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## **My Name is Shepherd Jesus: 50 Daily Devotions**

Elmer L. Towns

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MY NAME IS  
SHEPHERD  
JESUS

50  
DAILY  
DEVOTIONS

ELMER L. TOWNS

My Name Is  
SHEPHERD  
JESUS

DISCOVER *Me*  
*in* THE 23<sup>rd</sup> PSALM

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ELMER TOWNS

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PowerPoint Guide

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## Foreword

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD JESUS

**W**HEN you finish reading and praying Psalm 23, what's next? Why don't you make the lessons you'll experience in this book a part of your daily walk with Me?

First, cultivate a faithful attitude of walking with Me your Shepherd every minute of every day, for the rest of your life. It's really quite simple. I am with you all the time, so talk with Me often.

Second, apply the principles of praying Psalm 23 to other portions of Scripture. Just talk to Me as you read Scripture, asking Me to make the truths in My Word real in your life. Talk to your heavenly Father about the Scriptures as you read them. Then go a step further: Turn the words of Scripture into prayer. Talk to Me using the words of the Bible.

Third, pray Psalm 23 on a regular basis. All of Christianity is wrapped up in Psalm 23, as all of the oak tree is in the acorn. Therefore, praying Psalm 23 means you are praying about every aspect of your faith. If you can only pray once a day, would Psalm 23 be your choice?

## Introduction

# THE BEST-KNOWN CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE

**I**F you have not already discovered it, I want to introduce you to a growing trend of praying the Scriptures. People are turning specific Bible passages into the prayer from their hearts. Maybe you simply read the Bible, and that's wonderful. But I want to help take you deeper in Bible reading. I want you to experience Bible praying.

Many have memorized the 23rd Psalm in Sunday school or other places. This may be the most loved chapter in the Bible.

While there has been no election or contest to determine society's favorite Bible passage, the 23rd Psalm is clearly one of the most beloved passages of Scripture because of the way it has become woven into the fabric of their lives. It is often quoted at funerals, baptisms and other religious services. Many people can quote it verbatim, while many others (inside and outside the church) who do not know the psalm by heart nevertheless recognize its depth when they hear it.

When you begin praying Psalm 23, you will find Me the Shepherd making Myself real to you. I will come to you as you pray Psalm 23 and touch your life with the power of its words. As you daily begin praying Psalm 23, you will find something else happening; you will be touching Me.

If that is what you want—to touch me—take a journey with Me through Psalm 23. You will travel through this much-traveled psalm by a new way—a path you have never walked—in which you will pray through the 23rd Psalm. As you do, something will happen to you: you will touch Me. But more importantly, I will touch you.

**Jesus Christ**

The Shepherd of your soul

*I am Jesus your Shepherd;  
You shall not want because  
I make you lie down in green pastures;  
I lead you beside still waters.  
I restore your soul;  
I lead you in right paths  
For the glory of the Father's name.  
When you walk through a threatening valley with shadows of death,  
You shall not fear evil;  
For I am with you;  
My rod will protect you and My staff will lift you up.  
I will prepare a table full of good food for you in the face of evil;  
I will anoint your head with healing oil;  
Your cup is full and running over.  
My sheep dogs named Goodness and Mercy shall run after you,  
Bringing you back to My presence.  
And you will dwell with Me in My house forever.*

Psalm 23

# PART ONE

WHAT I, THE SHEPHERD, DO

## INTRODUCTION

THE opening of the 23rd Psalm is the “I” section, which describes My Shepherd ways of caring for you, My sheep. I do everything for you; you are not required to do anything but follow. I provide and protect when you stay close to Me. Hence, the theme of the first half portion is *relationship*.

I am your Shepherd and Lord.

I make you lie down in green pastures.

I will lead you beside still waters.

I will restore your soul.

I will lead you in right paths.

Why do I, the Shepherd, do all of these things for My sheep? I do it “for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3). I have My own reasons for protecting and comforting you. Why? Because that is My nature.

## Chapter 1

# I AM THE LORD, YOUR SHEPHERD

A Sunday school teacher visited a young boy from his class who was dying. *What hope can I give him?* the frustrated teacher thought. He did not know what to say to the boy, because he did not know how to help prepare a young soul to die. Toward the end of the young boy's visit, the teacher said to him, "Remember, the Lord is your Shepherd."

Then, to make it practical so the boy would remember the lesson, the teacher asked the little boy to hold up five fingers. Pointing to each of the boy's fingers, the teacher repeated five words: "The Lord is my Shepherd." Then the teacher asked the boy to repeat each word, touching each finger as he said a corresponding word. When the little boy counted to the ring finger—the fourth finger—he grabbed his own chubby finger with his other hand, repeating, "My my Shepherd. The Lord is *my* Shepherd."

The next morning the little boy did not wake up. He was asleep in Me. The parents found his chubby hand still holding that fourth finger. Truly in death I, the Lord, was *his* Shepherd.

*The Lord is my Shepherd;  
I shall not want (Psalm 23:1).*

When you say "my Shepherd," you are admitting that you are My sheep—or at least that you act like a sheep and have the needs of a sheep. If you have the characteristics of a sheep, your biggest need is to belong to Me your Shepherd, because sheep cannot make it in the wild without someone to lead them, protect them and care for them.

*Jesus, I need You.*

What kind of shepherd would you choose to get you to heaven? Obviously, sheep do not choose their shepherd, but let us just take a couple of minutes to play *What If?* If you were a sheep, what kind of shepherd would you pick?

Before you answer, realize what kind of shepherd most sheep would want to avoid. Your shepherd would not be like a businessman because he would want to make a profit off of you. Your shepherd would not have the manner of an army



sergeant, as he would want to lead you into battle. Your shepherd would not be like a coach, as he would want you to win the big game. And you would not want a king, because he would want to rule you.

You would want none of these! You would want a personal shepherd who loved you, not one who made money off you. You would want a shepherd who would protect you, not one who would get you killed in battle. You would choose a shepherd who knew what you liked to eat and where you liked to go. You would seek someone who knew how to care for you when you were sick. Your shepherd should know how to protect you from parasites, predators and poison weeds. You would choose a shepherd who would find comfortable places for you to sleep. If you became lost, you would want an unselfish and brave shepherd who would come looking for you.

*Jesus, I'm glad You first chose me.*

Isn't it good to know that you do not have to worry about choosing the right shepherd because I am *the* Shepherd who has chosen you.

When you say "my Shepherd," you are not just telling everyone that I am your personal Shepherd. You are telling the world that you belong Me, your Shepherd, who owns everything. I, your Shepherd, own it all and created it all—everything. So you never have anything to worry about.

*Jesus, I want to be Your heir.*

Are you wandering in a hot, sweltering desert? I created the burning deserts as well as the cool shaded pastures with crystal clear waters. I know where everything is located, and I can lead you to relief without looking at a map.

*Jesus, I need some water.*

Are you lost in a dark valley seeing death shadows behind the rocks? You may not know where you are, but I know. You're not lost; I know where you are in the valley because I *created* the valley. You can't even get lost in the dark night, because I created darkness, too (see Isaiah 45:7). You may have lost your way, but I, the Lord, don't need a map to show you the way. So take heart; help is coming.

*Come quickly, Lord.*

After falling into a hole, you may think no one in this world knows your troubles. You are miserable in the hole because you think no one can help you... not your mother...not your buddy...not your spouse...not even a pastor. You are

discouraged because I am sitting on a throne up there in heaven and you are mired in a hole. *Wrong!* I, your Shepherd, am the omnipresent Lord. I may be overseeing heaven, but I am also beside you in the hole. Remember: “I am with you” (Psalm 23:4). You have a Shepherd who is present everywhere at the same time, and best of all, I am the Lord your Shepherd.

*Hello, Lord. I didn't see You standing there.*

When I, your Shepherd, bring you home, I do not leave you to graze outside the door. I, your Shepherd, treat you better than you deserve, better than you expected, because I, the Lord, am good. As your Shepherd, I am good to you. I love you when you are good, and I love you when you stray. God is love, and I will always love you.

*And Lord, I love You.*

You have a wonderful Shepherd. Do you know My name? Because a person's name usually tells something about him or her, you ought to know your Shepherd's name. Why? So you can know Me better.

Your Shepherd's name is *Immanuel*, which means “God with you.” I am not just the Lord Most High, exalted in heaven.

*“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23).*

Your Shepherd was conceived of a young virgin girl and born in a lowly stable where animals were kept, including sheep not unlike you. My crib was a feeding trough for animals—and sheep like you. I was confined to live in a human body, but I never once sinned. I grew hungry, thirsty and became so tired I fell asleep in the bow of a boat. Some ask, “How would God act if He became a man?” Look at Me, Immanuel, for I am “God with us.”

*Lord, thank You for coming to show me how You would live in the flesh.*

I am your Shepherd, My name is Redeemer. When you landed in the pawnshop of sin I, your Shepherd, walked in with the pawn ticket that paid the price for your release. The Bible says you were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19).

*Lord, I'm glad Your blood paid the price for my sin.*

I am your Shepherd, My name is Deliverer. Because you disobeyed the

Father's laws, you were destined for punishment. You were heading for hell. What did I, your Shepherd, do? I went after you and the Bible says I delivered you "from so great a death" (2 Corinthians 1:10).

*Lord, I'm glad You delivered me from hell.*

I am your Shepherd, My name is Savior. The Bible says all have sinned; this includes you (see Romans 3:23). Because the wages of sin is death (see Romans 6:23), you were lost with no hope; but I your Savior reached My hand down to save you.

*And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world (1 John 4:14).*

*Lord, I'm glad You're still saving people, including me.*

How do you describe your Shepherd? Is he tall, skinny, old or athletic? If you have a shepherd, you ought to know what he looks like. The appearance of your Shepherd is not described in the Bible, although I came as a baby born in Bethlehem. I died in the full strength of manhood on a cruel cross. My physical features are not described because My appearance is not important, even though I am "chief among ten thousand" and "altogether lovely" (Song of Songs 5:10,16). You will learn My description by learning of the things I do for you.

I am your Shepherd, described as "the door" (John 10:7,9) and "the way" (John 14:6). I am described as "the narrow gate that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:14), I will lead you to heaven.

*Lord, show me the way.*

I am your Shepherd, described as "the light of life" (John 8:12). This is a dark, scary world when you do not know where you are going, and there are dangerous pits along the way. When you get lost in the valley, I your Shepherd, will light the way.

*Lord, shine some light over here on my feet.*

I am your Shepherd, described as "the resurrection" (John 11:25). One day you will die, but I, your Shepherd, died so you might live. And when you die, I will raise you up on the last day.

*Lord, I'm counting on You.*

I am your Shepherd, described as "the bread of life." When you get hungry along life's path, do not complain. Go looking for your Shepherd because I said,

“He who comes to me shall never hunger” (John 6:35). Isn’t it good to know that your soul will never be hungry because I will satisfy you? You may miss a meal or two—some martyrs even starved to death physically—but I, your Shepherd, will give you real soul-satisfaction.

*Lord, I want to be satisfied with You.*

I am your Shepherd, described as “living water” (John 4:10). Do you ever get thirsty? Not thirsty in your throat, but thirsty in your heart? That is soul-thirst. It is when you have taken a drink of cool water, but your heart is still empty...

## DO YOU NEED A DRINK OF MY SHEPHERD’S WATER TO SOOTHE YOUR PARCHED SOUL?

Your soul is still scared...you still do not know what to do. I, your Shepherd, said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst” (John 4:14). Are you feeling a little dry? Do you need some of My water to soothe your parched soul?

*Lord, I gladly drink from Your cup.*

I, your Shepherd, have a name. It was not given to Me the way your parents gave you a name. My Shepherd’s name came from heaven. An angel visited a young virgin to tell her, “You shall call His name Jesus” (Luke 1:31). I am your Shepherd, My name is Jesus.

I am a kind Shepherd. When vicious, self-proclaimed executioners wanted to stone to death a woman captured in the act of adultery, I stayed their hands. I told the woman, “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11). Isn’t that the sort of kindness you need?

I, your Shepherd, can take care of sickness. When a woman sneaked up behind Jesus to touch the hem of My garment, she was immediately healed (see Mark 5:27). Do you need a Shepherd who will look after your wounds?

I, your Shepherd, can get you out of trouble. When a group of mostly experienced fishermen thought they would die at sea in a storm, I came walking to them on the water because they were afraid. Then I calmed the storm and saved them (see Matthew 14:24-27). Wouldn’t it be comforting to have someone that strong come to get you out of trouble?

When the multitude was hungry, I fed them with five loaves of bread and two

small fish (see Matthew 14:19). Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a Shepherd who makes sure you never go hungry?

What kind of Shepherd do you want? You want one who knows your name. "I call My own sheep by name" (John 10:3).

You want a Shepherd who knows the future: "And when I bring out My own sheep, I go before them; and My sheep follow Me, for they know My voice" (John 10:4).

You want a Shepherd who lets you pursue life, liberty and happiness of the soul.

I am your Shepherd, Almighty God, your protection and guide.

But I, your Shepherd, also made the most incredible sacrifice in history. I was sinless, but I gave My life for sinful people like you. I did not like the idea of dying any more than you do. I prayed, "O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39).

Then I allowed soldiers to slap Me, beat Me with a leather whip and crown Me with needle-sharp thorns. They finally nailed My hands and feet to a cross and lifted Me up for all to see, and a mob ridiculed Me. My strength was drained as I hung six hours in the blistering sun.

Even then they could not kill Me. I said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). And bowing My head, I gave up My spirit and My life. I, your Shepherd, voluntarily gave up My life for you. I said, "I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me" (John 10:17,18).

*I need an unselfish Shepherd like You.*

I, your Shepherd, was not conquered by death. They carried My dead body to the grave, but I walked out alive three days later. Now I can give you victory over death and despair. When you face death's valley, I will walk with you through death's door and out the other side because I have already been there. Do you want Me to be with you when you die?

*Lord, I do!*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I live in my little world, looking after my family, my business,*

*my reputation and my friends. Thank You for helping me do these things.*

*Lord, You are all-powerful...all-knowing...and everywhere present. Yet You condescended to be concerned about my little world. You care about my insignificant troubles. I praise You for Your love and kindness.*

*Lord, You are the great God of the universe. Your holy name is pure and Your majesty is awesome. Yet You are kind and gentle to me. Even though I don't understand why, I humbly accept Your love.*

Some say, "The Lord is *a* shepherd," suggesting that they only know Me as one shepherd among many. But you cannot have many shepherds. There can only be one Shepherd and one path to heaven. "I am the way...no one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). There are not many roads to heaven, there are not many ways to the Father, and there are not many shepherds. I, the Lord, am the *only* Shepherd.

Can you say, "You, the Lord, are *my* Shepherd"?

You should not even say, "The Lord is *the* Shepherd," suggesting by the article "the" that I, the Lord, am a unique Shepherd. While there is some truth that I, the Lord, am *the* Shepherd, it misses the idea of *intimacy*. I, the Lord, really want more than to be identified as the great God—I want a personal relationship with you. I want you to say, "Lord, you are *my* Shepherd." Why do I want you to say that? Because that is who I am.

*Lord, I thank You for being my Shepherd long before I recognized it.*

And don't say, "The Lord is *our* Shepherd," even though that is a true statement. In church they pray, "Our Father who art in heaven," using the plural pronoun "Our" to show that you are one among many who come to the Father in prayer. But when you pray Psalm 23, you are not one in a crowd; you are not even one in a church congregation. You are the only one who matters, because you belong to Me, the Shepherd, and I, the Shepherd, belong to you. When you relate personally to Me, the Lord, nothing else matters.

*Lord, You are mine.*

Why must you have a personal shepherd? Why must I, the Shepherd, give

you personal attention? Because serpents slithering through the grass will poison sheep, wolves watching in nearby caves will attack sheep, rushing water will drown sheep and high places will cause sheep to fall to their death. And sheep walk through dark, threatening valleys where shadows stalk them. You need Me as a Shepherd; so remember *I, the Lord, am your Shepherd and Protector*. I am not just any type of shepherd; I am *your* personal Shepherd who cares for you and will protect you.

Some people think I, the Lord, am their Shepherd *if* they do not sin. But that is not what Psalm 23 says. Other people think the Lord is their Shepherd *if* they read the Bible, pray and give money to the church. Again, Psalm 23 does not say that. No matter where the sheep stray they belong to Me, the Lord, and I, the Shepherd, will go seeking My sheep. You have never read of the Shepherd kicking a single sheep out from under His care, nor have you ever read where I, the Shepherd, refused to go look for a stray sheep. Why? Because you the sheep belong to Me.

