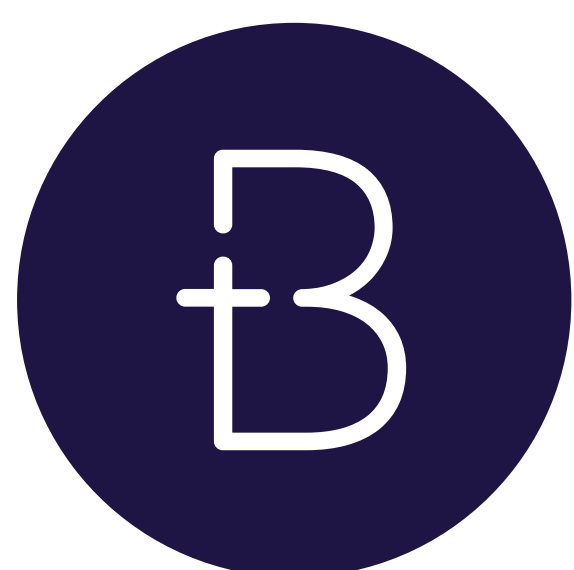




THE GOOD SHEPHERD

A Bible Study on Discipleship



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THE GOAL OF THIS STUDY

In this study, we pray that you will discover that God promises to shepherd those who belong to him. We pray that you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, and that this study helps you come to see that Jesus himself has joyfully taken on the responsibility of discipling you for the rest of your life.

Preface

THREE REMINDERS OF GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU

Before our study in Scripture, pause to consider these three pictures in Scripture that tell you how Jesus has loved you. If you have recently come to know and love Jesus, then the following three pictures may already be full of meaning for you.



A SINNER FORGIVEN AT THE CROSS

It was at the cross that God enabled you to see yourself as a sinner in need of a Savior.

Ask God to help you see yourself in this picture—to see yourself with your eyes fixed on the cross of Jesus. And ask God to help you see your burden of addiction to sin falling off your back and rolling into the empty tomb of the risen Savior.

“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.” (Revelation 1:5-6 NIV)

