Small Group Guide: Jehovah Raah — The Lord My Shepherd

Overview

This session explores the name of God revealed in Psalm 23 — Jehovah Ra'ah, the Lord our Shepherd. The sermon examines what it means to trust God as our guide, provider, and protector, and identifies common obstacles that keep us from fully surrendering to His leadership. Together we will reflect on those obstacles, explore what Scripture says about God's character, and consider what it looks like practically to follow the Good Shepherd in daily life.

Key Takeaways

- Jehovah Ra'ah means "the Lord my Shepherd," and the word "my" signals personal, intimate relationship — not merely knowledge about God, but genuine communion with Him.
- There is a significant difference between familiarity with God and intimacy with God. Scripture teaches us about God, but obedience to Scripture is what allows us to truly know Him.
- Four common obstacles to trusting God are: not knowing Him personally, doubting His goodness, doubting that He knows the way, and doubting that He loves us.
- God is fundamentally a giver, not a taker. Everything He permits in our lives — including hardship — is within His sovereign purpose to redeem, refine, and transform us.
- The Good Shepherd does not merely lead us from a distance. He goes with us through the darkest valleys, having already passed through death Himself and conquered it.
- Goodness and mercy are not passively trailing behind us — they are actively pursuing us every day of our lives.

Icebreaker

Before diving into the discussion questions, take a few minutes to answer this together as a group:

Think of a time you trusted someone for directions — a GPS, a friend, a family member — and they led you the wrong way. What happened? What did it take to trust them again, or did you stop trusting them altogether?

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Knowing the Shepherd

1. The sermon drew a distinction between familiarity with God and intimacy with God. In your own words, what is the difference? Which one would you say best describes where you are right now in your relationship with Him?
2. John 10:14-15 describes Jesus knowing His sheep in the same way the Father and Son know each other. Does that level of intimacy feel accessible to you, or does it feel out of reach? What do you think contributes to that feeling?
3. The sermon listed several ways God speaks to His people — Scripture, impressions, worship, other believers, dreams, and circumstances. Which of these have you personally experienced? Are there any you have been skeptical of or closed off to?
4. The sermon emphasized that Scripture is the primary and foundational way God speaks. How consistent is your personal engagement with the Bible right now? What is one practical step you could take to go deeper in studying it rather than just reading it?

Section 2: Trusting His Goodness

5. Oswald Chambers is quoted as saying, "The root of all sin is the suspicion that God is not good." Do you agree with that statement? Can you think of examples — either in your own life or in Scripture — where that suspicion led someone down a destructive path?
6. The sermon used the story of Joseph to illustrate how God's goodness does not always look the way we expect it to in the middle of difficult circumstances. Has there been a season in your life where, looking back, you can now see God's goodness working through something that felt anything but good at the time?
7. James 1:16-17 describes God as the Father of lights who does not change like shifting shadows, and says every good and perfect gift comes from above. How does this truth challenge the way you tend to interpret difficult circumstances? What would it look like to hold onto this truth in the middle of a hard season rather than only after it has passed?
8. The sermon makes the point that God is a giver by nature, and that what we sometimes perceive as God taking from us is often the result of living in a broken and fallen world. How does that distinction change the way you think about suffering or loss?

Section 3: Following His Lead

9. The sermon described the shepherd leading sheep along circular paths up a hillside — paths that might feel repetitive or aimless but are actually leading toward hope. Have you ever felt like you were going in circles spiritually? In hindsight, do you think God was leading you somewhere specific through that season?
10. Psalm 23 shifts from "He leads me" to "I walk" when it comes to the dark valley. The sermon suggested that God does not always lead us into hard seasons — sometimes we walk into

them ourselves — but He goes with us regardless. How does that distinction affect the way you process guilt or shame when you find yourself in a difficult place of your own making?
11. The sermon addressed two ditches when it comes to security in Christ: false assurance on one side and constant fear of condemnation on the other. Which ditch do you think is more common in your experience or in the culture of the church you have been part of? Which one do you personally tend toward?
12. Psalm 23:5 describes God preparing a table for us in the presence of our enemies — inviting us to feast on His goodness even while threats and problems are still present. What does it look like practically to "eat at the table" in the middle of an ongoing struggle rather than waiting until the struggle is resolved?

Section 4: Receiving His Love

13. The sermon closed with the truth that God the Father loves each of us as much as He loves Jesus, drawing from John 17:23. Be honest with the group — does that feel true to you, or does it feel like something you believe theologically but struggle to feel personally? What gets in the way?
14. The sermon described goodness and mercy not as things that passively follow us but as things that actively chase us down. How does that image change the way you think about God's posture toward you on your worst days?
15. Hebrews 2:11 says that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Is there anything in your life right now — a sin pattern, a failure, a doubt — that makes you feel like He should be ashamed of you? How does this verse speak to that?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to practice individually or as a group before your next meeting.

1. **Identify Your Obstacle** Reflect honestly on the four obstacles to trust discussed in the sermon: not knowing God, doubting His goodness, doubting He knows the way, and doubting His love. Write down which one is most active in your life right now. Bring it to God in prayer and ask Him to address it specifically this week.

2. **Create Space to Hear** The sermon emphasized that God speaks in quiet places. This week, set aside at least one extended block of time — at least thirty minutes — with no phone, no podcast, no background noise. Bring your Bible, a journal, and nothing else. Pay attention to what stirs in your heart.

3. **Trace His Goodness** Take a piece of paper and write out a timeline of a difficult season in your life. Then go back through it and look for evidence of God's hand — provision, protection, redirection, growth, or people He placed in your path. Share what you find with someone in your group.

4. **Memorize Psalm 23** Commit Psalm 23 to memory this week. Recite it aloud each morning. Let it become a daily declaration of who your Shepherd is and what He has promised.

5. **Feed Before the Fight** Identify one area of your life where you are waiting for a problem to be resolved before you engage with God wholeheartedly. This week, choose to engage anyway — worship, pray, read, give — before the situation changes. Practice feasting at the table in the presence of your enemies.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying specifically over each of the four obstacles. Invite group members to share which one they are wrestling with most, and then pray over one another. Ask God to make Himself known as the Good Shepherd in each person's specific situation this week.

Scriptures

- Psalm 23:1-6
- Luke 5 (Pharisees passage, referenced in context)
- John 5:39-40 (Jesus telling religious leaders they search the scriptures but will not come to him)
- Romans 1:20
- Jeremiah 29:13-14
- John 10:14-15
- John 10:27
- John 10:10
- John 17:23
- Matthew 7:11
- James 1:16-17
- Job 33:14-18
- 1 Timothy 6:6
- Philippians 4:11-13

- Hebrews 2:11
- Genesis 3 (the first lie in the garden, God holding out on humanity)
- Genesis 37-50 (the story of Joseph, his brothers, the pit, slavery, prison, and rise to power)
- Luke 15:4-7 (the shepherd leaving the 99 to find the one lost sheep)
- Luke 15:11-32 (the prodigal son)
- Psalm 14:1 (the fool says in his heart there is no God)
- Proverbs 14:12 (there is a way that seems right to a man)
- Joshua 1:5 / Hebrews 13:5 (God will never leave nor forsake)
- Revelation 1:18 (Jesus holds the keys of death, hell, and the grave)
- Job 1:21 (the Lord gives and the Lord takes away)