*Lord, You are my Protector and I belong to You.*

Picture a sheep in a meadow. This helpless animal does not worry about where its food is located for next week, tomorrow or even the next few minutes. Sheep rely on Me, the Shepherd, for good grass and green pasture. Sheep do not worry about predators lurking behind rocks, because it is My job to worry about protection. Sheep do not have to worry about the coiled snakes, deep water or high places.

*Thank You, Lord, for protecting me.*

Do you have problems? The question is not how you are going to solve them. If you have problems, the question is *relationship*. Do you know Me, your Lord? Are you My sheep? Stop grazing with your head buried in the grass. Lift your head and look around. Do you see Me, your Shepherd? If so, don't worry. It is My job to protect you. If you are My sheep, the problems belong to Me because of My promise: "I am the Lord, your Shepherd."

*Thank You, Lord, for Your constant care.*

Some people live in a way that seems to say, "The Lord *used to be* my Shepherd." There are a lot of people who used to go to church, who used to be Sunday school teachers, who used to be faithful. But something happened. When they experienced financial reversals, they turned their back on the Father. Or they became sick and cursed the Father because of the pain. Whatever happened, they *used to follow* the Shepherd. But the problem of the past-tense verb is with

the sheep, not with Me the Shepherd. People stray away from their Shepherd, but I, the Shepherd, do not leave My sheep. Remember, I am the Lord, your *nearby* Shepherd.

Some people say, “The Lord *will be* my Shepherd someday.” Are you living in the future? Do you plan to get right with the Me sometime in the future? Right now you are busy...you are having fun...you are starting a new job...you are pursuing an education. Your life is too hectic for you to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” because you would have to make many changes. But you love Me and you know that someday you will need Me. So you say, “The Lord *will be* my Shepherd.” Do not describe your relationship with Me using a future-tense verb.

*Lord, I need You now.*

You can have a close relationship with Me today. My favorite time is *now*. You can touch Me, your Lord,...right here...right now...immediately!

*Thank You, God, for not being too busy for me.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I have many problems. Some problems are like little stones in my shoe that are irritating and sometimes painful. Other problems are like huge boulders and I try to pretend are not there. I yield my problems to You. Solve them for me.*

*Lord, You know what problems I will face tomorrow and next week. You know the coming storms that I don't even know about. Prepare me for them. I yield my future to You.*

*Lord, help me not to live in the past tense, always remembering what You did for me in the past. Do it again now.*

*Lord, I sometimes live in the future, always planning to do more for You when I get around to it. But now, I will live for You today.*

If I, the Lord, am not your Shepherd, then who is? Who shepherds you? If anyone or anything else is your shepherd, you will probably never find the satisfaction you seek in life. That does not mean you won't have fun at worldly



gatherings. Nor does it mean you won't experience the thrill of an accomplishment at work or pleasure when your child is born. But I, the Lord, am not your Shepherd, you will always want something else...something more... something bigger, better, faster or more expensive.

If I, the Lord, am not your Shepherd, when you get a promotion at work, you will not be happy until you get another one...and another. When in sports you play the perfect game, you will not be happy until you do it again. When you make your first million, you will not be happy until you earn your second...and third...and fourth. No matter what you do in this life, success begets a desire for more success, and you will never be satisfied. But when I, the Lord, am your Shepherd, you will be able to honestly say in your soul, *I shall not want*.

If your *boss* on earth is your shepherd, then you will probably be restless or feverish with life's usual frustrations. As a matter of fact, your boss is placed over you to get the most out of you; his job is to make you do your job. Your boss will never make you feel at rest or make you say, "I shall not want." When your boss feels you no longer want to improve, contribute or be a team player, he will fire you. When you make Me, your Lord and Shepherd, you can honestly confess, "I shall not want."

Is *education* your shepherd? Then you will be constantly disillusioned. The pursuit of truth is a wonderful endeavor; you may become wise and confident. But when you gain truth, as salt on your tongue it makes you even more thirsty. Until you know Me, who is truth, you will not really become happy with what you know or satisfied with who you are. But when I, the Lord, am your Shepherd, you can testify, "I shall not want."

What about enjoyment of life? Is *fun* your shepherd? If you make fun your shepherd, your life will be put on hold. Like an unresponsive telephone, you will never get through. It's important to remember that fun is like the bubble you seek to hold in your hand: The moment you clutch it, it is gone. You can go to the circus to have fun. For weeks you look forward to the circus coming to town, and you anticipate an exciting time. You may laugh and be thrilled with the animals under the big top. When you are there, you have fun. But what happens after you leave and go home? Is there an emptiness in your heart. You must repeatedly go back to the circus for more fun. Surely you have your memories; but do you want to spend your life looking at scrapbooks, remembering the fun times you used to have? It is no fun living in the past.

When you know Me, the Shepherd, I give you enjoyment that is greater than

fun. I give you satisfaction and contentment. I call it peace: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” (John 14:27). You can have an experience that is greater than fun—a trusting relationship with Me, your Shepherd. When you rest securely at My feet, you do not need anything, you do not lack anything and you do not fear anything. Life is peaceful at My feet. You can say, “I shall not want today.” As long as you make Me, your Lord and Shepherd, you will always know peace and contentment.

*Lord, it's so peaceful lying at Your feet, I never want to leave.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I am tired of looking for fun everywhere. I am tired of dead-end streets. I'm tired of running on empty. Be my Shepherd so I shall not want any longer.*

*Lord, I want to be happy. I want to be at peace with myself. I want to feel great. May I sit close to You?*

*Lord, I want to please You and have fellowship with You. Thank You for taking care of me and protecting me.*

*Lord, it is so good to feel good, and I feel good when I'm close to You. Help me stay here, and keep me from straying.*

## Chapter 2

### YOU SHALL NOT WANT

A well-known minister stood before a Sunday School gathering of small children and asked, “How many of you can quote Psalm 23?” Several children raised their hands, among them a beautiful little blonde-headed girl who was not more than four years old. The pastor was surprised that such a young person would know Psalm 23. So he asked her to come to the front of the room to recite it for the class.

Standing before the class with hands clutched behind her back, the young girl smiled, and the minister smiled back. Then, with great confidence, she said only this: “The Lord is my shepherd. That’s all I want.”

The little girl had the words mixed up, but she got the message right.

The most important thing to understand about Psalm 23 is our relationship to the Shepherd. When you get Me, everything else is secondary. Psalm 23 is less about *where* you go—e.g., beside still waters or through the valley of the shadow of death—than it is about with *whom* you go in a deepening relationship of intimacy. Without My presence, what do you have? Nothing. Everything in this psalm is about your relationship to Me, the Shepherd, and My relationship to you.

*Lord, can I stand close to You?*

The little girl was right. If you have the Shepherd, you have a promise of every good thing. Why? Because Psalm 23 is about Me, the Shepherd; I am the Lord Jesus Christ. To get all the blessings of this psalm, you must become preoccupied with Me—Jesus Christ—you must relate to Me.

*Lord, be my Shepherd and I will be Your sheep.*

When I, the Shepherd, come into your life, I can take away all “want.” “Wow!” you might say. “Then why doesn’t everyone get right with the Shepherd? Don’t they want to be rich and famous, have security—get anything.” No, it doesn’t work that way. Getting rid of your wants does not begin with filling your wish list. You do not begin with your wants but instead, you begin with Me, the Shepherd. You must love Me, the Shepherd, seeking My fellowship

and asking for My influence in your life. Before you try to get satisfaction *from* Me, the Shepherd, you must get close *to* Me.

If you look around your life, can you see Me from here?

When I, the Shepherd, give you eternal life, I have given you everything because I have given you My life. Now you are My sheep, so you belong to Me. I am not going to let you starve; I will feed you. The secret is found in *relationship*; to receive the benefits of Psalm 23 you must be related to the Giver in Psalm 23. Remember, you cannot enjoy the *blessings* of Me, the Shepherd, if you have not received My offer of *salvation*.

*Lord, thank You for being my Savior.*

Once you admit, “Lord, You are my Shepherd,” everything else changes. Psalm 23 becomes personal. Jesus reminded us of the personal relationship between shepherd and sheep when He said, “I call My own sheep by name” (John 10:3). Do I know your name?

“The sheep follow Me, for they know My voice” (John 10:4). How close must sheep be to their Shepherd? They must be close enough to hear My voice. Are you close enough to hear My voice?

*Lord, keep me close enough to hear what You say.*

Notice how the first sentence in Psalm 23 is incomplete: “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” Ask yourself the question, *Want what?* David left the sentence incomplete so you could fill in the blank. *I shall not want money... security...fame...things...retirement...vacation.* What is your greatest *want* today? Take a flashlight and search deep within the dark caverns of your heart. What you cherish most is what you complain about most when you lose it. What would cause you to fuss the loudest today? What if you lost your job? Your car? A friend? Your health? What if you were to face death because of terminal cancer? What you stew about the most is what you treasure the most.

Remember when you went to the carnival as a kid and were worried about losing your money? You placed it in your deepest pocket, but you were afraid of losing it on the rides that turned upside down. So you gave it to your father to keep for you. Now take the most precious thing in your life today and give it to Me, your Shepherd, for safekeeping. Let Me worry about those things. Then you can say, “I shall not want.”

*Lord, keep my money safe for me.*

It is hard for you to say, “I shall not want,” because you *really want things*! You want to keep them, and you are afraid to give them to Me the Shepherd because you think I might not give them back. But things break, and eventually you will need a new car because it will wear out. You may need a new house because the present one can fall down. You will need new clothes. What things do you possess that are more important than your relationship with Me the Shepherd?

Perhaps the problem is not that you possess these things but rather that these things possess *you*. Notice how subtly *things* become *possessions*. At first we possess them, but in the end they possess us. If you stacked all of your possessions in a huge pile in your front yard, poured gasoline on them and burned them up, *then* could you say, “I shall not want”?

Before you light the match, wait a minute. Possessions are not wrong; neither do I necessarily want you to live like a hermit. It is all right to have a car. You do have to get to work. And everyone needs a roof over his or her head. You would look funny without clothes, not to mention that you might freeze to death in cold weather. You do need certain things, and I know this. Let Me provide all the things that you need. And when you realize that I provide good things for you to use, you can say, “I shall not want.”

It is all right to have things. But know why you have them, who gave them to you and how to use them properly. Make sure that your stuff is always secondary, and be sure that your possessions never possess your heart. Let Me own your heart and fill your life. When you become preoccupied with Me—Jesus Christ, your Shepherd—then things become secondary, they are only means to an end.

*Lord, I yield my things to You.*

Sometimes legitimate things lose their legitimacy in your life. Perhaps you have been feeding in a pasture of deep green grass, so when I come to move you away, you refuse to follow Me. You think you know best what to eat, how much to eat and where to eat. As I, the Shepherd, continually call, you do not answer. I, the Shepherd, lead you away, but you do not follow. Then a legitimate pasture becomes illegitimate to you.

When you will not follow Me, your Shepherd, you are saying that you know more than I do. You are saying you know what is best for your life. But I know when there are dangerous serpents waiting in the lush pasture. Perhaps I know that the pasture is a floodplain and I see a storm coming. To protect you from the

flood I, the Shepherd, try to lead you away, but you will not listen to Me. The grass that you are eating now may indeed be sufficient for a while, but there is a drought ahead. You may be thinking, *I do not have any wants now*, but what about tomorrow? Tomorrow you may find yourself saying, “I have desperate needs!”

You want to be victorious over satan, but you are not close enough to Me, the Shepherd, to let Me protect you. You want to overcome the dangerous threats to your life, but you do not stay near to Me who will make you an overcomer. There is no victorious Christian life when you stray victorious from your Shepherd.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I easily wander off. I am too busy eating to follow You. And I live in my own small world. Come after me when I stray, and pull me near Your side.*

*Lord, I am liable to believe what others say, and I have a hard time discerning the truth. Keep my eyes focused on You, and keep them open.*

*Lord, I have no sense of spiritual danger. Several times I’ve almost lost everything. Keep me from the attraction of sin. Help me choose the right thing.*

To many the word “I” seems so carnal when you say, “I shall not want.” How can such a spiritual promise begin with such a selfish word? The problem with “I” is that it has so many different meanings.

The vain person makes the word “I” the dominant force of his life. He says with pride, “I shall not want,” because he will not allow anything to come between him and his worldly desires.

The person struggling with self-deprecation has a hard time saying, “I shall not want,” because he thinks this is boasting.

Some people use the word “I” without thinking anything at all. “I” is their identity—the glue that holds everything together. “I” tells them where they are

going.

What are you saying about yourself when *you* say, “I shall not want”?

You have wants. When you walk through a store, you may *want* an expensive new dress. You may *want* a new power tool that will make your work a little bit easier. You may *want* a brand-new car, even though you know you can’t really afford it. Is that what David meant by “want”? Not really. Often when you say “want,” you really mean “desire.” A desire is often something you can’t have or shouldn’t have or don’t need.

A little boy sees a beautiful red-and-black coral snake, and he wants it because it is pretty. The boy doesn’t realize that what he wants could kill him. The alcoholic says, “I want another drink,” but anyone who gives him a drink pushes him closer to a spiraling freefall into hell. A traveling businessman wants to spend the night with a prostitute, but giving in to his desire could destroy his family and ruin his life. Many times the phrase “I want” really means “I lust.”

Many like children, do not always want what you say you want. The toddler screams for a toy that another child has, but drops it the moment she gets it. Then she screams for something else that another child has. What does the child mean when she says, “I want”? She really means, “I am dissatisfied.”

## WHEN I, THE SHEPHERD, AM NEARBY, YOU CAN SAY CONFIDENTLY, “I SHALL NOT WANT.”

Sometimes the thing we want is not a toy, a new car or any tangible thing. What we want most is relief from pain. A baby cries because an open safety pin is scratching his leg. His mother doesn’t know what is wrong, so she gives the baby a bottle; but he continues to cry. So the concerned mother tries a rattle, then a pacifier, but her baby continues to cry. The mother takes her baby into her arms to rock him, but the baby continues to cry. Sometimes what you want most is relief because you are hurting. Perhaps you have lost a parent to death, or you have broken up with your girlfriend or you have lost a lot of money.

What is your loss? When you are in right relationship with Me the Shepherd, I become more important to you than anything and anyone. You may lose things, but the loss won’t affect you as much if you are close to Me the Shepherd. I am the most important thing in life. Your concerns will virtually disappear because I, the Shepherd, work all things for good for those who love Me (see Romans 8:28). Know that I, the Shepherd, love you; I will take care of you and I will

keep you from all danger.

Sometimes your deepest wants come from being scared. The teenage boy frets about losing his car because he can't imagine what life would be like without one. A teenage girl can't face life without her friends. What happens when fears become wants? They evaporate when you come close to Me the Shepherd. When you learn that I will protect you, you begin to ask yourself, *Why should I be afraid?*

Are you afraid of the "wolf" that threatens to tear you apart? Stay close to Me the Shepherd because I have a club that will protect you from the wolves of this life. Are you afraid of falling from high places when walking through the dangerous "mountain passes" of this life? Walk close to Me, the Shepherd. When I am nearby, you can say confidently, "I shall not want."

Some Christians are history majors; they always talk about what the Father did in the past. They sit on their front-porch rockers to tell stories of what God did for them when they were younger. What they are often saying is, "I used to not want." The Bible does more than tell of past histories; it offers you modern-day solutions. My favorite word is "now." You need to claim, "I, the Lord, am *now* your Shepherd. I shall not want anything *now*." Tear the pages of previous months from your date book. You don't live there anymore. Focus on *now* and say, "I shall not want anything today!"

Some Christians live in the future. Today they are down and defeated, but they plan to have victory tomorrow. Today they are driven to buy everything they don't have. They can't say, "I shall not want," because today they have a grocery list of things they *absolutely must* have. But the future is a different story. They believe that once they purchase everything on their list, they can say tomorrow, "I shall not want." But today is another story. They don't want to be close to Me, the Shepherd, today because they are busy with their own agendas.

*Lord, make me want to be close to You all the time.*

What do sheep do when they need something? If they are hungry, they scoot close to Me, the Shepherd, who feeds them. If they are scared, they huddle next to Me, the Shepherd, who protects them. Where do you huddle when you have needs? When you say "I shall not want," you are describing My sufficiency to meet your needs. When I am your Shepherd, I will supply the things you need to remain in fellowship with Me.

