

Small Group Guide: The Shepherd's Table

Key Takeaways:

1. God prepares a table for us even in the midst of difficult circumstances ("dark valleys").
2. We need to go beyond surface-level faith and truly engage with God on a deeper level.
3. The journey of faith includes both easy and challenging times, all of which are opportunities for growth.
4. God provides abundantly for His people, both spiritually and physically.
5. Our relationship with God should impact how we interact with others, including our "enemies."

Discussion Questions:

1. The speaker uses the analogy of cleaning a car's windshield. How does this relate to our spiritual lives? In what ways might we be only "cleaning the outside of the glass" in our faith?
2. Discuss a time when you experienced a "dark valley" in your life. How did you see God working during that time? Was there a "table" prepared for you in that difficult season?
3. The sermon mentions that we often want to stay in the "green pastures" of our faith. Why do you think we resist moving into more challenging spiritual terrain? How can we cultivate a willingness to follow God even into difficult places?
4. How does the image of God preparing a table for us "in the presence of our enemies" challenge or encourage you? What might this look like in practical terms in our daily lives?
5. The speaker emphasizes the importance of listening to God's voice, especially in times of darkness or difficulty. What practices help you to hear God's voice more clearly?
6. Reflect on the statement: "Jesus isn't looking for sheep that just want the easy street." How does this challenge your understanding of what it means to follow Christ?

Practical Applications:

1. This week, intentionally spend time "cleaning the inside of the glass" in your spiritual life. This might involve deeper prayer, meditation on Scripture, or honest self-reflection.
2. Identify an area of your life where you're resisting God's leading. Take a small step of obedience in that area.
3. Practice hospitality this week, inviting someone (perhaps even someone you find difficult) to share a meal with you. Reflect on how this experience mirrors God's invitation to His table.
4. Write down three ways you've seen God provide for you recently, especially in challenging circumstances. Share these with the group next time you meet.
5. Choose a verse or passage from Psalm 23 to memorize and meditate on throughout the week. Pay attention to how it impacts your daily life and perspective.
6. Reach out to someone you know who is going through a "dark valley" and offer encouragement, reminding them of God's presence and provision even in difficult times.