to be still by quiet waters
- Soul care is essential: we must quiet our minds, bodies, and emotions to hear God's whisper
- It's okay to be weak and vulnerable; acknowledging our deficiencies is the first step to becoming strong
- Mourning often precedes comfort; we must go through trials, not around them
- The anointing of the Holy Spirit empowers us to navigate life's difficulties beyond our own abilities
- We should link people in our lives to specific Scripture passages and pray those passages over them consistently
- God's love is unfailing and undefeated. He has never lost and never will
- The difference between knowing Scripture and knowing the Author is transformational

Key Scripture

Psalm 23 (entire chapter) - The primary text of the sermon

Psalm 91:1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

Zephaniah 3:17

1 Kings 19 (entire chapter) - Elijah in the cave

John 10 (entire chapter)- The sheep know my voice

Other Relevant Scripture

Alluded To

Psalm 37:4 - "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart"

Matthew 6:33 - "Seek first the kingdom."

Psalm 1:2-3 - Meditate on the Word day and night

Psalm 3:3 - "The Lord is a shield and the lifter of our head"

1 John 4:18 - "Perfect love casts out fear."

John 10:28-29 - "Nothing can pluck you from His hand."

Matthew 5:4 - Beatitude: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Matthew 5:6 - Beatitude: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."

James 1:2 - "Consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds."

Philippians 3:14 - "Press on toward the goal to win the prize."

Philippians 4:8 - Things that are praiseworthy, righteous, excellent, perfect, lovely, admirable, noble, and true

Romans 12:2 - The renewed mind of Christ

2 Samuel 15-18 - Context of Absalom chasing David (background for Psalm 23)

Verses Aligned with Main Themes:

Psalm 46:10 - "Be still and know that I am God" (theme of quietness and stillness)

Isaiah 40:11 - God as shepherd who gathers lambs

Hebrews 4:12 - The Word of God is living and active

Romans 8:26-27 - The Spirit intercedes for us

Psalm 127:2 - God gives to His beloved even in their sleep

Isaiah 30:15 - "In quietness and trust is your strength."

III. DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

The Shepherd's Care

Day 1: The Shepherd Who Sings Over You

Question: How does understanding that God sings songs of deliverance over you change the way you view your current struggles or seasons of difficulty?

Reading: Psalm 23:1-3; Zephaniah 3:17

Devotional: In seasons of chaos and confusion, we often forget that God actively ministers to us even when we're unaware. Like David fleeing from Absalom, you may feel pursued, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Yet the Shepherd doesn't wait for you to perform or prove yourself worthy. He sings songs of deliverance over you. Melodies of freedom, hope, and restoration. This isn't about your ability to hear Him; it's about **His faithfulness to pursue you.**

Today, quiet yourself long enough to remember: God feeds, guides, and shields you. He restores your soul not because of what you've done, but because of who He is. Delight yourself in Him and watch Him work on your behalf.

Day 2: Still Waters and Soul Care

Question: In what areas of your life do you find it hardest to be still and allow God to minister to you rather than constantly striving and doing?

Reading: Psalm 23:2-3; 1 Kings 19:9-13

Devotional: Our culture conditions us for constant motion and instant gratification. We sprint through life, rarely pausing to let God minister to our weary souls. Yet the Shepherd makes us lie down in green pastures and leads us beside still waters. This isn't passive; it's intentional soul care. Like Elijah discovering God in the whisper rather than the earthquake, we must learn to quiet ourselves. Your soul, mind, will, and emotions need tending. Sometimes God must grab you by the collar and make you rest because you won't choose it yourself.

Today, create space for silence. Turn off distractions. Let Him restore what the hurried life has depleted. Strength comes from stillness.

Day 3: Walking Through the Valley

Question: On what do you tend to dwell? Worst-case scenarios and past hurts, or the truth of God's unfailing love and faithfulness? How does this affect your daily life?

Reading: Psalm 23:4; Romans 8:35-39

Devotional: David wrote this psalm while being hunted by his own son through dangerous wilderness valleys. He didn't deny his reality; he acknowledged he was walking through "the valley of the shadow of death." Yet he declared, "I will fear no evil, for You are with me." The presence of God doesn't eliminate the valley; it transforms your experience within it. Whether you face chronic illness, relational breakdown, addiction recovery, or crushing loss, the Shepherd walks with you. His rod protects, His staff comforts. **Nothing can separate you from His love.** Not death, not life, not your past, not your present circumstances.

Today, acknowledge your valley honestly, but declare His presence louder than your fear. He hasn't abandoned you; He's leading you through.

Day 4: The Anointing That Empowers

Question: How might your prayer life be transformed if you consistently prayed Scripture over people and situations rather than relying solely on your own words?

Reading: Psalm 23:5; 1 Samuel 16:11-13

Devotional: When Samuel anointed David, he poured oil over his head. A symbol of being selected, set apart, and empowered by God's Spirit. In your own wilderness, you need this same anointing. The situations you face are beyond your ability to navigate. You need empowerment from the Holy Spirit to know when to speak and when to remain silent. Empowerment from Him on when to act and when to trust. God prepares a table before you in the presence of your enemies. He provides and protects even when opposition surrounds you. This isn't about seminary degrees or perfect theology; it's about sensitivity to His leading.

Today, ask for fresh anointing. Invite the Spirit to be your GPS through gravel roads and stumbling blocks.