Notice what I have *not* promised. I have not said you shall never have any physical problems. You live in a finite body. You will get sick, and all will die. "I



shall not want” does not mean you will never have physical problems. It means that you can be satisfied with the body you have. You can learn like Paul to be happy in whatever state you find yourself (see Philippians 4:11,12). You may get sick, you may hurt and you may pray earnestly for healing, but you don’t have to worry if you are near Me, the Shepherd. I am more concerned than you are about your own hurts.

Some days sheep eat from lush meadows and other days from sparse brown grass. Sometimes you will know financial plenty, while at other times you may face bankruptcy. In your flesh you will likely desire money, cars, bigger houses and finer clothes. But if I, the Lord, am your Shepherd, you must accept what I provide and follow where I lead. I may lead you through a time of famine when there is little to eat. But you must say and *believe*, “I shall not want.” Why? Because I am the Lord, your Shepherd, who takes care of you.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I confess my life is centered on things like houses, money and possessions. Forgive me for letting things possess me.*

*Lord, even when I don’t have things, my biggest problem is a lustful heart that always wants more. Teach me to be satisfied with You.*

*Lord, I have many possessions, and I thank You for providing them. Help me to use them for Your glory.*

*Lord, I realize I could lose all my possessions at any time. Help me live for today and trust You for the future.*

*Lord, I want You to be the most important thing in my life. I surrender everything I have to You. Help me every day to say with sincerity, “I shall not want.”*

## Chapter 3

### I MAKE YOU LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES

**H**AVE you ever wondered why sheep lie down? Usually, you see sheep standing as they graze in the pasture. But in Psalm 23:2, I, the Shepherd, “make you lie down in green pastures.” Sometimes sheep grow tired, and I, the Shepherd, know when it is best for them to lie down. Some people love to serve the Father, but they don’t know how to rest their bodies. There comes a time when I must “make” them lie down in green pastures. Even I, your Lord Jesus, said, “Come aside...and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Do you need spiritual rest? Are you tired?

Most sheep lie down because they are sleepy; they don’t sleep well standing up. God has programmed humans so they need about eight hours of sleep each day. As much as you fight sleep and eschew rest, there comes a time when I, the Lord, make you sleep.

*Lord, I rest in You.*

When young people are in college, they hate the idea of going to sleep because there is so much they want to do. They don’t want to miss anything in life. They feel they are wasting time if they sleep. But sleep is part of God’s plan for all people, including the young. If you are a good steward of your body, you will sleep when you need rest. And then as a good steward of your time, you will use your waking hours for My glory.

*Lord, restore my body with sleep.*

When some people like sheep sense danger, they may lie down in tall grass to hide from a predator. When sheep are standing tall, it’s easy for a predator to take them down; but nestled among the grass, sheep can hide from danger. Don’t display fleshly courage by seeking out danger. Rather, learn when to hide. Sometimes it’s all right not to fight, as we are told to flee temptation (see 2 Timothy 2:22).

Have you ever seen a group of men working hard to dig a ditch? Eventually there come a few moments during the job when they can rest. Some will lean on their shovels; some will sit on the ditch bank; a few will even lie down on the grass. Lying down is one thing that is done when we finish work. As a matter of

fact, those who don't work are accused of "lying down on the job."

*Lord, I look forward to rest when I've finished my work.*

Why do sheep lie down? Because they have finished everything they have to do for the day. Now it's time for rest, sleep, food or just to be near the shepherd. When the shepherd is sitting down, it is only natural for sheep to come and lie next to him. Just like humans crave love, so sheep want the affection of the shepherd as they huddle close to him and lie at his feet. Are you resting near Me, your Shepherd?

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I still have old inclinations about straying. The world attracts me and my flesh stirs up wrong desires. Keep me close to You.*

*Lord, there have been times when I wandered instead of lying near You. Make me lie near You in fellowship.*

*Lord, thank You for seeking me when I went astray.*

*Thank You for forgiving me.*

*Thank You for keeping me near to You.*

When I, the Shepherd, lead My sheep to green pastures, I don't wander around searching for green pastures. I, the Shepherd, know where I am going. The Bible says that the Father always leads us which involves a choice on His part (see 2 Corinthians 2:14). I know where all the pastures are located and which one is right for you. Therefore, I take you to the best pasture—at the right time—with the right food—for today.

I, the Shepherd, don't take you to a pasture that is best for other sheep. That's because I know you by name and love you. I take you to choice pastures that have everything you could ever want.

*Thank You, Lord, for providing for my needs.*

I, the Shepherd, don't take you to good pastures of the past—places where

you used to feed and enjoy. Past pastures may not be the best for today. I, the Shepherd, daily choose today's best.

Likewise, I, the Shepherd, don't lead you to next season's pastures. If I took you to tomorrow's pastures and the grass was not yet green, what good would that do?

During summer in the holy land, the lower pastures are burned up by the scorching Palestinian heat. The shepherd leads his sheep to the summer pastures on the heights and in the mountains where cool breezes blow. But in the wintertime, when cold winds and snow kill the grass in the high plains, the shepherd leads his sheep to the grass down in the protected valleys. Timing is important for the shepherd; I must choose when a pasture is best for My flock... for you.

One commentary on the Hebrew text suggests that the phrase "green pastures" refers to places of "tender grass"—that is, new grass. Tender grass has more nutrients for sheep than old grass. But also, tender grass is easier to chew and is easier on the sheep's digestive system. Sheep will choose tender grass long before they will eat old, tough grass. When I choose food for you, I give you tender grass because I know you will enjoy it. I want you to have a bounty of food that will make you strong and healthy. I am a health-wise Shepherd.

While I, the Shepherd, make the sheep lie to down in green grass, I am not seen picking the grass for the sheep. The sheep must bend down, bite and chew. In the same way, I, the Lord, don't give you eternal truth without your involvement. You must *hear* the spoken Word of God and give attention to understanding it. Then, you must *read* the written Word to better understand what the Father is saying to you. You must study each book, each chapter and each verse of the Bible. And study is sometimes hard work.

Since I inspired every word in the Bible, every word is important and has some meaning for you. So know My Word, word for word. Memorize its truth and hide it away in your heart to help you grow to maturity. Finally, meditate on My Word so it can direct your life. Just as I, the Shepherd, take the sheep into the pasture but make them responsible for eating, so the Father gives you the Bible. You are responsible for understanding and applying it to your life.

*Lord, I will master Your Word to me.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, the food You give me in green pastures is wonderful. Thank You for feeding me.*

*Lord, I've never gone hungry when I've rested in Your presence. Thank You for Your faithfulness.*

*Lord, when I'm in Your presence, there's enough food. There's good food and nutritious food.*

*Thank You for providing all I've ever needed.*

I, the Shepherd, do not lead My sheep over hill and stream just to show them the pasture. No, I lead them down into the pastures so they can feed and grow in health and strength. So I, the Lord, do not want you to just enjoy Christianity from afar. Rather, you should walk into a church, learn the Word and serve the Father there. Christianity is not a museum to be admired; rather, it is a restaurant where you feed your soul.

The Shepherd chooses the pasture for you; you choose if you will eat.

*Lord, I will eat in Your pastures.*

The words “lie down” have the meaning of repeated action. You are to lie down many times, but that does not mean you are to stay down. There is a time to sleep, but you do not stay in bed all day. There is a time to rest in the pasture, but sheep do not spend their lives resting. I, the Lord, will make you lie down and rest today, but I will do it again tomorrow. I will make you lie down and eat tender grass today, but I will repeat the process tomorrow.

Just as you pray in the Lord's Prayer, “Give me this day our daily bread,” so each day I, the Shepherd, provide enough food for that day. And I will do it again tomorrow. I did it for Elijah in the desert (see 1 Kings 17), I did it for the children of Israel in the wilderness (see Exodus 16), I even do it for the birds of the air (see Matthew 6:26). And I will certainly do it for you.

Some people think it would be wonderful if they could go to church one time and learn enough about the Father so they would never have to attend again. They want a car that never needs gasoline—a perpetual motion machine. But that's not the way I do things. I make you lie down repeatedly. Why? Because I want you to enjoy relationship with Me each day. Repeatedly!

I want fellowship with you daily. I want you to pray to the Father daily. I want you to study the Word daily. The Father keeps many people on a short financial leash. Why? Because if they didn't have to trust Him daily for money, they might stray far from Him.

I make you lie down:

1. Repeatedly
2. Continuously
3. Daily

Why do I, the Shepherd, have to make My sheep lie down? When sheep get tired, will they not naturally lie down? Why doesn't the shepherd just wait until the sheep get tired or sleepy? If I, the Shepherd, am close enough to make you lie down, then you are close enough to Me for intimate fellowship. I am near right now. What are you going to do?

*Lord, make me lie down in fellowship with You.*

Although I, the Lord, make My sheep lie down, I do not force them to do it. There is no picture in the psalm of the shepherd pushing his sheep to the ground. He is not tipping them over, nor is he pulling their feet out from under them. Just being in a lush green valley where there is food gives the flock a desire to lie down. If I, the Shepherd, have led you through a dangerous valley or through a dry, arid desert, then you will want to lie down when you get to green pastures. I, the Shepherd, make you lie down not by force but rather by providing food. Similarly, a mother does not hold her hand over her baby's eyelids to force sleep on him, but instead, she feeds him so he will fall asleep naturally.

*Lord, I will lie at Your feet.*

Something else to consider: When a sheep is lying down, it can't wander off. So I the Shepherd will make you lie down to keep you from straying from Me.

*Lord, may I never stray.*

When a sheep is lying down, it's not looking around. When a sheep rests, it's not terribly curious, nor will it wander off. When sheep are standing, there is more likelihood of them straying. While standing, a sheep might look around, and it usually goes where it looks. Isn't that like you? You look at tempting things long before you go after them.

*Lord, keep me looking at You.*

But there's another problem with standing sheep: Some have their heads in the grass. They follow their appetites, and they eat what's in front of them. Eventually, they eat themselves away from the shepherd. But sheep that are lying down don't do that.

*Lord, I'll feed in the pasture You provide.*

After My people departed from their bondage in Egypt and entered the wilderness, they became disobedient and refused to do what the Father instructed. He then sent a plague to chastise them (see Exodus 32:35). Only then did they obey willingly. The Father doesn't make you go where you don't want to go, but He has His own way of making you willing to follow His directions.

*Lord, help me to obey You before I get hurt.*

I, the Shepherd, say, "Come to Me," but a young man strays. I, the Shepherd, tells the young man of My love for him, but the young man loves the things of the world. I, the Shepherd, want the young man to live for Me, but he instead turns to alcohol for pleasure. How do I deal with such a person when he does not respond to My declaration of love? I usually amplify the consequences of sin so that the individual is unwilling to stay in his or her sin. So, finally alcohol destroys the man's life, alienating his friends and corrupting his self-respect. Only then is he willing to follow Me, His Lord.

## I, THE SHEPHERD, SAY, "COME TO ME."

Are you straying from Me, your Shepherd? Do you have a problem with addictions? Are you struggling with a particular sin? I, your Shepherd, am waiting for you to return to Me. Don't stay in your sin until you get sick of it. Come to Me, the Shepherd, now!

When you pray for the Father to help you give up a sinful habit, remember that a new life starts with repentance. You must change your mind about the habit and then change your actions. Once you do that, I will help you overcome the habit. I will not just take a habit away from you, but rather, I will make you willing to give up the habit.

So how do I, the Shepherd, make My sheep lie down in green pastures? If it's been a long, hot day, I find cool, soft grass for My sheep to lie down. If My flock has not had a good meal, I find green grass for them to eat. If they have been lost, I bring them home to My pasture. Then I don't have to force them to lie down; all I do is lead them into green pastures where they will want to lie

down.

When My sheep are quietly lying down, then I fellowship with them. I may play a harp, as David did for his sheep, or even sing to them.

*I will rejoice over you with gladness, I will quiet you with My love, I will rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17, ELT).*

But when My sheep are standing, moving or wandering, they are not listening to Me. Are you lying close to Me, your Shepherd? Are you listening to Me?

*Lord, I will stay close and listen to You.*

Sheep can't lie on their backs like humans. But you can lie in green grass and gaze up at fleecy clouds drifting in the sky. You can sleep in the warm sun and feel the lazy breeze on your face. When you are lying in the meadow and you smell the earth and feel the grass, then you know that life is good. You feel human in the warm sun.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, You have repeatedly brought me back to Your pastures and fed me there. Thank You for Your faithfulness.*

*Lord, right now I am feeding in Your pasture, and fellowshiping with You is wonderful. Thank you for meeting all my needs.*

*Lord, I am enjoying Your presence. Keep me feeding in Your pastures forever.*

*I will never leave Your side.*



## Chapter 4

### I LEAD YOU BESIDE STILL WATERS

**W**HEN I, the Shepherd, lead you, that means I goes first. Why? If there is danger lurking nearby, I will face it first. Sometimes there are snakes hidden near the water's edge. If you follow Me to the cool pond of water, I will deal with the serpents first. You will not know where the serpents are lurking, but I know, because I know all things. I can deal with them.

*Thank You, Lord, for anticipating danger for me.*

There is another reason why I, the Shepherd, lead the way: You don't always know what is good for you, nor do you know the way. I, the Lord, know the way to the good water, so follow Me. There is an old song about My knowing the way through the wilderness. The chorus reminds us that all you have to do is follow Me.

Sheep have no sense of direction. They can't find their own way, and they need a guide to lead them to water. You are like that. You have no sense of spiritual direction on your own. Yes, you may realize when you are lost, and you may know when the Father is far off, but you will never find Him on your own. But you have a *conscience* to tell you when you are in danger, and the Father gives you *correction* to scare you and unsettle you when danger is nearby. But you are lost, and miserable and you ask, *What now?* That's when I, the Shepherd, come to you and lead you to green pastures and cool, still waters. Will you follow? Or will you stand there in the wilderness, confused and scared?

*Lord, thank You for coming to me when I didn't know what to do.*

Some sheep are just too rebellious to find water. They don't fight the Father or try to bite Him. They are just selfish...hardheaded...stubborn. They are determined to do what they want to do, when they want to do it, the way they want to do it. You are probably like that sometimes. You have an idea of where there is better water. I, the Shepherd, can tell you where to find water, but you won't go there by yourself. So I will lead you there. Follow Me, your Shepherd, and I will take you by the hand to walk with you to a cool, still pond of water.

*Lord, gently lead me by Your forceful hand.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, when I'm lost in the wilderness, when the valley is dark and when trouble overwhelms me, let me feel Your presence.*

*Lord, when I don't know which way to turn, when I'm confused and I can't find my way, guide me to green pastures and cool water.*

*Lord, there are dangers in my future; some I know about, others I have yet to encounter. Lead me safely to pastures and water, and protect me from the evil one.*

Suppose I, the Shepherd, *didn't* lead you to water. Only a cruel shepherd would say, "Let them choke in their thirst." No, I, the Shepherd, lead My sheep to water because the very nature of the shepherd is to care for his sheep. I love you, and if you follow Me, I will lead you to satisfying water.

I, the Shepherd, do not stand near the water and call for you to come and drink. Most sheep would never find water if their shepherd did that. If a shepherd remained in the wilderness, using his staff to point in the general direction of the water, the sheep would not find it. I, the Shepherd, must guide My sheep toward the water, making sure the sheep are with Me and are following Me. Sheep will follow Me when I guide them.

*Lord, make sure I follow You.*

Where am I leading you? A shepherd does not lead his sheep into the deep water. They cannot swim. They might drown if they venture in over their heads. A shepherd does not lead them into a rushing stream, because they would be swept away by the swift current. He leads them beside still waters. It is in a pool of still water that sheep can drink until their hearts are satisfied.

*Lord, there is a pool of still water somewhere. Lead me to it.*

Once the sheep arrive at the pool, the shepherd doesn't scoop water into his hands for each sheep to drink. Nor does he use a cup from which they can drink. They may need water but do not yet realize it; they may not be ready to drink. You can lead the proverbial horse to water but you can't make him drink; neither can you make sheep drink. All you can do is lead them to a place where they can satisfy their thirst.

And how does the shepherd lead his sheep? Slowly. When a shepherd leads his flock, some sheep are too young to keep up, so the shepherd walks slowly. Other sheep have been injured and are too lame to move fast. The shepherd walks before them, but he does not outdistance them. Why does the shepherd lead his sheep slowly? So they can see him and be near him. The shepherd wants his sheep close by for fellowship because he loves them. He doesn't want to lose a single one. But he also wants them close for protection. When a small lamb falls too far behind the flock, a wolf can easily snatch it. A crippled lamb cannot run away from danger, so the shepherd keeps it close by for protection.

