

# **Psalm 23**

***The LORD is my Shepherd***

***A Psalm of David***

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## **PSALM 23**

### ***THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD***

**<sup>1</sup> The LORD is my Shepherd;**

**I shall not want**

**<sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures.**

**He leads me beside still waters.**

**<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul.**

**He leads me in paths of righteousness**

**for His name's sake.**

**<sup>4</sup> 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.**

**<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;**

**You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**

**<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,**

**and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

## Day 1 – Introduction

Psalm 23 is noted to be the *Pearl of the Psalms*. It delights our soul with a soft, pure radiance.

Psalm 23 is the pearl because it combines a beautiful picture of *who God is* with a beautiful picture of *what God does* while speaking of the divine person of God and the abundance of spiritual benefits He desires every believer to experience.

Charles Spurgeon said, *“Its sweetness and its spirituality are unsurpassed. The position of this Psalm is worthy of notice. It follows the twenty-second, which is peculiarly the Psalm of the Cross. There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the twenty-second Psalm. It is only after we have read, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!” that we come to “The Lord is my Shepherd.” We must by experience know the value of the blood-shedding, and see the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly to know the sweetness of the good Shepherd’s care.”*

Read Psalm 22:1-21

Share what stood out to you from these verse

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Have you personally acknowledged the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, when? What implications has it had on your life?

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If not, will you please reflect a bit longer on Psalm 22:1-21, asking The Lord to open your understanding to the truth of His Word, and to help you see the wonder of His death and resurrection?

**Write a prayer of gratitude for all the Lord did in order to become your Shepherd**

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***Who is The LORD?***

**As we begin our study of Psalm 23 it's important that we take a deeper look into *Who* the LORD is that we are calling "my Shepherd." We need to know the character and attributes of the One doing the shepherding. We must know the One we choose to place our hope and trust in.**

***The LORD* in Hebrew is Yahweh or Jehovah. It is God's covenant name, establishing He will be faithful to His covenant relationships. It is the proper name of the God of Israel. He is the Supreme God. This is the name God gave to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3. I AM WHO I AM. His name is profoundly mysterious, hard to understand, and One Whom we cannot fully understand. Though He is beyond our comprehension we can be assured He will remain constant because He is completely independent. He is completely other than us. His existence is from Himself and for Himself. Nothing about Him is derived from anyone else. God is absolutely self-sufficient and self-existent. Yet He fully desires to be your Shepherd.**

**When God – Yahweh – revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3, He said in verse 5, "Do not come near; take off your sandals, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." The fire symbolized the holiness of God. It was a most pure fire, having its own energy source. The fire was not dependent on the bush but was dependent on God Himself. The Great I AM.**

**Moses was given a vivid visual aid to teach him that the LORD is "*the God who has all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He has made.*" (The Westminster Confession of Faith 2.2)**

***"The One Whom you need to shepherd you neither needs you nor needs to be shepherded Himself as He gives Himself to shepherd you. He shepherds you from His eternally undiminishing fullness, and He is never the poorer for it."* (Gibson)**

**The greatest thing we can ever have in life, is more of God! To gain a deeper and greater understanding of Him. To grow in a sweeter relationship with Him. There is nothing better in all of life than knowing the Shepherd you belong to!**

**Look up the following Scriptures about God and man, then summarize in the chart below**

<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Who God is</b>	<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Who man is</b>
<b>Exodus 15:11</b>		<b>Romans 3:10-12</b>	
<b>Jeremiah 32:17</b>		<b>Romans 3:23</b>	
<b>Acts 17:24-25</b>		<b>1 Corinthians 6:19-20</b>	
<b>Psalm 139:1-4</b>		<b>2 Corinthians 5:17</b>	
<b>Isaiah 40:28-30</b>		<b>Matthew 11:28-30</b>	
<b>Psalm 46:1</b>		<b>2 Corinthians 12:9-10</b>	

Scottish Pastor, Alexander Maclaren said it so well, *“I AM THAT I AM” – the law of His nature, the foundation of His being, the only conditions of His existence being, as it were, enclosed within the limits of His own nature. You and I have to say, “I am that which I have become,” or “I am that which I was born,” or “I am that which circumstances have made me.” All other being is derived, and therefore limited and changeful; this being is underived, absolute, self-dependent, and therefore unalterable forevermore. Because we live, we die. In living, the process is going on of which death is the end. But God lives forevermore. A flame that does not burn out; therefore, His resources are inexhaustible, His power unwearied. He needs no rest for recuperation of wasted energy. His gifts diminish not the store which He has to bestow. He gives and is none the poorer. He works and is never weary. He operates unspent; He loves and He loves forever. And through the ages, the fire burns on, unconsumed and undecayed.”*

**Read Psalm 18:1-3 and list the twelve attributes David gives to The LORD**

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**How do these particular attributes of God comfort and encourage you?**

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## Day 2 – The LORD is my Shepherd

Yesterday we saw that God’s sovereign independence supports and enables Him to remain forever faithful to His covenant name. And because He is eternally faithful, we can depend on Him to be fully present with us because He has bound Himself to His covenant.

Our relationship to God through the Lord Jesus Christ gives you and I the greatest foundation. “The fact that Jesus is a Shepherd is wonderful, but the fact that He can be my Shepherd is based on His drawing me in personally to a covenant relationship that predated me and will outlast me. The scale of that covenant relationship means I can know He is mine because it is the very meaning of His name to be the God who is faithful to His people.” (Gibson)

In John 10:11-18 Jesus declares that He is the Good Shepherd.

*“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 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, and one Shepherd. For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father.”*

What do these scriptures say about the Good Shepherd?

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**What do you learn about sheep?**

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**Sheep are defenseless animals. They are prone to wander, have poor eye sight, tend to follow other sheep without thinking, and can be stubborn. Sheep are mentioned in the Bible over 300 times, and are talked about more than any other animal.**

**Jesus, our Good Shepherd warns us that there are also bad shepherds. Shepherds who don't protect and properly care for the sheep. They are self-serving shepherds. Jesus told us these things so we would know who we follow matters!**

**How does Jesus describe these bad shepherds?**

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**Other Scripture references describe these bad shepherds as thieves and robbers who ravage the flock and exploit God's people. When trouble comes, they run; leaving the sheep vulnerable.**

**Highlight the portion of scriptures from John 10 on the previous page that describes Jesus knowing His sheep.**

**How well does Jesus know His sheep? And to what does He compare this knowledge?**

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The word *know* in the Greek is *ginosko*, indicating profound knowledge coupled with deep love and complete trust. This is more than intellectual information. *Ginosko* involves intimacy with a deep understanding of the person. The original Hebrew describes the intimate love between a husband and a wife. It involves knowing a person's nature. The sheep know their Shepherd; they know His voice, His gestures, His warnings, as well as His protective care.