Day 5: Dwelling in His Presence

Question: What would it mean for you to truly know the Author of Scripture and not just the words, and how might this deeper relationship change your experience of passages like Psalm 23?

Reading: Psalm 23:6; Psalm 91:1-2; Philippians 4:8

Devotional: David concludes with confidence: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The question isn't just where you dwell, but on what you dwell. Do you fixate on worst-case scenarios, or do you rehearse God's faithfulness? Do you dwell in fear, or do you abide in Christ as your hiding place? God is undefeated, He's never lost a battle in your life. Goodness and mercy aren't just theological concepts; they're divine realities pursuing you daily.

Today, shift your mental dwelling place. Think on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. Know the Author, not just the words. Let Him transform your mind and renew your soul.

IV. SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Praying the Scriptures - Psalm 23

Opening Prayer

Begin by inviting someone to pray.

Ice Breaker

Share a time when you felt like you were "running on empty" spiritually, emotionally, or physically. What helped you during that season?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

- Praying Scripture is powerful - When we pray God's Word, we pray God's will and position ourselves for answered prayer
- God actively participates in our lives - He sings over us, speaks to us in our sleep, and works on our behalf even when we're passive
- We need to quiet ourselves - In our culture of instant gratification and constant noise, we must learn to be still
- Knowing the Author matters more than knowing the words - Head knowledge versus heart relationship
- God consoles and comforts us - He doesn't just teach; He holds us, cradles us, and ministers to our souls

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Context

The sermon explains that David wrote Psalm 23 while being chased by his own son, Absalom. How does knowing this context change the way you read this familiar passage?

David was a shepherd as a boy. How does his experience as a shepherd inform his understanding of God as his Shepherd? What experiences in your life help you understand God's character better?

Personal Reflection

Pastor Gary mentioned three aspects of shepherding: feeding, guiding, and shielding. Which of these do you need most from God right now? Why?

"Feelings are not the Lord." Discuss this statement. When have your feelings led you astray? How do you balance acknowledging your feelings while not being controlled by them?

Read Psalm 23:2-3: "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul." When was the last time you experienced true stillness and quiet before God? What prevents you from having this regularly?

Deeper Application

The sermon states: "Sometimes God has to do most of the work." Why is it so hard for us to simply receive from God rather than constantly doing? What does it look like practically to "just be" rather than "be doing"?

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." The pastor says we must mourn before blessing comes. What might you need to mourn in your current season? (Loss of friendships, old ways of living, control, etc.)

Pastor Gary challenges us to link specific people in our lives to specific scriptures and pray those passages over them consistently. Who in your life came to mind during the sermon? What passage might you pray over them?

Practical Living

"On what do you dwell?" Do you tend to dwell on worst-case scenarios, past hurts, or God's truth? How can you shift what you meditate on daily?

The sermon emphasizes hearing God's whisper rather than looking for Him in the earthquake, wind, or fire (1 Kings 19). What practical steps can you take this week to position yourself to hear God's whisper?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Pray Psalm 23 daily - Read it slowly each morning, personalizing it ("The Lord is MY shepherd..."). Journal about what stands out to you each day.

Create a "Still Waters" time - Schedule 15-30 minutes of complete silence and solitude. No phone, no music, no distractions. Simply sit before God and let Him minister to you.

Link a person to a passage - Choose one person you're concerned about (child, grandchild, friend, coworker). Find a scripture passage that addresses their situation and commit to praying it over them daily for the next month.

Practice "being" not "doing" - Identify one thing you can remove from your schedule this week to create margin for rest and soul care.

Mourn to move forward - Set aside time to honestly mourn something you need to let go of (old friendships, past lifestyle, control, expectations). Write it out, pray through it, and ask God for His comfort.

Going Deeper

For Personal Study This Week:

Read: Psalm 23 in multiple translations (NIV, ESV, Amplified, The Message)

Study: Look up the following passages mentioned in the sermon:

Zephaniah 3:17 (God sings over us)

1 Kings 19:11-13 (God's whisper to Elijah)

John 10:1-18 (Jesus as the Good Shepherd)

Psalm 91:1 (dwelling in God's presence)

Philippians 4:8 (what to dwell on)

Memory Verse:

Psalm 23:1-3 - "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul."

Closing Exercise

Group Prayer Using Psalm 23:

Go around the circle and have each person pray one verse of Psalm 23 over the person to their right, personalizing it with their name. For example:

"Lord, You are [Name]'s shepherd. [Name] shall not want. You make [Name] lie down in green pastures..."

This allows the group to practice praying Scripture over one another and experience being prayed for using God's Word.

Leader Notes:

- Be sensitive to those in the group who may be in crises similar to David's (family conflict, health issues, job loss, addiction recovery)
- Create space for silence during discussion - don't rush to fill every quiet moment
- Model vulnerability by sharing your own struggles with quieting yourself and hearing God's voice
- Follow up with group members who commit to specific applications
- Consider having instrumental worship music playing softly as people arrive to set a contemplative tone

For Next Week:

Ask group members to come prepared to share:

- One insight from praying Psalm 23 daily
- One experience from their "still waters" time
- How praying Scripture over someone else is going

Remember: The goal isn't perfect performance but growing intimacy with the Shepherd who knows our voice and whose voice we're learning to recognize.