*Lord, keep me close to You so I don't get hurt anymore.*

Sheep that stay close to the shepherd reach the water first. Those closest to the shepherd also get to the best pastures first. They get the tenderest grass and the coolest water. But most of all, they get to enjoy it with the shepherd by their side.

I have led them there. So if you stay close to Me, I will make sure you are fed daily, that you have enough to eat and that you have the best. Have you been hungry lately? Perhaps you are hungry because you are too far away from Me, the Shepherd.

*Lord, I like eating and drinking by Your side.*

How will you plan this day? Will you stagger into unknown problems and then deal with them as they rear up in front of you? Or will you walk close to Me, the Shepherd, so I can deal with your problems first?

*Lord, lead me today.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I'm hungry and thirsty. I need some heavenly food and everlasting water. Lead me to green pastures and cool water.*

*Lord, walk slowly so I can keep up. I'm only a spiritual child, and sometimes I have difficulty following You. Lord, I want to walk as close to You as possible.*

*I need strength that comes from fellowship. I need all the*

*encouragement I can get.*

Isn't it wonderful that I lead you beside still waters but not *into* the waters? I led Moses into the Red Sea because Pharaoh's army was chasing his people. Perhaps you don't know about the danger you will encounter today. All you have to do is walk with Me. I want to lead you beside still waters so I can refresh your soul.

It is also comforting to know that I don't lead you to walk on the water. Through the mist the disciples had seen a man walking across the water. They cried out, thinking it was a ghost, then they realized it was Me, Jesus, walking on the water.

## I, THE SHEPHERD, LEAD YOU TO WHERE YOU CAN REST AND RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES.

Peter cried out in panic, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You." Of course I said, "Come." Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the water toward Me. But when he took his eyes off Me to look at the storm, he sank (see Matthew 14:28-31).

Walking on water is supernatural. I am not asking you to walk on water. I am asking you to follow Me. I will lead you beside still water. You don't have to walk on the water; just drink it.

What do you need to learn from Me, your Shepherd? You may need to learn to trust Me. If I, your Shepherd, lead you into a storm or into the barren desert, I will also lead you out. Eventually, I will lead you to still waters.

*Lord, I've had plenty of storms. I need still waters.*

Notice that I, the Shepherd, do not lead you beside the ocean. You go to the seaside to run in the sand, get a suntan or play in the water. Fun is not what you need from Me today. You don't need the Good Shepherd to find you a playground. What you need is for Me, the Shepherd, to lead you beside still waters so you can rest and recharge your batteries.

*Lord, I need renewal.*

Notice that the Psalm doesn't say I, the Shepherd, lead you to a waterfall. When you sit next to a waterfall, you enjoy the rushing water, the power, the mighty noise and the movement. A waterfall reminds us that the Father is the

powerful Creator, and there are times when you *need* to remember that He is Almighty God. As the water rushes over the waterfall in its hurried pace to get somewhere else, it reminds you of your tumultuous life, flowing toward an unknown tomorrow. There are times when you need to remember that life is rushing by and that you need to make the best use of your time. But not today. This day you need to rest beside still waters where your soul may be restored.

*Lord, if I can rest today, I'll work hard tomorrow.*

Also, I, the Shepherd, don't lead you beside a lake. True, a lake may be still. But when you think of a lake, other thoughts come to mind. You think of a beautiful sunset over the face of the deep water, wildlife in its marshes and even the soft lapping of water upon a sandy beach. When you sit beside a lake, you meditate on God who is the Creator of it all. But today you need comfort and refreshment. You need Me to lead you beside still water so you can drink. You need your soul restored.

*Lord, I need rest.*

I, the Lord, will lead you to walk *beside* the water, but eventually you will be led to walk *away* from still water. Today has many obligations. You are only walking by these still waters as you journey through this day. When you sit in a hectic conference, look inside for still waters. That pause will give you strength to go on. When the children are fighting or you get caught in traffic gridlock, remember your time beside the still waters. Life has to go on. You need to show up. So let Me lead you beside still waters.

*Lord, lead me to still waters. Then lead me back to work today.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, thank You for storms that make me trust in You. But today I need rest to restore my soul. Feed me and give me water to drink.*

*Lord, thank You for powerful waterfalls that teach me Your omnipotence and for lakes and streams where I can meditate. But today I need to briefly restore my soul before I meet the challenges of this day.*

*Lord, I'll only be here a few moments, so give me more rest than I*

*can get anyplace else. And help me make it through the day.*

When I, the Shepherd, lead you by a dancing stream, you watch the water bounce over the stones. It spills from one little puddle to another. What you hear is not just the quiet splashing of water upon itself. You hear nature rejoicing—the laughter of our Creator rejoicing in the goodness of water. And when you hear water laughing, you realize it will eventually quiet itself in a still pond, because water always comes to rest—still and quiet in a pond where sheep can drink without anxiety. As you drink there, appreciate the spiritual nature of spiritual water.

*Lord, just one taste makes me realize I was more thirsty than I thought.*

You know in your heart that still water will refresh and restore your soul and make you new again. You are hot and tired from life's journey. But one drink makes the long walk worthwhile. And the next time you are hot and thirsty you won't mind so much the long distance and the dangerous trail, because you know you are heading home to lie in peaceful green pastures near Me, the Shepherd, and to drink from still ponds. Your soul is restored because you are home.

*Lord, this is good water.*

## Chapter 5

### I RESTORE YOUR SOUL

**D**AVID knew the spot well. It was a quiet pool of water that was constantly filled by the small stream flowing in Wadi Kelt. The young teen liked the pool best, even though it was a long walk from his home in Bethlehem. Because of the Artesian springs, the pool always had pure water that bubbled out of the heart of the earth. The pool kept the surrounding trees alive in the hottest summers with its life-giving water. When the other pools dried up and the hot breezes killed the surrounding vegetation, David knew he would find food and water for his sheep in the Wadi Kelt.

David slowly led his sheep over the scorched fields. He didn't walk so fast that he would outdistance the young, nor did he wish to push his older sheep too hard in the blistering sun. David heard his sheep bellowing for a drink, but he didn't stop. The wise, young shepherd knew they would soon find relief.

Then David's young eyes spotted the green trees gently being pushed by the hot afternoon wind. When the older sheep picked up the scent of water, their pace quickened. When they arrived, some sheep went straight for the waters. Others began gnawing at the tender grass. Before long, all the sheep were surrounding David, lying in the grass, doing what the young shepherd wanted. David wanted them to eat, drink and rest. There would be no more hot travel today. Now it was time for relaxation and sleep.

The smell of the cool, black earth filled David's nostrils. He felt the soft grass as he laid among his sheep. The aroma of tender grass was perfume to the young shepherd. Just as David led his sheep to a special place for rest and restoration of spirit, so your Shepherd leads you to special places to rest your body and revive your heart.

Have you ever been lost? Have you ever been so disoriented that you didn't know where you were going? No one ever intends to get lost. You've never said, "I plan to get lost going to the store." No! You unintentionally get lost. It just happens. Your landmarks are moved or your directions are faulty. Sheep are like that, they never intend to stray. They follow the next bite of grass...and the next...and eventually they're lost.

I, the Shepherd, always takes the initiative to go after My sheep. I will search, call for them and look in every conceivable place until I find My lost ones. When the lost sheep are found, what happens? Do I, the Shepherd, punish the sheep for getting lost? Do I, the Shepherd, make the sheep sleep outside the fold? No! What do I, the Shepherd, do? I restore them.

How do I, the Shepherd, restore them? Lovingly! They don't come sneaking into the fold with their tails between their legs. They are the center of rejoicing. I, the Shepherd, am happy, and the other sheep know I would do the same for them, so they are happy too.

*Lord, thank You for forgiving me when I stray.*

After I, the Shepherd, find you, you can joyfully testify, "I restore your soul." You are returned to the fold with the other sheep. You are given green pastures from which to eat and still waters that furnish cool drink. You can lie down happy right next to Me, the Shepherd, because I restore your soul.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, several times in my life I've wandered from You, and I didn't even know what I was doing. Thank You for coming after me to restore my soul.*

*Lord, I never intended to stray from You, but I did. Thank You for bringing me back to the fold.*

*Lord, I'm sorry for my wandering feet. Forgive my sin and keep me close to You.*

Are you running on empty? Is there still a sense of purpose to your life? Do you have a compelling reason to get out of bed each morning? Some people just travel from home to work and back again. They occasionally go to the movies. They take a vacation once a year. They sometimes visit relatives. But they have no purpose in life!

A Miss America candidate was asked about her purpose in life. She answered, "Just to have fun." Some people think the purpose of life is to entertain themselves. Beyond having fun, they enjoy little in the way of deep



satisfaction, and they can point to few accomplishments. They're not serving Me. They're not trying to make the world a better place. They're not trying to improve themselves. They just live from event to event.

Have you ever needed restoration in your physical body? Remember the last time you were sick—a hacking cough, fever or even diarrhea? You felt terrible. You didn't want to go to work, eat or play golf. You felt so bad, you couldn't sleep. But eventually you *did* sleep; and when you woke up, you felt better. The fever had broken, and your body was restored. In the same way, I, the Shepherd, can restore your wandering soul. I can give you spiritual health.

*Lord, I want to be strong.*

Has your commitment to the Father slipped? Maybe there's a site on the Internet that you visit, though you know you shouldn't. When you type in the web address, you can smell the aroma of rotting flesh—yours. Then you hit the “enter” key and open the forbidden door.

Sometimes you slip away from the Father and enter the world of evil. You need to be restored. What can you do? There is a biblical way to restoration when you slip.

First, acknowledge to yourself and the Father that you visited the wrong website or did something you knew was wrong. Take responsibility for wandering. Second, ask Me, the Shepherd, to forgive you and to restore your soul.

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).*

Next, you must repent of your rebellion and commit yourself never to go there again. Finally, to walk in victory you must continuously surrender the problem to the Father, and you need to find at least one other person who will hold you accountable.

## I, THE SHEPHERD, PICK UP YOUR SPIRIT AND MAKE YOU LOOK FORWARD TO A NEW DAY

Maybe you haven't slipped outwardly. Maybe you're just spiritually tired. Remember the time you ached because you worked too long in the yard? You could barely get out of bed the next morning. You went to work tired, and you

didn't want to face the day's activities. What you needed then was physical restoration.

Sometimes you're so worn out that you just don't want to pray, read the Bible or go to church. You don't have any ambition to do anything for the Father. The problem is probably not sin; it's just that you are physically exhausted.

*Lord, give me physical rest for spiritual restoration.*

When you're physically down, what gets you up? For some, it's coffee. For others, it's a long nap. For others still, it's exercise or a protein shake. Some of us bounce back when we hear good news. And still others are restored by a telephone call from a sweetheart or an e-mail bringing good news.

Sometimes when you're spiritually down, look in the Word of God for good news. When the Bible says, "He restores my soul," it means that I, the Shepherd, pick up your spirit and make you look forward to a new day.

*Lord, I expect this day will be better than the last.*

Sometimes when sheep wander from their shepherd, they come to a place where the grass is dry, dead or nonexistent. Without food, they grow weak. Sometimes a hot wind saps their strength; other times the blistering sun steals their stamina. So what do I, the Shepherd, do? I lead My sheep under the shade of the palm trees near cool water. I make them lie down in green pastures to restore the souls of My sheep.

How do I, the Shepherd, restore your soul? Do I use good news, a hot meal, coffee or an unexpected phone call? Mostly I use spiritual resources such as the Word of God, prayer, Christian fellowship and worship. As you rest, I, the Lord your Shepherd, will restore your soul.

Do you remember when you loved the Father so much that you did not consider it a sacrifice to get up early to pray or go to church? You just *had* to be there. Remember when you used to memorize verses, share the gospel with lost people and sing hymns and worship songs with intense passion?

But then something happened. Perhaps you didn't sin outright or run after the things of this world. Your spiritual temperature may have cooled when your job needed more attention, the kids needed more time or you gave more attention to your hobby than to serving Me. Maybe when you came back from vacation you didn't get as involved in church, and you decided not to teach Sunday school that year. Now that your faith is famished, you need Me, your Shepherd, to restore

your soul.

*Lord, bring me back.*

What does the word “restore” mean? *To make new*. One of the recent Bible translations reads, “He renews my strength” (Psalm 23:3, NLT). When you restore the paint on your car, it looks like new; and when you run your hand over the surface, it feels as good as new. When I restore your soul, you’re like new—you have a new start or a new beginning.

When I, the Lord, restore your soul, I renew your strength and make you feel like you did when you were first saved. Remember that feeling? You laughed... you cried...you rejoiced. And with new spiritual energy you genuinely believed, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). Life was sweet when you were first saved, when heaven was real to you. That’s the way you’ll feel when I, the Lord, restore your soul.

What do you do when you are physically tired? You look forward to the weekend when you can recharge your “battery.” You need physical and emotional strength to return to the daily grind. You need the weekend to revive your frayed emotions. With other people, it’s their spirit: They don’t like their work, and they just don’t want to go back.

But the problem may run even deeper than that: You *hate* to go to work. You drag yourself out of bed, you take every sick day possible, and even on the job you give it your second best. You know you could do better, but you just don’t. You need renewal.

Savvy managers understand that people need incentives to stay sharp at work: a raise, a promotion, a transfer, stock options or a new challenge. Just as a wise boss knows how to restore the soul of her workers, so the wise Shepherd knows how to restore the soul of His sheep.

*Lord, restore me even when I don’t seek it.*

When I restore your soul, what does the word “soul” mean to you? It’s more than restoring your mind, for your soul is more than your thought patterns. Your soul includes the mind but is much deeper. Your mind expresses itself through thoughts, and your mind communicates with others through words. But your soul is the part of you that creates words, thoughts and ideas.

Your soul is also more than just your emotions. When you say, “I love you with all my heart,” you are expressing the warm feelings of your soul. Your deep love commitments come from your emotions, but your soul is more than those

fiery emotions of love and jealousy and those black feelings of hate. Your emotions serve to ventilate your soul, but your soul is more than your emotions.

Going deep within, you will find that your will, the power to make decisions, is also an instrument of your soul. Your dreams, your values, the attitudes that influence your everyday life—these are all expressions of the soul. The soul is who you are when no one else is around. When you really get dissatisfied with yourself, remember, “He restores my soul.”

*I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands (Psalm 119:176, NIV).*

Your soul is the power within you that relates to the Father. It is the window through which you see God and allow Him to see you.

Your soul is the monitor that tells you whether you are spiritually hot or cold. It is the thermostat that cools your anger or heats up your love.

Your soul is the song of your heart and the fragrance of your attitude. It reflects the shadows of your character.

Your soul is you, and God can restore your soul.

*Lord, restore my soul.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I'm not sure what is in my soul.*

*I want to love You more but I don't. I want to serve You more, but I hold back. Forgive me and turn me to You.*

*Lord, look into my soul and show me what You see. I feel out of touch with You and need You to restore my soul.*

*Lord, my soul is empty. I don't love You as much as I once did, nor do I serve You as I once did. Restore my soul to love and service.*

## Chapter 6

### I LEAD YOU IN THE RIGHT PATHS

**W**HY do I lead you to green pastures and still waters? Because I love you and care that your needs are satisfied.

*Lord, thank You for loving me and caring for me.*

Why do I protect you from the dangers of temptation and evil? Because I am a holy God who will punish sin.

*Lord, thank You for forgiving me and keeping me from judgment.*

Why do I lead you in right paths? Because I am righteous and want you to be like Me. I want you to think right, live right and decide right. I want you to walk rightly in the right paths.

What I, the Shepherd, want for you, I want for all My sheep.

Lord, You are my Shepherd;

I shall not want.

You make me lie down in green pastures

For rest and restoration.

You lead me in right paths

(Psalm 23:1-3, author's paraphrase).

We often wander through life wondering, *Where am I going? How do I get there? What do I do when I arrive? Why am I even going?* All these questions are answered by I, the Shepherd. I know what is best for you.

But like many sheep, you sometimes think you have a better idea how to run your life, so you don't always follow My leading. But before you take your eyes off Me, your Shepherd, and begin walking away from My right paths, consider this: You don't know what will happen tomorrow...or next week...or next year. You can't predict the future. But I, the Shepherd, can.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 1:8). I know exactly what will happen tomorrow, so I am qualified to be the

perfect guide for your life. Let Me lead you. When you can't trust Me with your future, it's called *unbelief*. Do you have a doubting heart?

