

1. Honor Christ as Shepherd

In what ways have you experienced Christ's redeeming leadership in your life? Read through Psalm 23. Which phrase from Psalm 23 best describes how you have experienced Christ as your shepherd?

Re-phrase the psalm as praise: Restate some of the phrases of Psalm 23. Speak directly to the Lord as you honor Him as your shepherd.

2. Focus on people you know who don't yet know Christ as Shepherd

Jesus described people who live without God's care and leadership as sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). Put on Christ's eyes—to see people as if they were sheep without a shepherd.

Put on Christ's heart—to express His concern for them as they struggle with pressures and fears.

Focus on two or three people you know: family members, neighbors or people at your workplace.

Reflect: When did Christ begin to act as your shepherd? Before you became a Christian? Consider the life-story of people you know. How long has Christ been acting in shepherd-like ways toward them? How eager is God to hear your prayers about enfolding them into a relationship with Him?

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 quiet waters.*

³ *He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*

⁴ *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, 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 have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

⁶ *Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever [literally "length of days"].*

3. Pray for Christ's leadership in their lives

Read Psalm 23 with the same two or three people in mind. Reflect on how their life situations may be described by one of these verses. Write their name next to the verse you choose for them.

Then pray for them by expressing the truths of these verses in your own words.

- **Lead them to a time of renewal (vss 1-2).** Pray for freedom from distractions and habits which keep them distant from God; that they would be weaned from the intoxication of being busy; that Christ would renew their appetite for the things of God and satisfy the deep thirst of their lives.
- **Lead them in the joy of right living (vs 3).** Pray that Christ would overhaul the interior of their lives, that they would be restored to see what is true and to value what is right; that they would be guided to make choices in accordance with God's design, to taste the joy of living rightly.
- **Lead them through fear and grief (vs 4).** Pray that Christ would manifest His presence to them as they navigate difficult days of fear or grief; that Christ's rod would be experienced as a great protection against evil powers; that Christ's staff would gently nudge them as a guiding force in times of terror or confusion; that they will be both confronted and comforted by Christ.
- **Lead them to know and worship God (vs 6).** [Note: The phrase "house of the Lord" probably refers to the temple (see Psalm 27:4) and all that it signifies today: a committed, worshiping relationship with God.] Pray that God's goodness will overshadow them, virtually herding them into his house. Pray that Christ's love would be revealed, drawing them into a worshiping relationship with God.

The ideas below are designed to help you facilitate an effective prayer gathering on behalf of people who have yet to follow Christ. These suggestions can be easily adapted to fit your group. It's possible to use FreshPrayer with large gatherings, but the ideas below are best suited for small groups in home or workplace settings.

1. Honor Christ as Shepherd

Read. Have someone read the entire Psalm. Or have one person read one verse, followed by another person, until all the verses have been read.

Discuss life experience. Ask the question about how participants have experienced Christ's leadership. Allow a bit of discussion by having each person identify one phrase that is most important to them.

Turn phrases to praises. Encourage people to declare God's goodness as it emerges directly from the Psalm. For example, someone might say, "I praise you Lord as I am free from fear. You have restored my broken soul."

Personal praise. Have each person speak praise to the Lord about the person to their right by simply saying, "You are (their name)'s Shepherd."

2. Focus on people you know who don't yet know Christ as Shepherd

Have a bookmark in Matthew 9:36. You may also want to read John 10:11 and Luke 15:3-7. Be aware of time, but invite participants to consider when Christ began to be a shepherd in their lives. The main point is that people would recognize that they have been pursued, as if the Lord was a shepherd searching for a lost lamb. The reason for this point is to invite a sense of compassion for lost people.

Very important: Be sure to invite participants to pray for people who are family members, their neighbors, co-workers or someone that they see from time to time.

Even more important: It's crucial that the people who are selected for prayer are people who are not Christians.

Divide the larger prayer group into smaller groups. Divide into groups of three; then each person can offer the name of one person.

3. Pray for Christ's leadership in their lives

Pray through these sections by either forming four groups, and having each pray for one person according to one of the four truths. Or you can do something similar with one large group.

Note on the note: There are three aspects of verse 6 that will help you pray with clarity:

- First, the house of the Lord refers to the temple. It is not a phrase that speaks directly of the afterlife.
- Second, the Hebrew word translated "dwell" can easily be understood as "to return again."
- Third, there is a Hebrew expression translated "forever" which actually should be understood literally as "through length of days." So verse six could be translated "...and I will return again to the house of the Lord, through length of days."

Invite people to offer a closing round of prayer with the statement of hope, worship and prayer on behalf of each of the people you named in prayer. Say it together for each of the people you have been praying for: "Lord Jesus, you are (insert the name of the person you are praying for)'s Shepherd."