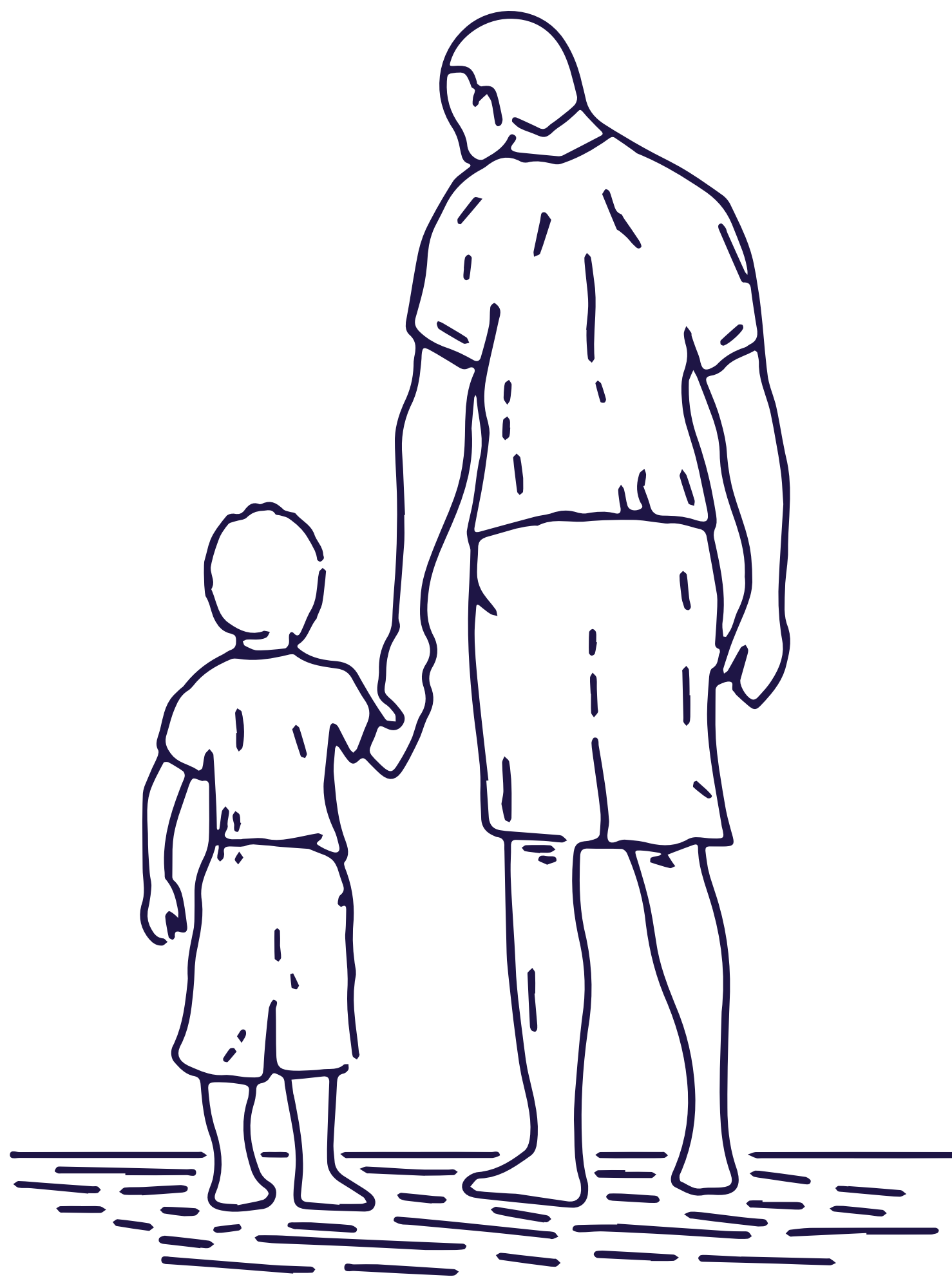


A LAMB CARRIED BY THE SHEPHERD

Like the little lamb on the shoulders of this shepherd, Jesus found you, and brought you to himself.

Ask God to help you see yourself in this picture—to see the Good Shepherd carrying you on his shoulders.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.” (John 10:14-16 NIV)



A CHILD DEARLY LOVED BY THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Like the child whose father is holding his hand, God has established a love relationship between you, himself and his Son.

Ask God to help you see yourself in this picture—to see Jesus holding your hand. And ask God to help you see that you are in a 24/7 love relationship with his Son.

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God... See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”
(John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1 ESV)

INSTRUCTIONS

WHO IS THIS STUDY FOR?

You may think to yourself, *I believe that Jesus loves me, but what should I do now? How will I know how to practically live out my faith in Jesus?*

We pray that as you walk through this Bible study, you will hear God speak to you through his Word that he promises to disciple you, which means to lead and to teach you. Throughout the Bible, God identifies himself as a Shepherd. This image helps us understand what his discipleship in our lives will look like.

In John 10:3-4 we hear this description of the Lord Jesus, **“He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.” (NIV)**

The Lord has committed to shepherd you personally, because he loves you. Before we begin to listen to God’s Word, first take some time to reflect on how God has loved you.

You may have heard children singing this song:

*Jesus loves me this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong,
They are weak, but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me,
the Bible tells me so.*

If your heart is singing this love song for the first time, or for the first time in a long time, you are in the right place.

WHO WILL DISCIPLE ME?

In a love relationship with Jesus, the answer to questions like “what’s next?” or “who will be the shepherd of my soul?” will come from God himself, from God’s Word.

As you read the following Bible passages you will be enabled by his Spirit in you to see and hear how God has shepherded his people from the very beginning of time until this very day.

You will see God meet the needs of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; you will hear King David’s story of how God shepherded him throughout his life; you will hear Jesus, the Good Shepherd, describe the love relationship he has with all his sheep; you will hear God reveal that the plan he has used to save you is the same plan he will use to change you into the image of Jesus in every area of your life for the rest of your life.

WHEN TO DO THIS BIBLE STUDY

This would be a wonderful study to do during a free afternoon. You don’t want to feel rushed or short on time, but rather ready to receive God’s Word without distraction.

You could also do this study over the course of a week, working through one passage each weekday, spending about an hour on it.

Whenever you choose to do this study, do it prayerfully, and without haste. See it as an opportunity to enjoy the presence of your Savior who loves you and to receive his leadership and instruction in your life.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

You will need this booklet, so you can refer back to the questions we provide.

We encourage you to have your personal Bible open to these passages and read from your own Bible, though we provide the Scripture passages here. This will allow you to pay attention to the context surrounding each passage, and become more familiar with the Scriptures.

You will be asked to make lists, so you'll need something to write with and something to write on. We suggest you use a journal so you can keep all your notes together and carry it with you throughout the week so you can keep a record of what you are learning.

HOW TO DO THIS BIBLE STUDY

Before you begin, pray. We cannot hear God's Word without God's help. Make sure to take a moment to quiet your heart before the Lord and ask him to teach you.

First, read the Scripture that follows each question as many times as it takes for you to see and be amazed by the wonderful ways God has personally provided what his people needed most.