It's amazing Jesus compared our relationship with Him to His own relationship with His Father! Jesus said to the Father in John 17:26 *"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make You known in order that the love You have for Me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."* What a profound thought, the Father loves us as much as He loves Jesus! Our Good Shepherd wants to tend His sheep in a loving manner. He knows we are prone to wander and must be cared for because we are defenseless. And because He is a tender Shepherd He will search for those who wander and bring them back into the fold. Sheep never have to fear when they belong to the Good Shepherd.

Pastor Warren Wiersbe said, *"The better we get to know Jesus and the Father, the more we will love God and experience His love in our hearts, and the better we will obey Him."* As we study the Word, worship, fellowship, and obey the Good Shepherd we come to know Him and also ourselves better. As we follow Him we grow in our love and trust of Him because we are growing in relationship with Him, learning to love Him with all of our mind.

Let's take a closer look at some of the Good Shepherd's attributes.

**Tender**

**Isaiah 40:11**

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**Ezekiel 34:11**

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**Sacrificial**

**John 10:11**

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**Risen**

**Hebrews 13:20**

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**Welcoming those who wander**

**1 Peter 2:25**

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**Crowning the Faithful**

**1 Peter 5:4**

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**Revelation 7:17**

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**After the apostle Paul had been saved for 30 years, he wrote in Philippians 3:10, “I want to know Christ.” He also prayed that the Christians in Ephesus might “know Him better.” (Ephesians 1:17). May we be women who pray this daily.**

**Have you wandered from your Good Shepherd?**

**Jesus, our Good Shepherd, can find you, rescue you, carry, protect, provide for, and comfort you – because He knows you, loves you, and cherishes you. Ultimately, He proved that He was the Good Shepherd by laying His life down for you.**

**Run to Him! He is waiting for you with open arms.**

**Take some time today to listen to Matt Maher’s song *Run to The Father*.**

**As we close today, let’s take a closer look at Psalm 23 as a whole.**

**What is the first thing we learn about what it means that The LORD is *my* Shepherd as found in verse 1?**

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**List the different things the LORD provides his sheep with in verses 2 & 3.**

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Verses 3 & 4 tell us where The LORD leads His sheep.

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What is the final destination for those following The Good Shepherd?

How long will they live there (verse 6)?

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*Courtney Doctor wrote, “The shepherd of Psalm 23 led His sheep not only to places of peace and provision – green pastures, still waters – He also led His sheep into hard, even frightening places – the valley of the shadow of death. In the same way, Jesus as our Good Shepherd, leads us both to places we love to go and places we’d rather never go. But He never stops being the Good Shepherd. He’s good when the path you’re on and the circumstances surrounding you are pleasant and peaceful, and Jesus is good when the path and the circumstances are rocky, dark, and frightening. In Psalm 23, the Good Shepherd never left His sheep, He never stopped loving them or protecting them, and He never stopped providing what they needed.”*

The wonderful love of the Good Shepherd cannot be earned. It is freely available to those who will call upon Him because of His death and resurrection. Jesus, The Good Shepherd laid down His life, willingly, out of love, for you, His precious daughter. He desires to lavish you in His love and kindness. I encourage you to receive His profound love and find true rest for your soul.

### Day 3 – The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want.

- ESV I shall not want
- NLT I have all that I need
- NIV I lack nothing
- NASB I will not be in need

The logical flow of verse one is:

*“The LORD is my Shepherd; therefore I shall not want.”*

*“Because the LORD is my Shepherd, I lack for nothing.”*

*“If I have Him, I have everything.”*

*“He is mine; so I have all I need.”*

Phillip Keller says in his book, *A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23*, regarding the word *want*; *“The word want used here, has a broader meaning than might at first be imagined. No doubt, the main concept is that of not lacking, not deficient, in proper care or management. But a second emphasis is the idea of being utterly contented in the Good Shepherds' care and consequently not craving or desiring anything more.”*

Yet the reality is that I do want. Almost daily I want more. I want a better body with better health. I want better relationships with my family and friends. I want my children to be happy and satisfied. I even want that cute outfit I saw the other day. I want more down time. And the truth is, I long for more.

What are some things you are longing for, or feel like you are lacking?

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Because God's Word is true, alive, and active I must approach His Word based on who He is and align my heart and mind with His truth. The fullness of His Word.

*"I shall lack for nothing" means "God will provide me with everything I need."*

*"If the LORD is my Shepherd, what more do I need?"*

I may *desire* things beyond what I have, but that is beyond the point.

Based on the teachings of the Bible we can conclude that David was not referring to material or physical poverty when he made the statement, *"I shall not want."* The truth is many of God's people throughout history have experienced lack of wealth or material possessions. Jesus told His disciples in John 16:33 *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Richard Briggs puts it so well saying, *"Verse one points to letting YHWH decide what it is I need, in the very process of ensuring that whatever it is, I will not lack it . . . Psalm 23 is partly in the business of training my sense of need to be better attuned to what God provides. This Psalm is a tool in God's hand – and we might say the tool is a staff – which He uses to recalibrate our desires."*

Kenneth Bailey suggests that our very conception of wants suffers from our living in a capitalistic society where *"The entire economic system is built on creating and then satisfying as many perceived wants as possible . . . The goal appears to be: Create wants and then turn them into felt needs. But Psalm 23 is an oasis in our materialistic wasteland. It invites us to stop and rest awhile, and consider afresh who God is for us in the simple plenitude of His being and the endless riches of His covenant love. David, it seems, knew in advance what the apostle Paul would later describe as the ability to live 'having nothing, and yet possessing everything.'"*

Look up the following cross-references using the Amplified Version of the Bible and share your thoughts on The LORD's attributes and how He meets your wants and desires.