Some don't trust Me with their future because they know they can't play around with sin if I am in control. If you won't trust Me, it's called *rebellion*. Do you have a rebellious heart?

It's unbelief when you *can't* trust Me, your Lord.

It's rebellion when you *won't* trust Me, your Lord.

I, the Shepherd, lead you to right paths because you don't know where you are going. Think for a moment about all the things you must do today. You have errands to run, family responsibilities and obligations at work. After that, you may have things to do for the church, your kids' sports teams or your friends. Then there are the things you do for yourself—education, entertainment, hobbies or self-improvement. You will do what you have to do, but are you doing what you should do for the Father? Will you trust Me, your Shepherd, and follow Me along the right paths?

*Lord, be my Shepherd and lead me to do the right things.*

You are doing a lot of things, but are you doing them “rightly”? In this busy life, you have so much to do that you give a lot of things a lick and a promise. Are you halfheartedly giving halftime to your projects? When it comes to the church, do you give much effort? Oftentimes in your busyness you don't pray effectively, you don't study the Bible deeply, and you don't serve with excellence. You need Me, the Shepherd, to guide you in order to walk rightly on the right paths.

*Lord, I need to do things better.*

Like sheep, you go through life looking for something to eat. If you don't lift your head to look around, you will end up eating sour food or poison grass. Lift your head, spot Me, your Shepherd, and let Me lead you on right paths to better food and pure water. I know what's best for you.

*Lord, I didn't realize I was lost until I found myself in trouble. Lead me back to the right paths.*

Just because you let Me, your Shepherd, lead you years ago doesn't mean you can find your way today. Sheep are constantly drawn toward dangerous cliffs and treacherous paths. Are you just like them, going through life playing too close to the edge? Do you get hurt because you don't let Me lead you?

*Lord, I've been hurt. Don't let it happen again.*

I am the Shepherd, a guide leading the sheep where they ought to go. And what are the qualifications for a guide? I've been there before and know how to get My sheep to green pastures. I know the safest paths. Best of all, I know what is waiting for the sheep when they get to their destination. So I, the Shepherd, gather My sheep together to lead them, guide them and go before them to greener pastures.

*Lord, I want to follow You because I want something better in my life.*

Where do I, the Shepherd, lead you? I lead you in paths of righteousness. While the word "righteousness" scares many, it simply means that I lead you in the right paths. Technically, these paths conform to the right things the Father wants done. And if they are done right for Him, then they will be right for you.

Notice I, the Shepherd, don't necessarily lead you in easy paths, beautiful paths or even prosperous paths. While right paths may be desirable at times, and often there are observation points from which to see the beautiful sights in this world, sometimes right paths are hard to walk. Sometimes you must walk through difficulties and tragedies. Sometimes I have to lead you up steep slopes through rocks. The right path for you can be a difficult path.

Doing the right thing has to do with character. But how is character defined? (So few people today have it.) Character is habitually doing the right thing in the right way. I, the Shepherd, will always lead you to do the right thing in the right way. I will never lead you to the wrong destination, nor will I teach you to do everything the wrong way. I will lead you rightly so you will develop the habit of doing things the Father's way.

Remember, I, the Shepherd, do not lead you in right paths just to please you, although I, the Shepherd, do it for My name's sake. I have you on the right path for *your* good. I have a plan to work all things together for good. The paths I choose for you are for your good as well as for My good purpose (Jeremiah 20:11).

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I see You up ahead, I know where You are going. But sometimes I fall behind, and it's difficult to follow. Help me obey.*

*Lord, I get mixed up at times. I think I'm doing the right things, but I get lost on the wrong paths. Help me see You clearly and follow You closely.*

*Lord, I know it's good for me to follow You, but help me obey for more than selfish reasons. Help me to please You by walking in right paths.*

Psalm 23 describes the Shepherd *leading* His sheep, not *driving* them. Why? When a shepherd uses his staff to drive his sheep toward a certain destination, they scatter in all directions.

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way (Isaiah 53:6, NIV).*

Sheep are not smart enough to understand that the shepherd is herding them to good pastures or cool water. Sheep have minds of their own.

*Lord, I'm stubborn and rebellious. Forgive me when I refuse to follow right paths.*

Shepherds in David's day didn't round up sheep the way a cowboy rounds up cattle into a corral or pen. Sheep weren't fenced in for feeding and watering. The shepherd led his sheep from one pasture to another so they could feed themselves.

Look again at the text: The shepherd doesn't transport his sheep from one place to another in a wagon or truck. No! The sheep walk from one place to another. The shepherd walks before them, leading them to the next place of food, knowing the only way to get the sheep to a green pasture is to lead them there. Remember, the key to your spiritual life is a correct relationship with Me, the Shepherd. You must follow where I lead. When you are in right relationship to Me, your Lord, I will lead you to the place of food and rest.

Psalm 23 doesn't show Me, the Shepherd, telling his sheep where to go. No, that would also be useless. The shepherd can point with his staff, but the sheep won't understand his motions. The shepherd can speak, yell or even gesture, but sheep don't understand gestures. Sheep understand one thing: example. They follow where the shepherd goes. Where am I, your Shepherd, leading you today?

Maybe you don't know where I am going, but are you willing to follow Me



anywhere? I, your Shepherd, may be leading you toward a dark valley filled with frightening death shadows. If I am leading you toward a storm, it's for a purpose. Green pastures lie just on the other side of the threatening valley. Are you willing to follow?

Today, I, the Shepherd, may be leading you in easy paths with bright sunny days. But out in the future there is a black valley for you. Just remember: On the other side, I your Shepherd, am preparing a table spread with food. Are you willing to follow Me?

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I know You are up front leading me, but I am hardheaded and selfish. Make me follow You even when I don't want to.*

*Lord, You're leading me through some dark valleys and I'm afraid. Remind me of the destination and keep me close to You.*

*Lord, I have a hard time accepting the sickness and death of those I love; it hurts to lose them. Help me see the right paths You've chosen for them and for me.*

Have you realized that I, your Shepherd, won't always tell you how to walk and when to follow Me? That's something you already know. I just expect you to do it. Many times I, your Shepherd, won't tell you where I am going; I just expect you to follow Me. Are you willing to obey Me even when you don't know where you are going?

*Lead on, Lord. I will follow.*

I, your Shepherd, will not sneak off in the night, leaving you alone. I will not play hide-and-seek with you. I am the Lord your Shepherd, and I am ever present to lead you in right paths. If your shepherd gets lost from time to time, then your shepherd is not Me, the Lord. And if your shepherd does not lead you in paths of righteousness, again, your shepherd is not Me, the Lord.

When you think about paths of righteousness, where do you think they lead? Some people think the Lord will only lead you to Sunday school or to worship services. Others think the Lord also leads us to revival meetings or a Christian

camp. Usually people associate some form of religious service with paths of righteousness. But that's not it.

The paths of righteousness are everyday trails. Some lead to the grocery store. Some lead down to the expressway to work. Other right paths are taken by planes and trains.

It's not only *where* I, the Shepherd, leads you, it's *how* I lead you and *when*. If the Lord is your Shepherd, I want to lead you all the time, to every location, by many different means of transportation. It means I want to lead your outward obedience and your inward attitude. When you are following right paths, you have the right responses of mind, will and emotions.

## LEARN TO GO WHERE I, THE SHEPHERD, LEAD.

Some translate "paths of righteousness" to mean a good path or the easiest path or the desirable path. The purpose of life is not to go where you want to go; you must learn to go where I, the Shepherd, lead.

There may be more than one trail going up the side of the mountain, with some sheep on the upper trail and some sheep on a lower trail. Which one is right for you? When you follow Me, your Shepherd, I lead you in right paths. This means some paths are right for you, right for this time or right for this place. Don't get envious or jealous of other sheep on other paths. What may be the right path for them could be the wrong path for you.

*Lord, help me follow the right path You have chosen for me.*

The way the Father has gifted you determines how I will lead you. Your right path may be behind a desk, but another who works well with his hands will be led by Me to the assembly line or a construction site. I, the Shepherd, have a right path for a good manager that may be different from the one I have chosen for a good teacher.

*Lord, what's my gift?*

A minister must follow Me, the Shepherd, on right paths for the ministry, and a mother must follow right paths for training her children. There are right paths for janitors, farmers and engineers. What is the right path for you? Only one person knows what is best for you: I, your Shepherd. And to find the right path for you, you must get close to Me, your Shepherd, and let Me lead you constantly.

*Lord, I realize You have a right path for me. Help me find it and follow it.*

If there are right paths, then there are also wrong paths. Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” You may think you are following right paths because of momentary success or excitement, but do you know whether your path leads to life or death? Is there a green pasture in your future? Will you dwell in the house of the Lord forever?

You can’t always tell if your path is a right path by looking down at your feet. Your feet may feel like they’re on the right path, but feelings are deceptive. You could be going in the wrong direction. Make sure you are on the right path; look at the horizon toward your destination. Where are you heading? Unless I am your Shepherd, you probably don’t understand the future, nor will you reach the right destination.

*Lord, lead my feet to the right destination.*

Some Old Testament scholars teach that right paths mean *straight* paths—not straight without a curve, but straight according to God’s moral standards. In other words, live straight, think straight and act straight. When I, the Lord, am your Shepherd, I will lead you in straight paths. What’s the opposite of a straight path? A crooked one! If you are being led down a crooked path, then I am not your Shepherd. Check your footprints. You can tell a lot about your direction by looking back at where you’ve been walking. Look in the rearview mirror to see if you are walking straight according to the Word of God. The Lord will lead you in straight paths, which means you will habitually do the right thing in the right way.

What kind of paths are you seeking? Exotic paths? Fun paths? Successful paths? Prosperous paths? Power paths? There are all kinds of paths that you can tread upon in this life, and sheep who don’t look around can easily get lost on the wrong path. If you are lost and you are not sure where you are going, you need to lift your head. Look first at Me, the Shepherd, before you look down at your feet, then look back to check your bearings. And finally, look to the destination; look to the future.

You may think you’re on a good path, but you don’t know what I, the Shepherd, know. Unless you follow Me as your Shepherd, you will miss the right path for you.

**YOUR TURN TO PRAY**

*Lord, I know You lead me to church and to pray. Help me see the right paths You've chosen for my life outside the church.*

*Lord, I know there are right paths and wrong paths. Help me recognize the difference and choose the right one.*

*Lord, sometimes when I am following the right path, it leads through a dark, frightening valley. Stay close to me. Lead me to green pastures and protect me.*

## Chapter 7

### FOR MY NAME'S SAKE

ELMER Towns learned early the importance of a family name. Because his family name was important to his mother, she made it important to him. His mother was the tenth child born to Eula and Robert McFaddin of Clarendon County, South Carolina. Originally, the land in the county was given as a grant by the king of England to the McFaddins during colonial times.

When Elmer was a young boy, his mother stood him before a 10-foot-tall granite stone in the McFaddin Cemetery. The stone traced the family lineage all the way back to the original John McFaddin, who first carved a farm out of the wilderness. His mother told him of ancestors fighting off Indian raids and later fending off the British during the American Revolution. She pointed at the names of his ancestors, carved in granite. She said, "One day your name will be carved in granite stone somewhere. You're a Towns." She transposed his loyalty from her maiden name to her married name. "Make me proud of you."

She constantly reminded him during his childhood that he had her blood flowing through his veins. "You're a Towns. You can do anything you set your mind to do," she would say. Little did he realize at the time that his mother was planting the seeds of dreams in his heart that would grow to influence his adult actions. He tried not to act "ugly" (a southern expression for naughty behavior) because he was a Towns. Because of his mother's expectations, he tried to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles when he found himself in difficult circumstances.

In the same way, I, the Lord, want you to meet My expectations and to live for Me for My name's sake.

### THE SHEPHERD'S MANY NAMES

I am the Lord, your shepherd;

(*Jehovah-Roi*, your Protector)

You shall not want.

(*Jehovah-Jireh*, your Provider)

I make you lie down in green pastures;

(*Jehovah-Adonai*, your Master)

I lead you beside the still waters.

(*Jehovah-Shalom*, your Peace)

I restore your soul;

(*Jehovah-Rophi*, your Healer)

I lead you in right paths for My name's sake.

(*Jehovah-Tsidkenu*, your Righteousness)

Yea, though you walk through the valley of threatening shadows,

(*Jehovah-Shammah*, your divine Presence)

You will fear no evil; for I am with you;

(*Jehovah-Tsebaoth*, your Warrior)

My rod will deliver you, My staff will lift you up.

(*Jehovah-El Elyon*, your Defender)

I prepare a table full of food for you in the presence of evil;

(*Jehovah-Nissi*, your Encourager)

I will anoint your head with healing oil;

(*Jehovah-Mekaddesh*, your Righteousness)

Your cup is full and running over.

(*Jehovah-El Shaddai*, your Nourisher)

My watch dog of goodness and mercy shall run after you;

(*Jehovah-El Elohim*, your Protector)

To always bring you back to My presence.

And you will dwell with Me in My house forever. (*Jehovah-El Olam*,  
your Eternity)

He leads me in right paths, for the sake of His many names (Psalm 23:3,  
author's paraphrase).

Shepherds risk their lives to protect their sheep because losing a sheep is like losing a part of themselves. A shepherd loves his sheep, and he will risk everything for them. His love motivates him to learn all about sheep and how to care for them, because it's not just an occupation. His sheep are his life. Each sheep is a part of his heart. He knows their weaknesses and which ones tend to stray. He knows the strengths of those that remain close to him. He knows what they like to eat and what they shouldn't eat. It's a shepherd's nature to know such things.

*Lord, You know me.*

The shepherd takes pride in the health and safety of his flock. He knows it's a dereliction of his duty if any sheep are hurt by wolves or if any wander off and are killed. A shepherd knows he must supervise everything his sheep do at every moment of the night and day. If he doesn't do a good job, the shepherd knows he has failed his family or his employer. But most of all, the shepherd has failed himself.

The shepherd takes ownership of his sheep, even if he is tending the flock for his father or master. He loves even the smallest sheep, protecting it as his own life and tenderly nurturing it to full health and strength. The shepherd and sheep are one. He puts his name and reputation on the flock collectively and on each sheep individually.

*Lord, thank You for owning me.*

Why does the shepherd sacrifice for his sheep, even when it means risking his life? It's for the sake of his name. Because the shepherd has identified with the sheep, if something happens to them it happens to him. When the shepherd fails, he has lost the respect of others. But most of all, he has lost his self-respect, and in his eyes he is a failure.

*I praise You, eternal Shepherd, for never failing.*

When the psalmist says the Shepherd does everything for His name's sake, it means the Shepherd cares for His sheep because that's who He is and that's what He does. Shepherding is My nature. There's an old saying, "What's in the cup passes through the lips." What's in the Shepherd's heart comes out in My actions. I love My sheep because I am your loving Lord. I, the Shepherd, love you because of who I am. It's all for the sake of My name.

When you say "The Lord is my Shepherd," you are saying in Hebrew *Jehovah-Roi*. You are pronouncing one of My names. This name suggests that I,

the Lord, am powerful to protect My sheep from danger. But this name also means I am the Lord, tender to care for you and provide for your every need.

*Jehovah-Roi, protect me from evil.*

Because I have a shepherd's heart, I want you to have the best to eat and drink. Have you been hungry lately? Perhaps you've strayed from My Shepherd's fold and you are eating old, dead, dried-up grass. That's not what I want for you. Remember, Psalm 23 is about *relationship*, and if you remain in My fold—and if you stay near Me, the Shepherd—you will have good food.

*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! (Psalm 34:8).*

I, the Shepherd, will provide you with good food for the sake of My name.

*Lord, let me eat near You.*

Because I, the Lord, am your Shepherd, you can now say, "I shall not want." When you think of My provision, think of My name *Jehovah-Jireh*, which means, "I am the Lord, your Provider" (see Genesis 22:14). I, Jehovah-Jireh, provided Israel with food for 40 years as they wandered in the desert wilderness. I, Jehovah-Jireh, also provided Israel with water from a rock when there was no water in the desert (see Numbers 20:7-11). The very nature of a shepherd is Jehovah-Jireh, to be a provider. If I, Jehovah-Jireh, can do that for so many people (more than one million) for so long, what can I do for you? I, Jehovah-Jireh, will provide for you. Why? For My name's sake.

