



NOT ALONE

PSALM 23

WEEK 1

STUDY QUESTIONS

As we move into a new year, many of us find it hard to be hopeful. As much as we want to believe this year will be a better one, many of us find ourselves alone, depressed, anxious and fearful. Psalm 23 gives us a picture of the God we serve- a Shepherd who is always with us. Over the next 6 weeks, we will explore this Psalm and the promises that are revealed within it.

But before we look at the Psalm, take time to read this “Anti-Psalm”:

I'm on my own.

No one looks out for me or protects me.

I experience a continual sense of need. Nothing's quite right.

I'm always restless. I'm easily frustrated and often disappointed.

It's a jungle — I feel overwhelmed. It's a desert — I'm thirsty.

My soul feels broken, twisted, and stuck. I can't fix myself.

I stumble down some dark paths.

Still, I insist: I want to do what I want, when I want, how I want.

But life's confusing. Why don't things ever really work out?

I'm haunted by emptiness and futility — shadows of death.

I fear the big hurt and final loss.

Death is waiting for me at the end of every road,

but I'd rather not think about that.

I spend my life protecting myself. Bad things can happen.

I find no lasting comfort.

I'm alone ... facing everything that could hurt me.

Are my friends really friends?

Other people use me for their own ends.

I can't really trust anyone. No one has my back.

No one is really for me — except me.

And I'm so much all about ME, sometimes it's sickening.

I belong to no one except myself.

My cup is never quite full enough. I'm left empty.

Disappointment follows me all the days of my life.

Will I just be obliterated into nothingness?

Will I be alone forever, homeless, free-falling into void?

Sartre said, “Hell is other people.”

*I have to add, "Hell is also myself."
It's a living death,
and then I die.*

Take a breath and pay attention to how you are feeling right now. Did that anti-psalm bother you? Does it resonate with you? What parts can you relate to? What parts felt uncomfortable?

Write down anything that comes to mind. If you are with others and feel comfortable, share your thoughts.

The truth is, at some point in our lives, many of us feel many of the things expressed in the anti-psalm. To feel these things does not mean we are disconnected from God necessarily. But it should alert us to the fact that we need more of who God is in our lives. So who is He?

Read: Psalm 23:1-6

How does this compare to the anti-psalm?

What implications are there when David directly compares God to a shepherd- *his* Shepherd? What does it say about God? What does it say about us?

Read: John 10:11

Psalm 23 was written for a Jewish audience. But Jesus came for the whole world. This means that both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) are allowed to call Him their Shepherd.

How have you seen Jesus as a Shepherd in your life?

Re-Read: Psalm 23:1

Remembering that Jesus is the Shepherd that David was speaking of, what would it look like to "not want" because of God's presence in our lives?

In what areas of your life have you been left wanting? What would it look like to trust God for what you need in those areas?

Live it out:

This week, when you notice yourself trying to feed your desires with anything other than God, stop and ask yourself if it's working for you. Then ask God how He can help you satisfy the longings of your heart.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for not leaving us on our own. Holy Spirit, You are always with us, comforting and guiding us. Jesus, thank You for being our Good Shepherd, and promising to fulfill the desires of our heart. May we learn to delight in You, and not lean so heavily on the things of this world. Teach us Your ways, and help us to look to Your hand for all of our needs. Amen.