Psalm 34:9-10

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**Psalm 84:11**

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**Matthew 6:33**

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**Luke 12:30-32**

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**Romans 8:32**

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**Philippians 4:19**

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**Which scripture stands out to you?**

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**How will you approach God’s Word based on who He is and align your heart and mind with His truth in a practical way that you can implement in your day-to-day life?**

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**Take the Scripture that stood out to you, and write it on the note card provided at the front of your binder.**

**Read and pray the scripture in the morning and evening every day this week.**

**You may want to set a reminder on your phone so you don’t forget to go back to it later in the day.**

**Share with a friend how and why this verse has stood out to you, and ask her to pray this verse over you daily this week.**

**Here is an example taken from Matthew 6:33:**

**Read the scripture in context – Matthew 6:25-34**

*AMP “But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His Kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right – the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also.”*

*ESV “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

*NLT “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.”*



## **Day 4 – He makes me lie down in green pastures.**

### **He leads me beside still waters.**

Phillip Keller tells us in his book, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, sheep do not lie down easily unless four conditions are met.

1. Because sheep are timid, they will not lie down if they are **AFRAID**.
2. Because they are social animals, they will not lie down if there is **FRICTION** among the sheep
3. If flies or **PARASITES** trouble them, they will not lie down.
4. If they are anxious about food or **HUNGER**, they will not lie down.

Only The Shepherd can provide release from these anxieties.

True rest comes when the sheep look to The Shepherd to provide for all their cares.

He cares for them physically, medically, socially, and emotionally, making it possible for them to lie down, to rest, to relax, and to be content.

“A flock that is restless, discontented, always agitated and disturbed never does well. And the same is true for people. It is significant that to be at rest there must be a definite sense of freedom from fear, tension, aggravations, and hunger.”

Let's look to God's Word on how we can be free from fear, friction, parasites, and hunger.

#### **FEAR:**

There is no substitute for the keen awareness that My Shepherd is nearby. There is nothing like Christ's presence to dispel the fear, the panic, the terror of the unknown.

2 Timothy 1:7

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This is a mind that is at ease – at peace – not harassed or overtaken by fear or dread of the future.

**Psalm 4:8**

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**Knowing that my Master, my Friend, my Owner has everything under control even when they may appear calamitous brings peace to my anxious heart.**

**FRICTION:**

**Friction; “Continuous conflict and jealousy within the flock is a most detrimental thing. The Sheep becomes edgy, tense, discontented, and restless. It is here that much jealousy arises. This is where petty peeves grow into horrible hate. It is where ill-will and contempt come into being, the place where hearted rivalry and deep discontent is born. It is here that discontent gradually grows into a covetous way of life where one has to be forever “standing up for himself, for his rights.”**

**1 Timothy 6:6**

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**James 3:16**

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**If the LORD is really my Shepherd, there should come an end to all rivalry, foolishness, and self-promoting. *When my eyes are on my Master they are not on those around me.***

**James 3:17-18**

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**“To be thus, close to Him, conscious of His abiding presence, made real in my mind, emotions and will by the indwelling gracious Spirit, is to be set free from fear of my fellow man and whatever he might think of me.”**

**Matthew 5:7**

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**PARASITES:**

**Parasites are organisms that live on or inside a host, feeding off them to survive, often causing illnesses ranging from mild to fatal. Tormenting their host. Making rest impossible. Similarly in the Christian life there are many small irritations, annoyances, frustrations, even disagreements.**

**Matthew 11:28-30**

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**Isaiah 26:3**

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**HUNGER:**

**Lush green pastures are essential for healthy sheep. And this is exactly what my good Shepherd wants to provide. His concern for my care and wellbeing is beyond my comprehension.**

**Matthew 5:6 in the amplified version reads, “Blessed [joyful, nourished by God’s goodness] are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [those who actively seek right standing with God], for they will be completely satisfied.”**

**Psalm 63:1-2**

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**Psalm 84:2**

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**Which of these four conditions is keeping you from lying down in His green pastures?**

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**What scriptures will you choose to meditate on and apply to your daily life this week?**

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**Write this verse on the note card provided at the front of your binder and carry it with you this week.**

**You might also want to make it your screen saver!**

**The key to lying down in green pastures is our abiding relationship with our good Shepherd, and the same is true for being led beside the still waters. Every part of our satisfaction is dependent upon the Shepherd.**

**When we are physically hungry or dehydrated our bodies give signals that something is wrong. We have hunger pangs, dizziness, irritation, headache, etc. The same is true when we are spiritually hungry and thirsty. We begin to strive when we lack satisfaction. We are on the search for something to bring us love, hope, comfort. But in our striving, we often look to lesser things. We drink from the wells of this world and find ourselves even more unsatisfied.**

**Write out what the prophet Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 2:13**

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**The Good Shepherd loves for His sheep to be contented, quiet, at rest, and relaxed. He delights knowing our soul and spirit are refreshed and satisfied. That is why He is working to lead us into green pastures and streams of living water.**

**Write out Psalm 42:1-2**

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## **Day 5 – He restores my soul.**

**He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.**

**Restoration – the state of being reinstated, made new, repaired**

**The Hebrew can mean “*brings me to repentance*”**

**Start your time today praying Psalm 51:10-12**

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**Job 33:26 beautifully portrays the concept of *restoration* saying, “He will pray to God, and He shall be favorable to him, so that he looks at His face with joy; For God restores to man His righteousness, that is, his right standing with God – with its joys.”**

**David, the author of Psalm 23 knew the pain and sorrow that comes with being cast down, dejected, and in desperate need of restoration. David had much personal experience with bitterness and hopelessness. He had been defeated many times in his life. He also committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then murdered her husband in hopes of covering his sin.**

**In Psalm 42:11 David cries out, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my Salvation, and my God.”**

**David was cast down, he was despairing.**

**Phillip Keller wrote, “This is an old English term for a sheep that has turned over on its back and cannot get up by itself. A cast sheep is a very pathetic sight. Lying on its back, its feet in the air, it flays away frantically struggling to stand up, without success. Sometimes it**

**will bleat a little for help, but generally it lies there lashing about in frightened frustration. If the owner does not arrive on the scene within a reasonable short time, the sheep will die.”**

**The sheep is utterly helpless on its own. Yet when the Shepherd comes to rescue His precious sheep there is something intensely personal that takes place; the Shepherd is tender, patient, and helpful, restoring the sheep to its proper position.**

**Far too often we believe the Lord is disgusted, fed up, and angry when His child falls away, or is once again found helpless and wandering. But the Gospels clearly display the tenderness, love, and patience that Jesus displays for His struggling child. No matter where we are or what we have done, our Good Shepherd comes gently and with His abundance of love and compassion.**

**Note how the following scripture shows God’s love and compassion.**

**Psalm 103:8**

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**Luke 19:10**

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**Luke 15:3-7**

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**Reflect on the Lord’s kindness found in Hosea 14:4-9**

**List the things the Lord will do for His people**

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## List the benefits of being restored to the Lord

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Take a few minutes right now to be restored to your Good Shepherd.