*Thank You, Jehovah-Jireh, for everything.*

Because I am the Lord, your Shepherd, I make you lie down in green grass. I am *Jehovah-Adonai*, your Master, which means I know what is best for you. Even more, I want obedience and I know if you are lying in green grass and I know if you are close to My feet. Why do I make you lie down? I want you to have rest and peace.

## YOU WILL FINALLY HAVE PEACE WHEN YOU INTIMATELY KNOW ME, THE SHEPHERD.

That's why I have another name, *Jehovah-Shalom*, meaning "I, the Lord, am Peace" (see Judges 6:24). When you lie safely beside still waters, thank Me for providing you with peace in a world where there is so little peace. My



Shepherd's name is "The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6, KJV). You will finally have peace when you intimately know Me, the Shepherd.

*Jehovah-Shalom, thank You for rest of heart that You give me because of Your name's sake.*

Maybe you are one of My sheep that tries to see what enticements lie in other pastures. Have you been running ahead of Me, the Shepherd? Maybe you are a sheep that likes thrills and excitement. You are a "party sheep," and you've been straying into dangerous mountain trails. You've even gone some places where there are no paths, and you've fallen a few times. Now you are bruised and battered.

You need to know I am your Shepherd, *Jehovah-Rophi*. That name means "I am the Lord your Healer" (see Exodus 15:26). When I find you, do I punish you for going to the wrong places? No! I, the Shepherd, restore you to the flock; you are brought back with the other sheep. Why do I forgive you and restore you? Because My name is Jehovah-Rophi; I am a healer and restorer.

*Jehovah-Rophi, keep me from disease and heal me in sickness.*

In certain seasons, I, the Shepherd, must move you from one pasture to another. There are many paths where you could get lost if you don't stay close to Me, the Shepherd. Some would like to stay in the old pastures, but there is no food in old pastures; sheep eat grass right down to the roots. After a period of time you must be moved to a new pasture of fresh green grass, and you can't find the way by yourself.

I, the Shepherd, will lead you in right paths. Why? Because I am *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*, which means "The Lord is your Righteousness." When you broke My laws, I substituted Myself on the cross at Calvary for your punishment because I am righteous. Then I gave you My righteousness so you would be perfect (see Matthew 5:48; Hebrews 10:14). Now you can walk in the right path of righteousness because of the sake of My name.

*Jehovah-Tsidkenu, thank You for making me righteous.*

Some refuse to walk in right paths but instead choose to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Are you in a black valley? You've created this mess by yourself, but don't fear. Even in the valley of your own making, the Bible promises, "I am with you" (Psalm 23:4). Why would I, the Shepherd, go after you when you're in trouble? Because that's My nature. I am *Jehovah-Shammah*, which means "I, the Lord, am There," or "I, the Lord, am with you." I

am with you in the dark valley because of the sake of My name.

*Jehovah-Shammah, be with me even to the ends of the earth.*

What's chasing you in the valley? Is there a death shadow pursuing you like a lioness running down an antelope? Do you feel a demon from hell nipping at your heels? You are running as fast as you can, but the death shadow is gaining ground. When you feel like you are almost being eaten alive, remember My name *Jehovah-Tsebaoth*, "I am the Lord, your Warrior." I will fight for you in the black valley, because that's My name.

*Lord, come quickly. I'm losing; please fight for me.*

If you've lost a battle, lift up your head to see Me, the Shepherd, running to your rescue. I have a rod and staff to protect you. Why do I carry you? Because My name is *Jehovah-El Elyon*, which means "I am the Lord God Most High," or "I am the Lord God, your Defender" (see Genesis 14:22). I protect you because My name says that is what I do.

*Jehovah-El Elyon, I am confident in Your care.*

When you come out of death's dark valley, what's waiting for you? Not punishment—just the opposite. I, the Shepherd, have a table loaded with good food waiting for you—cheese, meats, ripe fruit and delectable desserts. I will feed you in the presence of your enemies (see Psalm 23:5). Why? To demonstrate that I can both provide for you and protect you.

So eat and enjoy. Why? Because My name is *Jehovah-Nissi*, which means "I am the Lord, your Banner" (see Exodus 17:15), or "I am the Lord Who Rallies you to Myself." After a battle the troops rally around their standard, or banner. But as Christians you don't rally around a flag fluttering in the breeze; you get close to Me the Shepherd, where your hope is restored after the battle. You want Me to know you are grateful. I let you get close because of My name.

*Jehovah-Nissi, it's been tough. Can I get closer?*

When you are wounded in the battle, I anoint your head with healing oil (see Psalm 23:5). I, the Shepherd, douse you with cleansing oil to remove impurities from your wounds, and I anoint you with healing oil to make you healthy again. Why do I, the Shepherd, do this? Because My name is also *Jehovah-Mekaddesh*, which means "I am the Lord Who Sanctifies" or "I am the Lord Who Makes you Righteous." It's My nature.

*Jehovah-Mekaddesh, I am honored to be Your sheep.*

Look down the table. I, the Shepherd, am filling your cup—not someone else’s cup—to the brim. Notice that your cup is not partially filled. I, the Lord, am pouring so much into your chalice that it is beginning to overflow. Wow! Now you realize I, the Shepherd, love you and treat you special. Why? Because that’s the way I do things. My name is *Jehovah-El Shaddai*, which means “I am the Lord, your Nourisher” (see Genesis 17:1,2). I love to give thirsty people something to drink. I am the almighty One who supplies all your needs.

*Jehovah El-Shaddai, fill my cup.*

As I, the Shepherd, lead you from one pasture to another, you don’t have to worry about death shadows tracking you down. When you follow My leadership, My “goodness and mercy” will follow you (Psalm 23:6). Why? Because I am *Jehovah-El Elohim*, which means “I am the Lord God, Strong to Protect” (Joshua 22:22). I, the Shepherd, look after My sheep because My reputation is at stake. I will protect you for My name’s sake.

*Jehovah-El Elohim, I rest in Your protection.*

A shepherd would prefer to live in a house, away from the rain and wind and protected from the snow. He wants an abode where no snakes or scorpions can slip under his tent or crawl under his blanket. So here’s good news: I, the Shepherd, am going home and taking My sheep with Me! The sheep are going to live in a house, but not just any house. They will live in My house! And the greatest thing about My house is that I live there.

Why do I take My sheep to My eternal home? Because My name is *Jehovah-El Olam*, which means “I am the Lord God of Eternity” (see Psalm 48:14). Some scholars translate this “The Lord God of His Secrets.” The Hebrew word *olam* can be translated either “eternity” or “secret,” which might suggest that I, the Lord God, have many secret things to share with you when you get to My house. Why would I do that? Because My Shepherd’s name is Jehovah-El Olam. I will take you to live with Me forever—because of My name’s sake.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I didn’t know You had so many names. Help me know You better through all Your names;*

*I thank You for everything Your names mean to me. Lord, Your many*

*names tell me about the different things You do for me. Help me understand every way You help me.*

*Keep helping me; there's a lot more I need.*

*Lord, I worship You for Your power and greatness. I marvel at Your care and concern for me. I accept Your forgiveness and restoration.*

## PART II

### **What My Sheep Receive**

The relationship between the sheep and the Shepherd is two-way. In the first half of the psalm, you see all the great things I do for you, without you having to do anything but trust and obey.

The second half of Psalm 23 is the “you” section. Because I, the Shepherd, have done everything for you, you are now responsible to follow Me closely so I can provide for you and protect you. What does this mean for you, My sheep?

You will fear no evil.

You will have Me with you always.

You will be comforted by My rod and staff.

You will eat from a prepared table.

You will have your head anointed with oil.

You will be followed by goodness and mercy.

You will dwell in My house forever.

## Chapter 8

# YEA, THOUGH YOU WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

**S**HADOWS scared Elmer Towns nearly to death when he was a youngster. Because he lived next to a cemetery, he believed that the threat of spirits from dead bodies was ever present. But it was the threat of live burglars that frightened him most.

The moon shining through their pear tree caused strange shadows to dance on the cheap paper shade that covered his bedroom window. He was certain the shadows were those of a robber trying to break into his room. The wind outside made the “burglar shadows” jump, and the limbs scratching on the screen frightened him even more. His mouth would turn to cotton, so he couldn’t yell for his mother, and he was too scared to move. He would sweat, vowing not to move, so the burglar would think he was asleep.

The next morning—an eternity later!—he would wake up and everything would be all right.

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me (Psalm 23:4).*

*Even when walking through a dark, dangerous valley, you will not be scared of death shadows, because I am with you (Psalm 23:4, author’s paraphrase).*

Up until now I, the Shepherd, have been leading you. I always lead My sheep to a grassy pasture and a pool of still water. So how did you end up in a dark valley full of shadows and death? I didn’t lead you there. You *chose* the path of darkness...the path of shadows...the path of death. Notice that the psalm declares, “Yea, though you walk through the valley.” There’s no Shepherd out in front leading you. You chose the valley because you strayed from Me, the Shepherd.

Into the ever-increasing darkness descends

Is not a place the Shepherd sends.

Into the deepening dark night of the soul,  
Until the Shepherd brings us back to the fold.

What is scary about valleys are the high mountains on either side of the path. You can get lost among high mountains because the alpine passes are always turning to the right or left. Sometimes they seem to turn completely around! Then you've lost your sense of direction for sure.

*Lord, give me direction in the mazelike valleys of life.*

Sometimes you are following a valley through high, foreboding mountains—then you come to a dead end. You are stranded in a box canyon with no way out. Have you ever been frustrated because a mountain blocked your path? Here's what you do when blocked by a mountain. First, remember that I, the Lord, am in the mountain-moving business. If you have faith the size of a small seed, you can say to your mountain barrier, "Get out of the way!" and it will be removed (see Matthew 17:20).

You don't need to be hemmed in by mountains. Remove them by faith. But sometimes you don't have much faith, much less enough faith to move mountains. So what can you do?

Try the second option. When you come to the end of your path in a box canyon, turn around. The path that led you into the valley can lead you out. When you turn around to go in the opposite direction, that's called repentance. The path that you followed away from Me, the Shepherd, also leads you back to Me. It runs both ways.

*Lord, help me stay on the path. I'm coming back home!*

## REMEMBER, I, THE LORD, AM IN THE MOUNTAIN-MOVING BUSINESS.

Then there are wrong paths in the valley. Because the mountains are high all around you, it's easy to follow the wrong path in the valley. And what happens when you do? You end up at the wrong destination. When you thought getting drunk was cool because all your friends were doing it, you never thought you would end up hooked. Now you're addicted. Maybe not to alcohol, but to sex, drugs, food, sports or TV. There are a lot of good things that will hook you if you're not close to Me, the Shepherd. If you've taken the wrong path down the wrong valley, do what a lost lamb does: It cries! Cry out to Me, the Shepherd,

who can free you and bring you back to green pastures and pools of still water!

*Lord, “unhook” me from addictive things.*

You can be blinded by the dazzling sunlight Or by the foreboding dark night.

Are you walking in a shadow today? How dark are your shadows? Remember, I am Jesus, the Shepherd. I am the light of the world. My light will dissipate any shadow! Whether your shadows are black or just gray, I can illuminate your path.

*Lord, shine some light over here.*

A shadow isn't real; it's only an illusion. When something blocks the light, it makes a shadow. Or worse, when something distorts the light, what happens? Distorted shadows. If a shadow looks like a friendly hand, you reach out to shake it; but your hand is empty. And if the hand looks threatening, as if it is going to choke you, you perspire, your heart beats faster, you might even yell out in fear. The shadow is not real, but the fear it inspires is very real.

Why do shadows scare you? Remember when you walked home from school on a late winter after-noon? The night came early, and the bitter wind cut through your jacket. The streetlight through the bushes created scary goblins in the shadows. Your pulse beat faster, your mouth went dry, and you wanted to run. You thought if you ran quickly past the shadows the boogeyman wouldn't get you.

## WHY SHADOWS SCARE YOU:

You're afraid of the unknown.

You feel defenseless.

Your active imagination thinks you'll die there.

You know evil hides in darkness.

A man walked up the gallows to be hung. The noose was tightened around his neck and the executioner said, “I'll give you two choices. You can be hanged right now, or you can go through that door over there.” The plain wooden door looked innocent enough, but the prisoner knew they tortured prisoners in the belly of the prison. He was afraid some type of torture was behind the door, so

he chose hanging. What he didn't know was that the door led to freedom. Fear of the unknown makes you hurt yourself.

Walking home through the dark shadows, you may think a mugger is hiding in the darkness. You begin running madly to get away, but you fall. You scratch up a knee and ruin a good pair of pants. It's often been said, "What you don't know can't hurt you," but that's only half right. What you don't know may not hurt you, but it can make you hurt yourself.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I am ignorant of all the dangers I face. Protect me from unseen threats.*

*Lord, I don't understand all the implications of the trouble I'm in. Guard me from going deeper into trouble.*

*Lord, it's dark and I can't see what's ahead. Guide me through this valley.*

*Lord, I don't know if tomorrow will be worse or better. Prepare me to face whatever comes.*

*Lord, I'm lonely, scared and don't know what to do. I know You are with me. Help me to see You and follow You out of this dark valley.*

But even though there is probably nothing in the dark shadows, don't play in the darkness. Why? Because men love darkness more than light, as their deeds are evil (see John 3:19). Have you ever thought about how thieves sneak in under the cover of darkness? How houses of ill repute are dimly lit? How more crimes are committed at night than under the glaring sun? You innately know there's a dark side and a light side to your personality. You are like Jekyll and Hyde or Beauty and the Beast. The Bible calls this condition the "old man" and the "new man" (Colossians 3:9,10). Your evil deeds come from your evil nature, and you don't want anyone to know about the dark side of your personality.

Are you scared of shadows? How about the shadow of death? When you are



close to someone dying, his or her shadow falls over you.

For the last five days of Elmer Towns' mother's life, he stayed with her, sleeping in the hospital room. He knew she would die soon. Her kidneys, liver and other internal organs were shutting down. Her feet and legs had swelled to twice their normal size. When her hands and wrists became so swollen that the nurse couldn't get the IV into a vein, he knew it was only a matter of time. The swelling made it impossible for the intravenous needle to feed life-sustaining nourishment and medicine into her body.

For five nights he slept beside her bed. It was an excruciating experience to watch his mother die and not be able to do anything about it. Elmer couldn't even muster up the faith to pray for a miracle. The poison was shutting down her organs one at a time. At 5:17 a.m. on May 3, 1999, she sighed deeply and was gone. But he didn't realize she was dead because her eyes were still open.

At 6:00 a.m. he said, "I'm going down to the hospital cafeteria to get a cup of coffee. We'll pray when I get back." But I, the Shepherd, stopped him in his tracks. He knew he shouldn't go. So he said, "No, let's pray first."

After getting his Bible, he reached out to touch her hand. When he touched her, he knew she was dead. And then he tried but couldn't close her eyes.

For the next 30 minutes Elmer Towns was incoherent. He couldn't speak. He had been brave in the shadow of death for five days. Death hadn't scared him, but now he was no longer standing in death's shadow, because the shadow was gone. The blackness of death visited the room, and her body was getting colder by the minute. Death's shadow became a reality. All he could do was sit there, immobilized in the presence of a dead body.

Thirty minutes later her pastor walked in the room, laid his hand on the bed next to the dead body and announced, "You know she's not here. Your mother is with the Lord."

Instantly, the burden of death lifted. Towns knew the pastor was right. It's what he had taught all his life: To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (see 2 Corinthians 5:8). When the pastor said that, Towns stepped out of the shadows and into the light.

Remember, the Lord is your light and life. Why should you fear?

## WHY DOES DEATH SCARE US?

Your physical eyes can't see the other side.

You do not want physical pain.

You do not want to give up anything.

You have not finished all you have set out to do on Earth.

Because of sin, you have doubts.

Psalm 23 doesn't talk about walking through a valley of death; it says you will walk through a valley of *shadows* that are about death. To the unsaved, death is real. But if you walk with the Shepherd, death is only a shadow. Since shadows are created when something obscures the light, your death will obscure the light only for a moment. You will walk into that dark shadow, momentarily losing perspective of what you see in this life. But the instant you lose sight of earthly things, the shadow of death melts in the light of the other side. You walk through a doorway with Me, the Shepherd, into the other side.

Are you afraid of dying? Death seems inevitable to you who are alive because everyone you have ever known dies. Besides being real, death is frightening. Even for Christians, death is a fearful thing. You know some who descended into a valley of pain, and none of us are very good with pain. Others have gone through a long, debilitating illness as their physical body wasted away. They were weak and ugly, and they lost the power of memory. The valley of death scares you.

