Summary

In this final installment of the "Creature Teachers" series, the pastor draws wisdom from the animal kingdom by focusing on sheep and what they teach us about our relationship with God. Using Psalm 23 as the foundation, he explores how sheep are entirely dependent on their shepherd for direction, protection, and provision, and how this mirrors our need for Jesus as our shepherd. The sermon highlights three core needs that sheep have, which reflect our own spiritual needs. First, sheep need direction, and God leads us to places of rest, restoration, and righteousness. Second, sheep need protection, and just as a sheep's safety is found in its proximity to the shepherd rather than its own strength, our safety is found in staying close to Jesus. Third, sheep need provision, and even when we wander down the wrong path, God still prepares a feast for us and supplies our needs from His own riches. The pastor closes by reminding the congregation that God is simultaneously in front of us leading, beside us guiding, and behind us pursuing, and that surrendering to the Good Shepherd is the first and most important step.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today as sheep in need of a shepherd. As we open Your Word together, we ask that You would quiet our hearts and minds. Help us to set aside distractions and personal agendas, and give us ears to hear what You want to speak to each of us today. Whether we are walking through a green meadow or a dark valley, remind us that You are close beside us. Lead this group into honest conversation and open hearts. We trust You to do something meaningful in our time together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What is the most memorable road trip or journey you have ever taken, and what made it stand out?

Key Verses

- Psalm 23:1-6
- John 10:27
- Isaiah 53:6
- Isaiah 43:2

- Psalm 34:10
- Philippians 4:19

Questions

- The pastor opened by saying, 'You can't have all that you need unless he is first your shepherd.' What does it practically look like to make Jesus the shepherd of your life on a daily basis?
- Psalm 23 describes God leading us to places of rest, restoration, and righteousness. Which of those three places do you feel you need most right now, and why?
- The pastor pointed out that David, a mighty warrior, still chose to identify himself as a sheep in need of a shepherd. Why do you think it is difficult for strong or capable people to admit they need guidance and direction?
- The sermon described how a sheep's safety is not found in its own strength but in its proximity to the shepherd. In what areas of your life are you tempted to rely on your own strength rather than staying close to God?
- The pastor noted that David shifts in Psalm 23 from talking about God to talking directly to God, and that 'valley prayers and meadow prayers are built different.' How has your prayer life changed during difficult seasons compared to easier ones?
- The sermon mentioned that even when we are on a wrong path of our own choosing, God still prepares a feast for us in the presence of our enemies. How does that truth challenge or encourage you personally?
- Philippians 4:19 says God supplies our needs from His glorious riches, not from our own resources. Where in your life do you find it hardest to trust God's provision over your own plans or savings?
- The pastor closed by saying God is in front of us leading, beside us guiding, and behind us pursuing. Which of those three postures of God is most meaningful to you in your current season of life, and why?

Life Application

This week, identify one area of your life where you have been resisting God's direction, relying on your own strength for protection, or doubting His provision. Write it down and spend five minutes each day this week praying specifically about that area, asking God to be your shepherd in it. At the end of the week, reflect on whether you notice any shift in your peace, perspective, or circumstances.

Key Takeaways

- Sheep need direction, and God leads us to places of rest, restoration, and righteousness when we follow His path rather than our own.
- A sheep's safety is not found in its own strength but in its closeness to the shepherd. Our spiritual safety works the same way.
- Even when we wander down the wrong path, God does not abandon us. He still provides for us and works to guide us back.
- God is simultaneously ahead of us leading, beside us guiding, and behind us pursuing, covering every angle of our journey.
- Surrendering to Jesus as your shepherd is the essential first step to experiencing the direction, protection, and provision described in Psalm 23.

Ending Prayer

Lord, we thank You for being the Good Shepherd who never leaves us or forsakes us. Thank You that You lead us, guide us, and pursue us with goodness and unfailing love every single day. As we leave this time together, help each person in this group to trust You more fully as their shepherd. Where there is fear, bring courage. Where there is confusion, bring clarity. Where there is lack, bring provision. May we stay close to You this week, not relying on our own strength but resting in Yours. Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will follow us all the days of our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.