



Week Two Study Guide – September 20
The Jesus Way: Control
Psalm 23

Opening Questions:

- On a scale of 1-5, how much of a “control freak” are you? 1 = not at all; 5 = it’s all gotta go MY way.
- Share a time when something in your life seemed completely “out of control”. How did that feel to you? How did you respond?

Read aloud this introduction:

Several years ago, Tisha had her world by its proverbial tail. Beautiful, funny, insightful, full of faith in Jesus, focused on others, caring and competent, she was a nationally recognized leader in sales and recruiting for her company. Her husband was equally successful in his field. Their two young sons were her joy. She was adept at managing her roles as salesperson, recruiter, mentor, wife, Jesus follower and mom. She kept all the pieces in proper position so that everything ran on all cylinders. Her extended family and many friends admired her and wanted to be like her. Some even wanted to **be** her.

She awoke one morning to find that her stomach was tingly and numb and her fingers were, too. She noticed that same feeling in her legs and feet. She called her doctor the next day after the symptoms continued unabated. Out of the gate, he told her it was quite likely a potentially debilitating, even life-threatening disease. She wrote the next day from her hospital room where she was sent for tests, “Just the mention of that disease seems to have a universal impact - panic. As this journey continues to unfold, we’ll learn what the Lord has in store for us to learn.”

A few days later, as she pondered that her life could be short, or drastically smaller or really painful, she wrote:

“I’m in charge of ...stuff. I have stuff to do! I like things a CERTAIN way. (Don’t let it get out but) I’m kind of particular about how I like things to go! I like to GET STUFF DONE, accomplish goals, and get on with it! But, Friday night, I was forced to stop and process that life may never be the same, and I’m not the boss...of any morsel of my life. I’m not the boss. I’m not the boss. My husband leaned up to my hospital bed and softly said, “Babe, you know you’re saying that out loud?” With . . . single strand

tears dripping down my cheeks one by one, I said, "I have to...I'm not the boss...of anything."

She concluded that night:

"I'm not the boss of the norms of my boys lives, I'm not the boss of the organization of my house, I'm not the boss of if I wake up tomorrow, I'm not the boss of anything...God's the boss. And, when you think about how He knows ALL, made ALL, is EVERYWHERE, existed before TIME, and will exist AFTER time...He's kind of an overly qualified boss, which is NICE!"

Almost ten years later, she remains asymptomatic. But what she learned through that experience, she keeps in front of her on a moment-to-moment basis is, "I. Am. Not. The. Boss."

Invite someone in the group to read Psalm 23 aloud.

Pray this prayer (one person or the whole group together):

Lord, as we come together to study your Word, we bring all of who we are with our needs, our hopes, and our expectations. Meet us here in the power and presence of your Holy Spirit. Give us insight and understanding as we listen carefully for your voice. And then give us courage and conviction to align our lives with the way of Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen.

Questions for Exploration:

As noted in the Archaeological Study Bible, "Shepherd" was a widely used metaphor for kings both in Israel and elsewhere in the ancient Near East. The Lord is often called the Shepherd of Israel. In Psalm 23, David the king acknowledged God as his Shepherd-King.

- As Shepherd-King, what does God control?
- What does the Lord, the Shepherd, provide?
- What benefits are experienced from the hand of this Good Shepherd?
- What does it mean to say, "The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need"?



Some Notes for Understanding Psalm 23:

- vs. 2 = “he settles me down”
- vs. 3 “he restores my soul” = has the force of “he brings me back”; the word translated “soul” here is the Hebrew word *nephesh*, meaning “the whole person”
- vs. 3 “for his name’s sake” = good shepherds don’t lose their sheep and the flock is a reflection of the shepherd
- vs. 4 = Kenneth Bailey reminds us that “the only way is **through** . . . “
- vs. 4 = the shepherd’s rod is never used on the flock, only on predators
- vs. 5-6 = we have a picture of God as the generous host - look at what He provides!

Questions for Pressing it Out:

- What does this Psalm reveal about who God is?
- What does it reveal about God’s priorities?
- What does this Psalm tell us about who we are?
- How does this Psalm inform us about our own priorities in living out the way of Jesus?
- What area of control in your life is God asking you to relinquish?
- What promise from this Psalm do you most want to focus on this week?

Closing Prayer:

Depending on the needs/desires of your group here are some options:

- Ask one or two group members to close the group in prayer
- Pray the Lord’s prayer together aloud:

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.”