- Admit and confess your sin to Him
- Praise Him for His restoration

Psalm 23:3 is a picture of total and ultimate rest. The sheep has been restored to its proper position, and now the Shepherd will lead in His paths of righteousness with us following behind Him. He is ultimately leading us home where we will  *dwell in the house of the LORD forever* . And the way to His house is a scenic route that we need to learn to savor. Because it is the result of receiving the Shepherd's love and close attention, and then following in the Shepherd's way that is truly the restoration of my soul.

His goal for us as we walk along His paths of righteousness is to see that we become strong, sturdy, and energetic. What He does expose us to along our journey will strengthen and fortify our faith and confidence in Him. Because He is the Good Shepherd, we can rest assured that He knows what He is doing, and that His way is always best. Knowledge of who our Shepherd is should be sufficient to continually refresh and restore my soul. "I know of nothing which so quiets and enlivens my own spiritual life as the knowledge that God knows what He is doing with me!" (Keller)

Gibson writes, "...there is a restoration of the soul that takes place when I cease striving to master the world and I am content to lay down the tools of work and instead be nourished by the provision of the Shepherd. Sheep benefit enormously from regular, daily, weekly reminders that we are sheep and not the Shepherd. A renewal of the soul takes place in seeing afresh who I am in the world – not master and commander but a frail and prone-to-wander sheep with a Good Shepherd – and that my experience of soul rest will always be dependent on my proximity to Him."

**God clearly tells us in His Word that He is the One who gives us true rest, restores us, and leads us in His paths of righteousness. How do the following scriptures confirm these truths?**

**Matthew 11:28-29**

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**Isaiah 40:31**

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**Psalm 25:9-10**

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**Often there are times we do not understand the leading of our Shepherd. But we must remind ourselves that He is leading and our job is to follow Him, learning to trust that the path we are taking is His path of righteousness. When we are allowing our Shepherd to lead, we cannot fail to be on His right path.**

**Take time to consider the path you are walking, who is leading you, and where might this path end?**

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**As you consider your path, also reflect on Mark 8:34**

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**We see here in verse 3b that the reason for the Shepherd’s incredible care for His sheep is the fame of His own name. “He leads by binding His own honor and reputation in His world to His sheep and to what happens to them, and how they follow Him.” (Gibson)**

**How beautiful that our God has bound His reputation to His people. John Piper said, “The deepest reason given for God’s commitment to His people is His prior commitment to His own name. The rock-bottom foundation of our forgiveness and our fearlessness and our joy is the commitment of God to His own great name.”**

**Write out Psalm 106:8**

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**This week we have seen the way of our Good Shepherd – an invitation to journey through this life allowing Him to lead us because of who He is and for His name’s sake. Close today in a prayer of rejoicing, celebrating all that you have and are because of Him.**

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## **Week Two**

### **Day 1 – Introduction**

**We began last week learning that Psalm 23 is a beautiful illustration of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd. We spent some time looking at who the LORD is and what His beautiful attributes are. Let's begin this week by looking at the characteristics of the sheep, the ones who are in constant need of The Good Shepherd.**

**David was drawing on his own life when he used the illustration of sheep and shepherding. He spent much of his life in the fields tending sheep, caring for them and keeping them safe. People in the agriculturally oriented world of David's time would have immediately understood the literary image of a shepherd and his sheep. But notice that David is flipping roles as he writes this Psalm. Now he is the sheep, and God is the one responsible for his safety and provision. This illustration works, not just because people would have understood the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep, but also because the behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways.**

**In his book, "A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23," Phillip Keller points out that sheep require more care than any other class of livestock. They need endless attention and meticulous care because of their habits and their personality traits. "It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways. Our mass mind or mob instincts, our fears and timidity, our stubbornness, and our perverse habits, are all parallels of profound importance."**

**Let's look at these characteristics of sheep, how we display them in our lives, and what the Bible tells us about these traits.**

**Mass Mind or Mob Mentality - this is also referred to as "herd mentality" or "sheep mentality." Sheep have the instinctual urge to flock together and follow the leader which sometimes can cause them to move into danger because they are highly social and panic when separated. Humans display this behavior trait when they "follow the crowd" or conform to the behavior of others, setting aside personal judgment and independent thought.**

Look up Romans 12:2 and record the verse here: \_\_\_\_\_

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What warning does this verse speak to you? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Fears and Timidity** - Sheep are inherently timid and skittish prey animals. They exhibit fear through a "flight-or-fight" response to prioritize escape from perceived dangers. They show fear by stampeding in blind panic, freezing, or trembling. They often rely on their flock for safety. Their timidity may cause them to run blindly when threatened, sometimes injuring themselves. We too display fear and timidity when we wander off of God's path, running blindly in our own strength, straight into danger.

Look up Isaiah 53:6. What warning does this verse give you personally? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Stubbornness** - Sheep are considered stubborn because they are creatures of habit, prone to follow their own instincts. They have a strong, independent, and often resistant nature when moved against their will. They often prioritize their immediate desires, like grazing or wandering, over following a shepherd.