*Lord, remind me that death is only a shadow.*

Death is very real as it chokes the last breath from your body. And then you feel My hand. I am Jesus, I guide you through death to the other side. I said, "I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Revelation 1:18), so why should you worry? When you are afraid of walking through death's valley, listen for the jingle of the keys. It's Me. I am coming to unlock the door to let you into My Father's house.

*Lord, thank You that I am not a latchkey child. The light is on at my eternal home, and You will be there to let me in.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I know I'll have to die one day (unless You return first), so prepare me for that experience.*

*Lord, I'm afraid to die. I don't like physical pain. Teach me what I need to know about death.*

*Lord, I don't want want to lose control of my mind and body due to lingering illness. Nor do I desire an instant death by accident. I just don't want to die. Help me accept death's inevitability.*

*Lord, give me courage to accept pain and faith to see Your plan. And take me to live with You when I die.*

*Lord, give me faith to meet You at death's door. Be with me as I die.*

*Lord, I trust You for everything, but it's hard to trust You about life's final experience because I've never been there before. Renew my hope.*

*Lord, give me love for family and friends to the end and faith to live through anything that comes.*

Have you walked in daylight and felt something following you? Did it feel like a pit bull chasing you, nipping at your heels? You feel death shadows following, even in the sun where there are no shadows. A death shadow could simply be your memory of what happened in the dark. Maybe it's guilt that dogs you constantly. No matter how fast you run, a death shadow keeps pursuing you, and you're sure it's gaining.

Death shadows don't bite, but they can do something worse. They can make you bite yourself through guilt and regret. First you take one bite, then another, and finally you chew yourself up into small pieces. A death shadow can make a person kill himself (or herself ).

But your death shadows won't kill you; they'll only leave you maimed. Suppose a lion pounced on you and ripped off your arm. For the rest of your life you would have to live with only one arm. You would get along somehow, but you would miss the arm. When a death shadow pounces on you, its teeth do not chew off your arm, but you still live with emotional scars. Your arm is there, but it feels like it's gone, so you go through life fearful, intimidated, even cowardly.

Death shadows don't scare Me, the Lord. Why? I faced death shadows My

entire life. Being rejected at birth, I was born in a stable. Even then a death shadow of a cross flashed across My future. The Old Testament had already predicted My death: “He was wounded for our transgressions” (Isaiah 53:5). I always knew I would die.

As a young man, I was introduced to the world with the words “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29). In My day, this was the sacrificial language of the Jews. The death shadow of the cross reminded Me of the prophecy, “And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so I opened not My mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

The death shadow of the crucifixion followed Me throughout My life. What does that mean to you? I, your Shepherd, dealt with a much worse death shadow than you will ever face. Whereas many of your shadows are not real, the reality of the cross crushed the physical life out of My body. But because I know about death shadows, I understand your fears and will go with you through the dark valley. I will be with you until you come out on the other side.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, teach me to trust You when I’m scared, because You know how to handle my fears. I need Your strength and peace.*

*Lord, I want to get rid of all shadows over my life. You lived all Your life with the shadow of the cross looming over You. Help me to live as You lived.*

*Lord, how did You put up with the constant shadow of death over Your life? I can’t go through life with this tension. Take away my fears and anguish.*

*Lord, I know You are not scared of death shadows because You faced them all. I claim Your victory over death shadows for my victory.*

So what can you do when shadows scare you?

*Seek the Lord’s presence.* I bring light in your darkest night. Then claim again the promise that “I am with you” (Psalm 23:4). Remember, there is no

darkness in My presence, nor is there any shadow. I said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).

*When entering your personal “death valley,” pray.* If you find yourself in the middle of a dark night, pray. If you want to get out of the valley, pray.

*Trust Me to help you find the path out.* If the valley has you hemmed in and the mountains are too high to climb, remember that a valley is a path through the mountains. If you can’t see the other side, keep following the valley. Claim the promise, “I am with you.” I, the Shepherd, won’t let you get lost.

*If you are on the wrong path, turn around.* There are usually box canyons and false trails in the mountains. Not all openings between the mountains will get you to the other side. The easy path may not be the right valley, because it may end abruptly. What do you do then? Turn around—repent—and retrace your steps back to the Shepherd.

*Know that I will never abandon you.* Anticipation can help you mentally prepare for your valley of troubles. I promised that you will walk *through* the valley—not just *into* the valley to be left there, but *through* it to green pastures. If you are in the valley of the shadow of death, remember that I will never abandon you in the valley. I will bring you out to the other side. I promised to be with you through your trouble.

You were afraid your death shadow was a posse from hell. You have been *fear conscious* when you should have been *God conscious*. You’ve been so worried about the death shadow that you missed the *divine shadow*. Because you always see in life what you look for, if you search for death shadows, that’s what you will find. If you seek Me, you will see Me. Who is with you in the darkness? It’s Me, the Shepherd.

Reach up, take My hand and let Me guide you through the valley to the other side.

*Thank You, Lord, for leading me through the dark night.*

## Chapter 9

### YOU WILL FEAR NO EVIL

**S**HEEP walk confidently through the threatening shadows of a valley because their shepherd is with them. When darkness obscures the path, the shepherd guides them. When predators lurk in the shadows of nearby caves, he protects them. If they fall into a crevice, he will rescue them. If they grow hungry or thirsty, he knows where to find green pastures and still waters.

*Lord, guide me through life's threatening problems.*

When you say, "I will fear no evil," it may sound as if you are trusting in your own courage. But only bullies who don't understand the complexities of life would boast, "I am not afraid of anything." Never could a sheep make that boast, because of all the animals, sheep are among the most helpless. They cannot stand courageously against a lion that could rip them apart with a swat of his mighty paw. Nor can sheep walk fearlessly into battle against any other animal. How could they? They have no weapons—no means to defend themselves and nothing with which to attack their predators.

Yet the Bible promises that you can say with confidence, "I will fear no evil." Does this mean you as My sheep, should never get scared? No! Many sheep have quivered in the face of approaching death. There are many things to be fearful of, but you should never fear evil. If you fear Me, who is your Shepherd, I will take care of evil.

Does this mean that you as sheep should have courage? Yes! Because you belong to Me, the Shepherd, you can testify, "I will fear no evil." I can fight the lion for you.

*Lord, teach me to let You fight my battles.*

Sheep spend their days nose down in pastures of fresh, green grass, paying no attention to perimeter defense. Almost anything could destroy them. When a sheep hears the roar of a bear or lion from behind nearby rocks, what does it do? The sheep lifts its head from grazing and looks around to see that the shepherd is nearby. When it sees the shepherd, the sheep calmly goes back to grazing, because the shepherd is close by to protect the sheep.

The Bible describes the devil as a roaring, hungry lion that walks about seeking whom he may devour (see 1 Peter 5:8). Have you heard a lion's roar in your soul lately? Did it send a shiver up your spine? Did you look around to make sure I, the Lord, was nearby to protect you?

*Lord, come over here near me.*

When you hear the lion roar, can you say, "I will fear no evil"? You can if you are in a right relationship with Me, the Shepherd. When you are near Me, you are safe. The question is not whether you can protect yourself from the evil one. The question is, do you belong to Me, the Shepherd? If you do, He can fend off all your enemies.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, it's very hard for me to say, "I will fear no evil," because I have many fears. I am not always sure, nor am I courageous. Give me Your courage and strength.*

*Lord, I have some doubts—not about You but rather about my faith and my ability. Strengthen my faith to believe in You, and strengthen my courage to trust You.*

*Lord, I've been hurt by disappointments and failures. Friends have let me down and there are emotional scars. Give me faith to trust You for protection.*

I said to John on the Isle of Patmos, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Revelation 1:17,18). What does this say to you? I hold the keys to death. I know when you are going to die, and *nothing* can destroy you before that time. Trust Me, the Shepherd, to protect you until then and to guide you through the experience.

*I have promised:*

*In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am,*

*there you may be also (John 14:2,3).*

When it comes time to die, look around for Me who has the keys in My hand. Listen for My words as I cry out, “Hold on! I am coming. I’ll open heaven’s door.” Because you already know that you’ll go to be with Me when you die, you should say, “I will fear no evil.”

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I know I will die, and I’m not looking forward to it. As a matter of fact I dread death. Give me courage to face it.*

*Lord, thank You for the promise that You have the keys to death. I trust You to receive me at death. I really have no other hope but to trust You for eternal life.*

*Lord, I want to say, “I will fear no evil” at death, but it’s hard to trust in an unseen heaven. So teach me to trust in Christ who dwells in my heart.*

Vance Havner, a Baptist preacher from North Carolina, has said,

[God] was here before there was any fear; He will be here when all fear has passed away. Let us remember that He saw everything before there was anything. If we could stand aside today and see what He sees, how baseless would be our theories, how excuseless our tears.<sup>1</sup>

Since I know everything from the beginning and what will happen in the end, you ought to feel safe trusting Me with all your life.

You cannot see what I see, but there is one thing you can do that will help you get rid of fears: Look at them through My eyes. I know all about your fears, and I know they are nothing. When you look at your fears through My eyes, they seem so small. I am omnipresent and can detect whatever is lurking on the perimeter of your life. I have omniscient knowledge about everything that will happen, so I can guide you to safety. I have omnipotent power to accomplish My will in your life. And when life is over, I will make sure you arrive at your destination in heaven with Me.



*Lord, because You know everything, I trust You with my future.*

The story is told of a powerful orator who addressed a large audience in Philadelphia. He cried out that Jesus said, “I am Alpha, Omega; the Beginning and the End.” Then the minister stopped for oratorical effect, and when he did, all 3,000 people sat on the edge of their seats waiting for his next words. Then a poor woman who trusted Jesus for everything cried out from the balcony, “Yes! And He is everything in between, too!”

I, your Shepherd, was present at the beginning of your life, and I will be present at the end of your life; but the most important thing to know is that I am present at everything in between, too.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, thank You for your omniscient knowledge. You know everything that will happen to me. Help me to trust the future You plan for me.*

*Lord, thank You for your omnipresent understanding of the future. When I’m afraid of what’s coming, teach me to trust in You. Help me see the future through Your eyes.*

*Lord, thank You for Your omnipotent power to do everything You want to do. Help me to trust in Your ability to work all things together for Your glory.*

When David said, “I will fear no evil,” notice the things he left out. He could have said, “I will fear no man,” “no circumstance,” “no sickness,” “no problem,” or even “I will not fear death.” Why did he single out evil? Because evil comes from the one who wants to harm you. The fear of death can be evil in the hands of satan; but the event of death may be good in My hands, for death may stop suffering or loneliness. Death may stop a sinner from further sin that would have brought dire consequences to his family.

All of us must die, but none of us has to fear death because I hold the keys to death. When things get scary and you’re afraid of dying, hang on until I come with the keys.

Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Actually, the only thing you have to fear is the Father Himself. I told you, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Me who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). You are afraid of the wrong thing: You are afraid of the devil, but all he can do is kill the body. You should fear the Father. He can cast you into hell where body and soul are lost.

*Lord, I was afraid of You until the blood of Jesus cleansed me of sin.*

Every day you should pray the Lord’s Prayer, carefully praying through each of the seven petitions. But some days spend most of your time praying the first and last petition. Why these? The first petition is worship to the Father: “Hallowed be thy name” (Luke 11:2, KJV). This petition means, “Holy be Your name on Earth in my life, as Your name in heaven is revered.” So use the many names of God the Father to worship Him.<sup>2</sup>

The last petition of the Lord’s Prayer is about the devil: “Deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13). Every day pray for the Father to deliver you from the evil one. When you do, then you can confidently say with the psalmist, “I will fear no evil.”

Why do you not fear the evil one? Because greater is He who is within you than he who is in the world (see 1 John 4:4). Two little boys were fighting, and the bully threatened the smaller boy. But the spunky little guy didn’t back down, saying, “My dad can whip your dad!” So you will fear no evil because your Father in heaven can whip the father of lies from hell.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I sometimes fear the wrong things: I fear the devil and his evil but not You. Forgive me of my blindness and doubt.*

*Lord, I have fears that I can’t explain, except to say they are so threatening at times. Give me peace and joy.*

*Lord, when I become more concerned with the devil than with You, forgive me for not trusting You and obeying You.*

*Lord, teach me to fear You most of all and take away all fear of the devil. Help me to honestly confess, “I will fear no evil.”*

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[1](#) Vance Havner, quoted by R. T. Ketchum, *I Shall Not Want* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), pp. 72, 73.

[2](#) For more on the Lord's Prayer and the names of God, see the books *Praying the Lord's Prayer for Spiritual Breakthrough*, Elmer Towns (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1998) and *My Father's Names*, Elmer Towns (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993).

## Chapter 10

### FOR YOU ARE WITH ME

**W**HAT a wonderful promise: “I am with you” (Psalm 23:4, ELT). But the promise is even greater when you examine the different places where I go with you. Most people think of the Father being near only in church or when you pray. And, of course, you expect the Lord to be with you when you go to present the gospel to the lost or when you perform a good deed of mercy. But Psalm 23 tells you that I am with you both in difficult places and in restful pastures.

I, the Lord, am not a fair-weather friend who jumps ship at the first sign of a storm. Can you think of any person I have ever left? Not Me! There are plenty of illustrations in the Bible of people leaving the father and for many different reasons. The prodigal son left for the pleasures of sin. King Saul left because of his jealousy of David. Judas left for money. Paul wrote, “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10). But I, the Shepherd, won’t forsake My sheep, and I, the Lord, won’t leave you.

*Lord, thank You for this promise.*

I spent a morning preaching to the multitudes, and then I directed My disciples to head to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. I needed rest. But a storm would hit the lake as the disciples crossed to the other side. I knew about it; I know all things. Nevertheless, I sent the disciples into a coming storm. The best part of the story is that I went with them into the storm, even though I was asleep (see Luke 8:22-25).

Have you ever noticed how storms bother you more than they bother Me? I knew the storm was coming, but was I concerned? No! I went to sleep. Doesn’t that say something about the troubles in your life? Your storms bother you a lot more than they trouble Me.

*Lord, help me see my storms through Your eyes.*

Don’t blame Me for going to sleep. Preaching takes a lot out of a person, and I had preached all morning. Then there was the warm sun, the gentle breeze and the lapping of the waves against the boat. What fatigued person wouldn’t go to sleep under those conditions? But the disciples were in trouble, and I was asleep.

What did the disciples do when the waves became rough? They didn't turn to Me for help when the storm suddenly broke around them. They leaned against the oars, they hoisted the sails, they bailed water...and bailed water...and bailed water. They did everything they could to get out of trouble. That is, they did everything but ask Me for help. They reacted probably just like you react when you get into trouble. You do everything you can think of to solve your problem. You forget that I am with you in the boat. You forget that I know about the storm and that I sent you into the storm. So, I am with you.

*Lord, let me never forget Your presence is with me when trouble comes.*

Only when the disciples asked for help did I awaken and calm the sea. Though the disciples were probably irritated when they yelled, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" (Luke 8:24), at least they came to Me with their predicament. Did I care that the disciples were irritated? No. Did I care whether they perished? Yes! I care for My own.

*Lord, thank You for caring for me.*

As you walk through the valley of death shadows, has something frightened you? Just as I cared that My disciples were scared in the storm, so I care about the things that frighten you. After all, you belong to Me. That's one of the reasons I walk with you in the valley—to keep you from being frightened by death shadows.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I know there will be storms in the future and I really don't want to go through them. Let me feel Your presence in the darkest night.*

*Lord, when I lose my direction in the darkest storm, come show Yourself to me. Save me.*

*Lord, help me to learn from past storms and trust You in the future. Keep me safe.*

*Lord, be close to me in storms and keep me from permanent harm. Guide me to still waters.*

Are you walking the valley at night, not knowing where you are going? Are you afraid the next step will be your last? Remember, I am with you. But do you really know it? Do you recognize My presence? Can you feel Me right behind you?

*Lord, where are You now?*

Some walk in the night—not in the darkness of sin but rather in simple ignorance. They don't know I am with them. They have lost their bearings. They are like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on that first Easter Sunday afternoon. The disciples were walking with Me, talking to Me and listening to Me, *but they didn't know it was Me* (see Luke 24:13-16).

The two disciples had not wandered into sin; they were just blinded by preconceived ideas. I was with them, but they didn't know it.