Second, make a list of the ways God met his peoples' spiritual needs.

Third, ask God to shepherd you in these same ways.

Fourth, for the next seven days, make a list of the ways you see God meet your spiritual needs.



ADAM AND EVE

GENESIS 3

Who shepherded Adam and Eve following their first sin in the Garden of Eden?

Step #1: Read as many times as needed:

**“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden... And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”
(Genesis 3:7-8; 21 ESV)**

(Record your observations on a separate sheet of paper.)

Step #2: List the ways God helped you see how he shepherded Adam and Eve.

Step #3: List of the ways you are asking God to shepherd you like he shepherded Adam and Eve.



KING DAVID

PSALM 23

Who did David say shepherded him?

Step #1: Read as many times as needed:

“The LORD is my shepherd I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (Psalm 23 ESV)

(Record your observations on a separate sheet of paper.)

Step #2: List the ways God helped you see how he shepherded David.

Step #3: List of the ways you are asking God to shepherd you like he shepherded David.



JESUS' SHEEP

JOHN 10

Who did Jesus say would shepherd His sheep?

Step #1: Read as many times as needed:

“Truly, truly, I say to you... The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name leads them out... the sheep follow him, for they know his voice... A stranger they will not follow... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” (John 10:1-5; 14-16 ESV)

(Record your observations on a separate sheet of paper.)

Step #2: List the ways God helped you see how Jesus shepherds his sheep.

Step #3: List of the ways you are asking Jesus to shepherd you.



BECOMING LIKE JESUS

HEBREWS 10

What does God say a person will do, who is becoming like Jesus all the time?

Step #1: Read as many times as needed:

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through His flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

(Hebrews 10:19-24 ESV)

(Record your observations on a separate sheet of paper.)

Step #2: List the ways God helped you see who Jesus is and what he has done that has established a shepherding relationship with his people.

Step #3: List the ways you are asking Jesus to shepherd you during the rest of your life.



THE WARNING

HEBREWS 10

What warning did God give a person who is not becoming more like Jesus all the time?

Step #1: Read as many times as needed:

**“For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume his adversaries.”
(Hebrews 10:26-27 ESV)**

(Record your observations on a separate sheet of paper.)

Step #2: List the ways God helped you see the importance of responding with a heart of obedience to the shepherding relationship he has established with his people.

Step #3: List the ways you are asking Jesus to shepherd you, to change you, asking him to give you a heart of dependent obedience every day for the rest of your life.



RESPONSE

PRAISE & CONFESSION

Will you respond with praise?

In 1868, Henry Baker wrote a hymn that he entitled “The King of Love My Shepherd Is.” The words of Baker’s hymn might become the words of your prayer to the One who is, and always will be the 24/7 Shepherd of your life on earth, and your soul for all eternity. Ask God to enable you to make this your love song to Jesus.

“The King of Love My Shepherd Is”

The King of love my Shepherd is
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
and he is mine forever.

Wayward and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home rejoicing brought me.

In death’s dark vale I fear no ill with thee,
dear Lord beside me,
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
within Thy house forever.

Will you respond with confession?

What if instead of praise you feel conviction of the Holy Spirit? You know that you have sinned against the love relationship God has established with you through faith in Jesus. If this is you, consider this prayer of William Carey, a missionary to India in 1795.

“O Lord Jesus, I am by nature a rebel and find more pleasure in what you made than in you. I am sin-sick and corrupt.

O Christ, how plain it is to me now that I need something so much deeper and more powerful and more personal than my own fleshy efforts to keep the Law. Help me turn away from all earthly pleasures and cling to you alone as the all-satisfying joy of my life.

O Lord, I pray that you would have mercy on me, and open the eyes of my heart to see you as you really are in all your surpassing glory and triumph in the world. May I love and embrace you as my King who has lovingly called me to ‘...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

What I see and know of you now, I embrace with all my heart. I receive you as my Savior and Lord and Treasure. I thank you for dwelling in me mightily and making yourself the Victor in my life so that the glory will go to you. Amen!”

SPEND SOME TIME IN PRAYER

You have seen the way God shepherded Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

You have heard King David's testimony that "the Lord is my shepherd."

You have heard Jesus say, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me... I lay down my life for the sheep... the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name... a stranger they will not follow."

Now, having heard God speak to you, what will you say to him and to his Son, Jesus?

WHO ELSE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE GOOD SHEPHERD?

If this study has helped you draw near to your Savior and trust and love him more, would you consider sharing it with a friend? Who do you know that might need to be assured of God's promise to shepherd those who belong to him? Ask the Lord if there's anyone you know who he wants to go through this study.