Which of these descriptions of stubbornness define you? \_\_\_\_\_

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Look up 1 Samuel 15:23. What does a stubborn person reject? \_\_\_\_\_

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How can you avoid being stubborn like a sheep? \_\_\_\_\_

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David, as a shepherd, would have known about each of these characteristics of the sheep and would have developed ways to overcome them as he cared diligently for each member of his flock. Because of the many hours he would have spent caring for his sheep, he would have had a personal knowledge of each one of them. It wasn't unusual for a good shepherd to know their sheep by name and recognize individual temperaments, habits, and needs. This familiarity enabled them to easily spot illness, track missing animals, and provide tailored care. This deep connection between a shepherd and his sheep comes out in David's writing and the tone he uses throughout Psalm 23 as he expresses what it means to be a sheep.

We too are sheep under the care of THE Great Shepherd. He knows everything about us, our temperaments, our habits, our needs. But most importantly He knows what is best for each and every one of us and He cares for us accordingly. Look up the following verses that detail how well we are known by our great God.

Psalm 139:1-4, 13 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 1:5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Look up the following verses that remind us how God has our best interests in mind

Jeremiah 29:11 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:28 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

David was not a perfect man. He had many pitfalls and tragedies throughout his life, but God was with him personally and David knew that. We see this expressed in the writing of this beautiful Psalm because as we reach the middle of Psalm 23, we notice that David's expression becomes more personal. He changes from speaking about the shepherd to speaking directly to the shepherd. The pronoun changes from "he" to the more personal pronouns of "you" and "I." This shifts the Psalm to a more intimate conversation as David (the sheep) begins to speak directly to God (his Shepherd). The tone changes from description to relationship. God is no longer talked about, but talked to, in a closer and more personal way.

Let's start by looking back at the first three verses of Psalm 23. Record the main ideas in verses 2 and 3 that begin with the word He:

Verse 2a \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 2b \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 3a \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 3b \_\_\_\_\_

Through the use of the word He, we see that David is describing God in the third person by speaking about God. The tone is reflective and instructional. God is seen as a guide and a provider and because of this David has peace and clarity. He uses language of testimony, declaring who God is and what He does.

Now let's look at how David shifts into a more intimate conversation as he begins to speak directly to God in verses four and five. Record the statements in verses 4 and 5 that begin with the pronoun you or your:

Verse 4b \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 4b \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 5a \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 5b \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you notice the change in David’s speech? Does it feel more intimate to you? He is no longer describing God, but speaking directly to God through the use of the pronoun you. This indicates a relationship with God. God feels closer.**

**David also uses the pronoun I several times in the six verses of Psalm 23, but let’s look at the concluding statement of Psalm 23. Record the final declaration of the Psalm that begins with the pronoun I.**

**Verse 6b \_\_\_\_\_**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The use of the three different pronouns trace the spiritual journey David has gone through. First, the use of the pronoun “He” in the beginning of the Psalm indicates a knowledge about God. David makes several declarations about things that God does for him. When David shifts to the use of the pronoun “You,” he begins to indicate a relationship with God. The intimacy really shines through as David includes phrases such as “You are with me,” “You comfort me,” “You prepare a table for me.” Then, with the final declaration and use of the pronoun I, David declares his identity in God and his desire to be in relationship with God forever.**

**This can mirror our own spiritual journey towards real faith. We often start by learning about God through Bible reading and Bible study. As we learn more about God, we start to build a relationship with Him. Our head knowledge grows into a heart knowledge that begins to feel intimate and personal. Finally, our heart knowledge gives us trust and confidence in God and we are able to make the commitment and declaration that our desire is to remain in relationship with him forever.**

**Think about your own faith journey. Where do you fall in this path towards real faith? What have been some of your keys to growth in the following three areas?**

**Knowledge about God: Detail ways you have increased your knowledge of God**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**Relationship with God: What have been key ways you have been able to deepen your relationship with God and grow closer to Him? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Identity in God, Identity in Christ: Is your sense of who you are measured and identified through your relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ our Savior, or do you let labels from “the world” define your value and worth? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Write a prayer asking God to help you to deepen your knowledge about him, your relationship with him, and your identity through him. \_\_\_\_\_**

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## **DAY TWO - Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.**

Apart from the opening line of Psalm 23, verse four is undoubtedly the most famous part of this Psalm. It may have already comforted you at some point in your life. It's the verse many of us reflect on when going through a life threatening disease or when facing the loss of someone dear to us.

This middle point of the Psalm is also the first dark note in Psalm 23. In the first three verses, David wrote of green pastures, still waters and paths of righteousness. He now speaks of the valley, and the shadow, and of death. Let's look at the first part of verse four together to better understand the change in tone.

Write the first two words from Psalm 23:4 here \_\_\_\_\_

The phrase "even though" links two contrasting ideas, showing that the second idea holds true regardless of the first. David is conveying the message that even though he is in the valley of death, he does not fear, for God is with him. Write your own "even though" sentence below that describes an event or emotion in your life contrasted by God's protection or assurance in your life. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now let's turn our attention to a second important word in this verse. Let's look at the speed at which the sheep is moving through the valley. Look up the definition of the word *walk*. \_\_\_\_\_

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One definition states that to walk is to move along at a steady pace. Charles Spurgeon defined the word walk as used in Psalm 23 as "a steady advance of a soul which knows its road, knows its end, resolves to follow the path, feels quite safe, and is therefore perfectly calm and composed. The sheep is not moving in a flurry. He does not run as though alarmed, nor stand still as though he could go no further, rather he keeps to his regular pace."

Thinking of Charles Spurgeon’s definition of walk, which words would you use to describe your walk with God? Is your walk similar or different? \_\_\_\_\_

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Another word or phrase we will look at today is where the sheep is walking. Look back at our verse (Psalm 23:4). Where is the sheep walking? \_\_\_\_\_

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Did you write valley or did you include valley of the shadow of death? All three main words in the phrase “valley of the shadow of death” are important in understanding this verse.

When we think about being in a valley, we think of being low and trapped and surrounded by obstacles. There is no easy way out. A valley suggests being hedged in and surrounded, a place that is hard to climb out of.

The “shadow of death” is a phrase used eighteen times in the Bible (half of those in the book of Job.) It is an expression used to represent the most dire of circumstances, the most dangerous. It is a single Hebrew word that can mean “deep darkness.”

But Spurgeon points out that it is not the valley of death, but the valley of the shadow of death that the sheep is walking through. “For death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains. Some one has said that when there is a shadow, there must be light somewhere, and so there is. Death stands by the side of the highway in which we have to travel, and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across our path. Let us then rejoice that there is light beyond. Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man’s pathway even for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite. The shadow of a sword cannot kill. The shadow of death cannot destroy us.”

