

DISCUSS

We have spent the last six weeks slowing down and working through a very familiar psalm in the hopes of seeing it anew. As Matt said in session one, when biblical truth becomes commonplace, it can be easy for us to overlook its significance—even taking it for granted at times. But despite its brevity, Psalm 23 delivers some astounding truths about our God and what it means to belong to him. So let's start off this week by reflecting on where we have come. In week one, you listed two or three ways you hoped the Lord would help you grow as you worked through this series. **How has God answered your prayers for growth? In what ways has he met you as you have studied Psalm 23?**

How has your understanding of God grown throughout this study?

How has your understanding of yourself grown over the last few sessions?

Matt has challenged each week our tendency to view God incorrectly. All too often, we fall into the trap of believing that he is a distant God, constantly observing our moral efforts and ready to punish us when we go wrong. But that simply is not the image of God we receive in the Bible and we are going to close out our study by challenging that misunderstanding one last time.

Read Psalm 23:6

Matt said that if we could distill all sixty-six books of the Bible in to a single phrase, it would be "God with us." **When you think of that phrase, what are some examples that come to mind of God being present with his people?**

We have wrestled with this question previously, but what makes it difficult to believe that God desires to be with you? How has your perspective on God's presence changed as you have worked through this study?

This final verse of Psalm 23 presents us with two ideas, the first being that goodness and mercy follow those who call the Lord their shepherd. The Bible contains plenty of commands that we are expected to incorporate into our lives for the sake of obedience.

How do you tend to respond to being told what to do? Specifically, when it comes to the commands of the Bible, how do you respond to the ways in which it calls you to obedience?

As Matt pointed out, part of misunderstanding the character of God is also misunderstanding his intention for our obedience. He is not looking for begrudging submission. Rather, his commands are intended to bring us joy because they bring him glory and help us live in the way he designed the world to function.

When you think about obedience, is "goodness" something that you imagine it leading you toward? What situations make it difficult to believe that God wants good things for you?

Inevitably, no matter how faithfully we pursue obedience, there will be times in which we fail. That's true in every area of life. We will come up short before God, in our marriages, in our jobs, in our friendships, and so on. That's why the second characteristic that chases after those who follow the Lord is so significant.

What is mercy? How would you define it?

How do you tend to respond to your own failures? In what ways do you find it difficult to believe that God would respond to them with mercy rather than punishment?

Matt argued that we misunderstand mercy "following" us because we don't truly understand the righteousness of God given to us through faith in Christ. **Where are you in need of mercy today? How should the truth that God's mercy follows you through faith in Christ meet you in that need?**

If you belong to Christ, it does not matter where you find yourself today—if you have given in to temptation, missed a deadline at work, spoken careless words to your spouse, or failed in any other way, goodness and mercy still follow you. Even more, God has extended to you the invitation to dwell with him forever, which is the ultimate hope of our faith.

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