For a shadow to be present, there must be light. Look up the following verses about light and record them below. What reassurance does each verse give you?

1 John 1:5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

John 1:4-5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**John 8:12** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Following Jesus, the Light of the World, will result in receiving the two promises listed in John 8:12. What are those two promises?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**As followers of Christ, we will never walk in darkness, which is a reference to the assurance of salvation we enjoy. True followers of Jesus do not follow the ways of sin and do not live in a state of continually sinning. Rather, we repent of our sin in order to stay close to the Light of the World. The second promise is that we will have the light of life. Jesus came as the Light of the World and gives us the light of life. Look up Matthew 5:14–16. What does Jesus command us to do with the light we receive in?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Think about the ways you are shining your light in this world and record them below:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Psalm 23:4 finishes with the statement, “I will fear no evil, for you are with me.**

**David recognized that under the shepherd’s leading, he had nothing to fear. He would walk through the valley of the shadow of death. It wasn’t his destination or the place he would stay. Bible commentator David Guzik points out that this verse in Psalm 23 is especially suggestive when we read it with an eye toward Jesus, the Great Shepherd, and realize that because of him we face only the shadow of death. Jesus took the full reality of death in our place when he died on the cross for our sins. As Charles Spurgeon put it, “We emerge from the dark tunnel into the eternal light of our Shepherd.”**

David also realized that the conscious presence of the LORD as his shepherd is what made the valley and the shadows of death bearable. God’s presence allowed him to lay aside his fear of evil and of death. It didn’t eliminate the presence of evil, but certainly the fear of evil.

One commentator said, “The shadow of death represents a circumstantial reality. Sometimes things are difficult, even tragic. But the fear of evil is a choice. Psalm 23 delineates between the two. He may experience the valley, but he will not let the circumstance lead him to fear evil. The tragic circumstance, importantly, is not evil itself. It only tempts us to fear evil because we are not in control, do not understand, or do not want the difficulty. Even within these realities, God is there. ‘You are with me.’ And choosing this perspective over and against the fear of evil is an act of worship. It is an acknowledgement and trust that the Lord is our shepherd and is guiding us into something that will work for our best.”

Let’s look at some scripture regarding fear and God’s presence. Look up the following Bible verses. Note the reassurance these verses give you as well as how each verse better expands on today’s scripture (Psalm 23:4).

Isaiah 41:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 138:7 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 43:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “The worst evils of life are those which do not exist except in our imagination. If we had no troubles but real troubles, we should not have a tenth part of our present sorrows. We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, but David was cured of the



## **Day Three - Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

**One of the shepherd's greatest responsibilities was finding the best grazing land for the flock. This often meant leading the sheep up into the mountains in search of greener pastures. As autumn approached, the shepherd would begin the long journey back home, guiding the flock down the mountains and through narrow valleys so they could reach safety before winter set in. That trip home wasn't easy. The terrain was rough, the path was narrow, and danger could come from anywhere. The shepherd would have to guard against bandits, wild animals, or other unseen threats. David would have continually made this journey through the valley during his time as a Shepherd. It was a real place, filled with risk, where he would have had to stay close and guide his sheep every step of the way.**

**David also knew this kind of terrain in his personal life. He had many high points, but he also encountered many difficult and dark times throughout his lifetime. Some of these difficulties were self-inflicted, while others were beyond his control. Let's take some time to look at some of the tests and trials that David experienced. Read the following passages and summarize each of the significant trials from David's life.**

**1 Samuel 18:6-11; 19:9-12** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Samuel 23:14; 24:1-2** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2 Samuel 11:2-27** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2 Samuel 12:15-19** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**These passages are only a few examples of adversities from David's life. Through these difficult and dark valleys, David drew comfort by the ever present knowledge that God was there with him, guiding him and protecting him.**

As a shepherd, David also guided and protected his sheep through the valleys they encountered with a rod and a staff. Let's look at how a shepherd used these tools.

The rod was a sturdy wooden stick also referred to as a scepter or weapon. This instrument would have been about two and a half feet long with a blunt end embedded with heavy pieces of iron. It was used to fight off wild animals who might have hoped to make an easy meal out of an otherwise defenseless flock of sheep.

Read 1 Samuel 17:34-37 and summarize it below.

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In these verses from 1 Samuel, David is presenting himself to Saul as a combatant with the ability and experience to be able to fight the mighty Goliath. The tool he would have used to fight off the wild animals would have been his shepherd's rod.

Look up the following verses that detail the strength of the rod:

Psalm 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 2:27 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 12:5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What insight do these verses give you about a rod? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One commentator noted that the rod helps us to know that having the Lord with us is not merely a feeling. It does not signify mere presence, but also action and strength. This presence expresses itself by aggressive action to defeat enemies and thus protect the one to

**whom the Lord is committed. Defeating enemies and protecting sheep; both of these are present in the Shepherding work of the Lord Jesus for us. Look up John 10:27-30. What will no one be able to do to the sheep that belong to the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**What does this mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Can you think of a time the LORD protected you and kept you out of harm's way?**

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**The rod was not just a tool of aggression, but also a tool of possession. It was used to help the Shepherd keep count of the sheep within his flock and to examine and inspect them. "In the terminology of the Old Testament, this was referred to as passing under the rod. (See Ezekiel 20:37) This meant not only coming under the owner's control and authority, but also to be subject to his most careful, intimate, and firsthand examination. A sheep that passed 'under the rod' was one which had been counted and looked over with great care to make sure all was well with it." (Keller)**

**How does our Great Shepherd look over us with great care? Share your thoughts below as well as any Bible verses that come to mind. \_\_\_\_\_**

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**The other tool David refers to is the shepherd's staff. This instrument was a long stick with a hook on the end. It was used not only as a walking stick, but also to direct and round up the sheep and to pull them in when needed. Picture the hook at the end of the staff gently placed around the sheep's neck to pull them closer, pick them up, or direct them when wandering off the path. The staff was used daily to care for the sheep as the Shepherd led them in search of food, drink, tranquility and rest.**

**The metaphor here is that our great Shepherd uses his staff to draw us near to Him, to draw us back into His presence when we wander, and to guide us along the unknown paths we walk through daily in life. We often don't know what is best for us or where we are going but our Great Shepherd knows the way.**

**Can you think of a time when the LORD pulled you close or pulled you off the wrong path?**

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**Our verse today ends with a beautiful reminder: our Shepherd comforts us. This comfort includes protection from our enemies, symbolized by the rod, and also protection from ourselves, pictured in the staff that gently draws us back toward the Shepherd. "Some of us want Jesus to protect us from our enemies with His rod, but we don't want Jesus to protect us from ourselves with His staff. We like the idea of Jesus coming down hard on others; we are less enamored when He reaches us personally and directs us somewhere we don't want to go." (Gibson)**

**What is your greatest enemy in your life right now? Is it your sinful heart? Is it pride, self sufficiency, vanity, self pity, or a distorted belief that the grass might be greener somewhere else? Is it your tendency to wander? Write a prayer of self examination.**

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**Our Great Shepherd protects us and comforts us from the enemies in our life, but in order to receive His comfort we must keep Him close to us by recognizing His constant presence. We do this by practicing spiritual disciplines, a few of which include Bible study, prayer, worship, and scripture memorization. Knowing God's word and then being able to pray it, sing it or recite it, draws us close to the Lord during difficult times and brings us comfort. If you have not yet committed Psalm 23 to memory, now is the time to make that special effort.**

**When we store scripture in our minds, it is available for the Holy Spirit to bring to our attention when we need it most.**

**Read Psalm 119:11 and record it here.** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Look up Colossians 3:2. How does this verse encourage you to memorize scripture?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What does Ephesians 6:17 call the word of God?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**The best example of needing God's word hidden in our hearts comes from Matthew 4:1-11 when Jesus was tempted by Satan and used the Sword of the Spirit, or God's word, to chase the devil away. It was the Spirit who prompted recollection of specific verses of Scripture that helped Jesus experience victory. We can also experience this kind of victory when we take the time to commit God's word to memory and hide it in our hearts.**

**Spend some time working on your memorization of Psalm 23. Try writing it from memory below. Share your progress with your small group.**

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Day Four - You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**

In this verse, David expands on the goodness of God and the ways He brings comfort by introducing another powerful metaphor. He paints a vivid picture of God preparing a meal for him, not only as a sheep cared for by the Shepherd, but as an honored guest welcomed to the table. This image deepens our understanding of God’s care. He provides both His tender provision and His intentional, personal hospitality.

“A magnificent banquet is provided by a most liberal and benevolent host; who has not only the bounty to feed me, but power to protect me; and, though surrounded by enemies, I sit down to this table with confidence, knowing that I shall feast in perfect security.” (Adam Clarke)

Look up the definition of *hospitality*. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now write your own definition of hospitality. What does being hospitable mean to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Look up Romans 12:9-21. In addition to showing hospitality (verse 13), what are the other traits of a true Christian? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Gathering together, around tables and in everyday moments, gives us the opportunity to live out these traits of a true Christian before others. Sadly, the practice of welcoming people into our homes is becoming increasingly rare, as lives grow more isolated and schedules become more overextended. As Christian women, we need to make time to practice hospitality, just as our Great Shepherd welcomes us and spends time with us. These times of fellowship, displaying our Christian traits, can create meaningful relationships as others see us live out our faith modeling our lives like Jesus.

The word *prepare* in this verse is a present tense verb. This means that it is not something that is past (prepared) or future (will prepare), it is now. In other words, this is something continuously being done for us by our great Shepherd. We need to picture our Lord laying out a spread for us and then continuously filling our cup. Not just to the top, but overflowing. He meets all of our needs and then some.

The next word we need to look at is the word *before*. The Hebrew word for *before* in this verse is the word “panim” which means face. It is used to reference the front of someone, the direction they are facing. This same word is used in Exodus 20:3, “Thou shall have no other God before me.” This means we should not face toward any other but the Lord. Does this help you to picture this table more intimately? Record your thoughts. \_\_\_\_\_

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Let’s look at the next part of this verse. Who is present at this table prepared by the Lord?

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David Guzik points out how striking this phrase is. The goodness and care suggested by the prepared table is set right in the midst of the presence of my enemies. The host’s care and concern and presence doesn’t mean that my enemies won’t be in attendance, but it does enable me to experience God’s goodness and bounty even in their midst.

If you were to enjoy a meal with your enemies, yet sitting face to face with the Lord, how would you behave differently than if you were eating with your enemies alone? \_\_\_\_\_

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Spurgeon points out that a meal prepared by the Lord in the presence of our enemies would not be hurried. There would be no confusion or disturbance. The enemy would be present, yet the Christian would be able to sit down and eat in perfect peace.

God does not remove the affliction or the distress in our lives. Instead, He prepares a table in its very presence, while it is still there. God is certainly able to change circumstances, but Psalm 23 highlights something even more profound. God has the wonderful ability to comfort us in the midst of hardship. This Psalm anticipates that God’s purpose is not always to spare us from difficulty, but to faithfully lead us through it. And in that process, He is shaping us, molding us, and conforming us more fully into His image.

**Do you feel God’s presence when you’re in a difficult situation or surrounded by difficult people? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Does this verse make you think differently about being in the presence of enemies?**

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**The next phrase in this verse tells us that the Lord anoints our head with oil. In David’s culture, when a guest entered your home, you would wash their feet and perfume their heads with oil. The word anoint used here means to make fat. So the literal translation would be, “you make my head fat with oil.” It was a sign of favor and prosperity. When used in this phrase it is a sense of how liberal the host was. The provision is lavish and rich, not meager or minimal.**

**To anoint with oil was also an outward sign of spiritual reality. The kings of Israel were anointed with oil to signify their high and holy calling to lead. It’s a sign of favor and calling. David was anointed with oil as king by the prophet Samuel.**

**Read 1 Samuel 16:12-13. What happened to David after he was anointed with oil? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**David experienced a spiritual anointing when he was recognized as king. In Psalm 23 David speaks of this spiritual anointing, but as a sheep being anointed by his Shepherd, the Lord.**

**David also drew on the analogy of a shepherd protecting his flock. Sheep were anointed with oil each day to keep flies and insects and other pests away from their eyes and nose. The anointing had to be reapplied daily to continue working.**

**We are also anointed. Read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 and record it here. \_\_\_\_\_**

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What are the benefits of being anointed by the Holy Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

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Phillip Keller writes, “When people or circumstances or events beyond our control tend to “bug” us, it is possible to be content and serene when these outside forces are counteracted by the presence of God’s Spirit. It is this daily anointing of God’s gracious Spirit upon my mind which produces in my life such personality traits as joy, contentment, love, patience, gentleness and peace.”

We need both a liberal amount and a daily application of the LORD’s spiritual anointing. How do you make sure you are receiving a daily anointing of God’s spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

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This verse ends with the reminder that “my cup overflows.” This is another simple yet powerful metaphor of abundance. The Hebrew word for overflows is *rvaya*, a term that appears only twice in Scripture and carries the meaning of being wealthy, saturated, or abundantly filled. David’s message is clear. Even in the presence of distress and difficulty, we live from a place of abundance because the Lord is our Shepherd. We are never lacking in the presence or provision of the Holy Spirit. God’s nearness is our comfort in every circumstance. He has a purpose for all things and will redeem all things, even distress and suffering, using them to shape us into the image of His Son.

Read Matthew 6:26-33. What do these verses mean to you? Close today’s study with a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s abundance in your life. \_\_\_\_\_

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**Day Five - “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”**

The final verse of Psalm 23 is a beautiful conclusion and benediction. David wrote this Psalm as a prayer about everything the Good Shepherd does for His sheep, but also as a personal prayer about all that the Lord had done for him. Have you made this Psalm your own? Take a moment to think about the many ways the Lord cares for you. List the personal blessings you find reflected in Psalm 23.

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The concluding verse begins with the word “surely,” which is a word of emphasis. David uses it to highlight the reality of everything he has just said in the Psalm. In other words, he’s not speaking with uncertainty or hopefulness. He is expressing a deep confidence. The word surely is an intense affirmation, a way of saying “this will definitely happen.”

David is saying that both God’s goodness and His mercy will surely follow him. The word for *follow* is “*radap*” and it means “*pursue*.” In fact, some versions of this verse use the word *pursue* instead of *follow*. The Biblical definition of *pursue* is to diligently chase after, follow with intent, or strive for something, often requiring active, strenuous effort, like chasing an enemy or seeking peace, righteousness, or God Himself. It involves a conscious choice to follow, conveying relentless, determined action towards spiritual goals or away from evil.

As a shepherd, David had the assistance of his sheep dogs. They were almost an extension of himself as they assisted him in guiding the sheep. David would lead from the front and the sheep dogs would gather and pursue the sheep from behind. The sheep would be surrounded by the Shepherd and the sheep dogs as they were guided to safety.

Look up Psalm 139:5 in ESV. How does this verse give you comfort? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Both God’s goodness and mercy are pursuing us, diligently and relentlessly chasing after us. They have us hemmed in and protected. As wonderful as that truth is, Psalm 23:6 communicates something even more powerful. The Lord Himself is pursuing us because goodness and mercy are His divine attributes. Our Great Shepherd sends goodness and mercy after us as a way of giving us Himself. Look up the following verses about God’s goodness and mercy and reflect on what they mean to you.**

**Psalm 103:8** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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**Lamentations 3:22-23** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**Hebrews 4:16** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**John 3:16-17** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**One commentator states, “It is absurd to look for goodness and mercy without acknowledging God’s presence. They go where he is. And if God’s presence is with David, or with us, the fruits of God’s presence are sure to follow as well. Life is full of difficulties. There are enemies. There are valleys. But David trusts that the Lord, as his Shepherd, only led him into circumstances because his intent is goodness and mercy. The essence of this Psalm is David’s ability to look at any circumstance, no matter how dire, and say that must be just what I needed. It is a total trust in God’s benevolent intent in all things.”**

Are you able to look at difficult circumstances and state, “That must be just what I needed?” \_\_\_\_\_

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Look up Jeremiah 29:11-13. How does this verse tie into Psalm 23:6? \_\_\_\_\_

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God’s plans for us are always good. Sometimes it’s difficult to feel His goodness and mercy while we are going through a difficult time, a valley. We only recognize it when we look back on events. But like David, we should be confident that God’s goodness and mercy never leaves us. He is walking with us, side by side, every step of the way.

Look back at Psalm 23:6. How long does it say God’s goodness and mercy will follow us?

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Can you think of a time in your life when you didn’t notice God’s goodness and mercy until you looked back on the situation? Record your thoughts here. \_\_\_\_\_

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The Psalm concludes with the amazing statement. “And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” David’s confidence in God’s tenderhearted intent extends not only to the fullness of his life on earth, but through all eternity. It is exactly as it sounds. Live where God lives. Be where He is. In His house, His home. And if we dwell in God’s house forever, it is not just His home, it is ours.

Look up the following verses. What do these promises mean to you?

John 14:1-3 \_\_\_\_\_

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Revelation 21:3 \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Those who believe in Jesus Christ can have complete confidence that they will dwell forever with God because He has made life with Him in eternity possible for us. Through his death on the cross he has taken on our sins. He has taken the punishment that we deserve. God declared that all who sin will die, both physically and spiritually. This is the fate of all mankind. But God, in His goodness and mercy, provided a way out of this dilemma through the shed blood of His perfect Son on the cross.**

Read 1 Peter 1:17-21 and paraphrase it here \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Jesus Christ is our great Shepherd, but he is also our spotless, blameless Lamb. Through His death and sacrifice, He has provided a way for us to enter into His presence for all eternity.**

Read Colossians 1:22 in the NLT. What has Christ's sacrifice done for us? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

**Jesus Christ has also provided a way for us to stand before Him holy and blameless. Those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ can have complete confidence that they will be brought into His presence and dwell with Him forever in eternity.**

**The heart of this Psalm is God's presence and the final phrase is the climax. It is the ultimate of being with God, "dwelling in His house forever." This is the message of all of scripture. God created us to be with Him, for fellowship with Him. This is the whole point of our existence. This fellowship was fractured by the fall and by our sinful nature, but none of these tragedies has succeeded in changing the original plan. We were made to be with our Creator.**