Maybe you are walking toward a storm without even realizing it. There is no great rebellion or sin in your life, so you don't think you are straying from the fold. You are just going your own way, doing your own thing. Then suddenly you realize that the dark night of trouble is upon you. Even then, I am with you.

*Lord, help me see Your presence in my life at all times.*

An earthly shepherd can't know everything, and he may not realize it at first when one of his flock wanders off. But no one can wander from Me, the heavenly Shepherd. I know everything! I know when you disobey Me and when you go off to feed yourself on the husks of this world. Do you realize that I go with you when you sin? Nothing happens in your life that catches Me off guard.

*Lord, I'm grateful that I can't wander away without Your knowing it.*

I know all things and I am always with you, then why don't I stop you from wandering? Why doesn't the Father do something to keep you from sinning? That's a good question. Your answer is found in the essence of Christianity. Theologically, the answer is *human responsibility*. I am your heavenly Shepherd let My sheep make some decisions because they are responsible for their walk with Me.

I did not design you to act like stuffed animals—the kind that grandmothers bring as gifts for their grandchildren. While a stuffed sheep is a nice toy to keep a grandchild happy, it's not My plan for you. You are not a stuffed sheep. I want you to love Me, obey Me and worship Me. I want you to be an acting, thinking, responding person. Because I want something from you, I created you with the freedom of choice. You can choose—or refuse—to love Me.

So now you can give Me something that I want. I have everything except your worship. The Father wants to hear you say “Thank You” and “I love You.” The human response of fellowship can’t come from a stuffed sheep; it comes only from the heart of one who is made in His image. It comes from one who has the ability to say yes or no.

Because I made you like Me, you have freedom to choose—I let you decide whether to remain near My camp or wander from Me. Do you see the picture? A sheep begins to wander from Me, and I know it. Usually, the sheep doesn’t know what it’s doing. A sheep chooses to feed itself on the chaff of this world, rather than eating in the green pasture provided by the Father—and I, the Shepherd, know My sheep is making a bad choice.

## I, THE SHEPHERD, TAKE CARE OF YOU, EVEN WHEN YOU DON’T SEE MY HAND WORKING IN YOUR LIFE.

What do I, the Shepherd, do when you begin to stray? First, I speak to you through your conscience, saying, *Don’t do it!* But you go there anyway. Next, I, the Shepherd, speak to you through My Word, the Bible. You know what is right because you heard the Word preached in church or sang the message of Scripture in hymns. But still you disobey. Sometimes I, the Shepherd, speak to you through the laws of government, and at other times I speak through the natural consequences of your rebellion.

*Lord, when I stray, come after me.*

Some sheep ask, “Where was the Father when I strayed?” The 23rd Psalm has the answer: “You are with me.” I was with you from the moment you began to stray. I was your conscience telling you to stop. I spoke to you through the Bible and through your memory. I tried to stop you through circumstances. I, the Shepherd, take care of you in many ways, even when you don’t see My hand working in your life.

*Lord, I’ve strayed. Thank You for Your faithfulness in coming after me.*

I, the heavenly Shepherd, walk patiently with you through the dark valley, waiting for the occasion when you finally realize your sin...when you are sorry for your disobedience...when you turn back to Me...when you repent and seek My fellowship. When that moment of realization comes, cry out like a lost sheep. I will be there to help you.

The prodigal son demanded his share of the family inheritance and then

squandered it on riotous pleasures and fair-weather friends. When his money ran out, his friends left him and he ended up feeding pigs. When he was hungry, he had to eat pig food. Then, the Bible declares, “he came to himself” (Luke 15:17). The prodigal son was fed up with his life, so he cried out, “I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:18). Have you been there, done that? Have you come to yourself in the pigpen? Are you willing to return to your heavenly Father? He awaits you with open arms.

*Lord, search out any hidden sin in my heart that keeps me from You.*

Why do I go with My sheep when they wander away from My sheepfold? Because I want to be there when they come to their senses. I am the eternal Shepherd with you so I can receive you back to Myself. Then I will bring you out of the dark valley. Have you been lost in any dark valleys lately?

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, in the past I have wandered away from Your presence and fallen into trouble. Thank You for making me see my mistakes.*

*Lord, I'm grateful that You came seeking me when I strayed. Thank You for Your presence in the dark nights.*

*Lord, it's good to be home with You and to enjoy Your presence. Keep me close to Your side.*

*Lord, I promise I'll never leave You again. I want to be near You. Don't let me wander.*



## Chapter 11

### MY ROD AND MY STAFF COMFORT YOU

THE shepherd is not afraid of danger, because he knows the safest trail through the valley. The shepherd is courageous because he has a club—a rod—to drive away the enemy. The shepherd loves his sheep; and he is not reluctant to use his rod, nor is he fearful to attack an enemy. And because he knows how to use the rod, enemies keep their distance. He knows the ways of the predators.

*Father, because You know the enemy, I will walk with You.*

The shepherd also carries a staff to guide the sheep in the right paths and to rescue them when they fall into cracks and crevasses.

*Lord, teach me to be cautious about the temptation of sin and help me to aggressively overcome its dangers.*

*Yea, 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 (Psalm 23:4).*

People usually think of the rod and staff as being the same thing, but actually they are two different instruments carried by the shepherd. Before the days of pistols and rifles, the shepherds had to make their own weapons. Many shepherds didn't have an ax or a knife to fight off their predators, so they used the best means available. The shepherd's rod was usually a thick, heavy stick—sometimes with a heavy knot on one end, carved from a root or tree joint—that was used to club an enemy. The shepherd could send a wolf running with a good, hard *whack!*

Using the best tools available, shepherds became skillful in defending their sheep. Some shepherds preferred to carry a short heavy club, so that in a close battle they could smash a predator's head. Other shepherds liked a longer club to keep the predators at a distance. Many shepherds kept a shorter club fastened to their belts, always ready to defend the sheep.

*Lord, I thank You for Your weapons that can protect me.*

The shepherd also had a staff, usually as tall as his head—sometimes taller—

with a hook, or crook, at one end. The staff was made when a stick was tender, supple and green; it was bent into a crook and allowed to harden. The staff was used for directing the sheep. When sheep didn't follow their shepherd, he would reach out with the staff to pull back straying sheep back into the fold.

The shepherd often used the staff as a walking stick to steady himself when climbing over large rocks or when small gravel shifted under his feet. The crook at the end could be used for rescuing a lamb that had slipped off the path or fallen into a creek. The shepherd tenderly placed the crook under the lamb and lifted it back to safety.

*Lord, because I will need to be rescued many times in my life, keep coming after me.*

Are you a sheep that wanders from Me, the Shepherd, into the dark valley? When the enemy appears, what instrument do you use to defend yourself? Do you use your skillful arguments? Your money? Your position? Your education? So often you depend on your own tools and not on Mine. My Shepherd's rod is available to defend you, but the club is wielded by Me, the Shepherd, not you the sheep.

Not once in God's Word does it mention a sheep carrying a club to defend itself. Nor do they have a staff for rescuing another sheep. Sheep have to depend entirely upon their shepherd for direction and safety. How about you? Are you depending entirely upon Me, the Shepherd, for your direction and safety?

*Lord, help me learn the folly of self-defense. Teach me the security of Your defense.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I rely on myself too much, and I think I can fight my battles alone. Help me see how You protect me.*

*Lord, I am fearful of the enemy, and I don't want to fight. I only get hurt. Protect me from the enemy.*

*Lord, I have lost many battles because I have fought in my selfish strength. I yield to Your protection. Help me see it.*

*Lord, I want to be victorious over the enemy. Come fight for me and deliver me.*

In this world, you live with more stress and pressure than ever before. There seem to be more temptations around every corner waiting to tear you down, and you often have more bad days in life than good days. You seem to be constantly climbing over problems—mountains that block you from moving forward in the Father’s plan for your life. Isn’t it good news that I will comfort you both on the path and when you get to green pastures?

*Lord, I know trouble is coming. Help me get ready for it.*

Isn’t “comfort” a strange word to be used in this psalm? Isn’t comfort something you expect from a bowl of chicken soup or a warm bed? How can you be comforted when you’re walking through a dangerous valley—or when you’re climbing, crawling and running through the obstacle course of life? The problem with the word “comfort” in Psalm 23 is that in your modern language it suggests the wrong thing—it suggests resting. Technically, the word “comfort” here can be translated “help.” You could read this promise, “Your rod and Your staff, they *help* me.”

If a wolf attacks, you don’t want to try hiding under the covers of a comfortable bed; the wolf will find you and devour you. Instead, you want the help of a fearless shepherd wielding a lethal club. Once I swing My club and the wolf runs away, then you are comforted. So in that sense, the club is a comfort to you. So when you think of the word “comfort,” think of the results the sheep experiences when My club protects it from the wolf.

## THINK CAUSE AND EFFECT

Cause	Effect
Thy rod helps me.	I feel comforted.
Thy staff directs me.	I feel assured.

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I called the Holy Spirit both the Comforter and the Helper, much like the club and staff are a means of comfort. I promised, “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter/Helper...the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16,17,

KJV). The Comforter/Helper is not like a blanket on a bed, nor is the Comforter a person who comes to soothe you when you are emotionally upset. “Comforter” comes from the Greek word *parakletos*, which means “helper.” The Holy Spirit helps you live the Christian life. He helps you through difficult times, and you are comforted. This is why He is called the Comforter.

When sin sneaks up to deceive you, the Holy Spirit is there to use His club to protect you from evil. How does the Holy Spirit keep believers on track? He uses negative influence, *conviction*, to warn you of sin and keep you pure and holy.

But the Holy Spirit also employs a positive influence, *guidance*, to lead believers into the truth. His guidance is similar to My shepherd’s staff that gives direction to the sheep.

So how do I, the Shepherd, comfort you? By the ministry of the Holy Spirit who comes to warn you when you stray into sin, and by the Spirit’s ministry of directing you into the will of God.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I’ve lost battles and been defeated many times. Teach me to trust You and not myself, and give me victory now and in the future.*

*Lord, I’m afraid of sin and the enemy. Teach me to always trust in You.*

*Lord, I don’t ever want to fight again. I’m weary and afraid. Prepare me mentally for the next battle, and give me courage and strength.*

*Lord, I sometimes feel I can’t hold out and the enemy looks fierce. Come and fight for me. Defeat my enemy and give me peace.*

You will go through dark valleys; everyone has troubles. But you don’t have to be afraid of the shadows in the valley because of the promise, “I am with you.” I am not only with you; I carry a big stick.

When you are walking near to Me, the Shepherd, look up every once in a

while at that big menacing club dangling from My belt. It will make you feel secure. You don't have to be afraid of it. I, the Lord, love My sheep and would never use a club on them. The club is for the enemy.

*Lord, show me the club when I'm most fearful.*

Some sheep in the fields don't follow close to the shepherd because they're afraid of him. Perhaps they're afraid because he yelled at them when they strayed. Have I ever yelled at you? Sometimes you are like the sheep, straying too close to the edge of the cliff, in danger of toppling over. For your own safety, I yell, "Come back!" But you misunderstand My intent and thought I was angry with you because I shouted at you.

*Lord, help me always understand when You shout at me.*

Once there was a little lamb that continued straying into the thicket...near the edge of the cliff...into deep water...and near the wolf's lair. Finally, out of frustration, the shepherd broke the little lamb's leg. Then he tenderly bandaged it with a splint. The little lamb could no longer wander away from the shepherd; it had to stay nearby for food and drink. When the flock was led to another pasture for food, the shepherd carried the hobbled sheep. When they reached their destination, the shepherd caressed that little lamb more than the others. Why? Because the little lamb needed more love after it had been disciplined by the shepherd. Have I had to discipline you? Have I broken your leg or shouted at you to call you back to Me?

*Lord, help me obey so You don't have to shout at me.*

## **BE SURE I AM YOUR SHEPHERD, SO WHEN THE FINAL BATTLE COMES, YOU WILL BE ON MY SIDE.**

I, the Shepherd, have a club to protect you, but I would rather not use it unless I have to. No right-thinking shepherd ever picks a fight with a wolf, bear or lion. The shepherd could be wounded in a battle, and some of his sheep could be hurt or maimed. There seems to be a lot of sin around you, and satan seems to be having his day. Have you ever thought that maybe I have not picked My final fight yet with satan because I am protecting My sheep on the earth? When it comes to the final days and I pour out My tribulation on the earth, satan will lash out at My people in retaliation. That final day of judgment is coming, and I will be ready for the confrontation. Just make sure I am your Shepherd, so when that day finally comes, you will be on the My side.

I tell about the many enemies of My sheep. Sometimes satan poses as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14) and comes in among the sheep to destroy them. The enemy is like a thief sneaking into your house at night to steal your property (see John 10:10). Sometimes false teachers sneak into churches to steal My sheep. False teachers are like muggers who sneak up behind you to club you and steal your money. They deny the essence of Christianity, robbing the Bible of its supernatural nature. They deny the miracles and the power and necessity of My death and resurrection.

The hireling is also an enemy of the sheep. He watches sheep just for the money; so when the wolf comes, the hireling runs away, because he is more interested in self-protection than in guarding the sheep (see John 10:11-13).

The wolf is satan who comes to “steal, kill and destroy” (John 10:10). The enemy will steal sheep because he wants their allegiance, often to help him steal other sheep. But satan is the natural enemy of the sheep. He will kill you for no other purpose than to destroy your life.

## WHO ARE THE ENEMIES OF THE SHEEP?

1. The stranger (John 10:5)—unprepared ministers
2. The thief (John 10:10)—false religious teachers
3. The hireling (John 10:12)—uncommitted ministers
4. The wolf (John 10:12)—satan

If you are a sheep that belongs to Me, there will always be danger. You need Me nearby. There will always be someone trying to destroy you, so you need My club to protect you.

The rod is My important instrument. Moses was a shepherd in the Sinai Desert for 40 years. When the Father called him to service, Moses hesitated. The Father told him to throw his rod on the ground, and it became a serpent. This was a miraculous demonstration of the Father’s authority in Moses’ life (see Exodus 4:1-5). Later, to demonstrate the Father’s power to Pharaoh, Moses’ brother Aaron threw his rod to the ground and it, too, became a snake. The sorcerers of Egypt duplicated the feat with a pseudo-miracle, a magic trick, but the Father demonstrated His greater power as the serpent of Aaron swallowed up the serpents of the magicians (see Exodus 7:8-12).

For Jewish shepherds, the rod was not just a weapon; it also contained the

family genealogy. Just as some American families write their genealogy in the family Bible, so the head of each Jewish family carved his genealogy on his rod (see Numbers 17:2). When a father was about to die, he would pass his rod on to his sons, and it was kept in the family to remind them of their lineage. Some believe that when Moses wrote the genealogy of the various families of Israel, he was copying the names from the family rods.

One of the basic teachings of Psalm 23 is that the Shepherd has many ways to teach us. When a Jewish son misbehaved, he was disciplined with the family rod. The son was not beaten just to inflict pain, but rather, the rod reminded the disobedient son of family expectations, family tradition and family authority. “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Proverbs 13:24). Has the Father had to discipline you lately?

*Lord, keep me in close relationship to the Shepherd.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, forgive me for when I used my weapons against the enemy. I failed by not trusting You and the weapons You use to defeat the enemy.*

*Lord, I know You have weapons to defeat our enemy. Your weapons are much more powerful than mine. Teach me to trust Your weapons and Your power to defeat our enemies.*

*Lord, when the night gets dark and the enemy scares me, remind me to look up to see Your rod and staff.*

The staff is the most recognizable symbol of shepherding; you have seen pictures of a shepherd holding a staff with its crook at the upper end. When you walk through the valley of dark shadows, glance up every once in a while to see My staff held high in the air. Watch for the Shepherd’s crook in front of you. When you see it leading the way, you have nothing to fear.

*Lord, help me to keep my eyes on You.*

Sometimes three or four shepherds will bring their sheep together for a period of time. At night when the sheep go into the sheepfold for protection, one

of the shepherds will sleep across the door of the sheepfold to protect the animals throughout the night. The next morning, as the sheep leave to go out to pasture, a shepherd will take his staff to separate his sheep from others, pulling out those that belong to him.

The shepherd will also use his staff to pull a “dumb” sheep in the right direction or push away a sheep that doesn’t belong to him. Again, the shepherd doesn’t want to hurt the sheep; he only wants to make sure his sheep stay close to him. Have I been pulling on you lately? Maybe it’s because you are not staying close to Me.

*Lord, help me yield to Your direction when You pull me to come to Yourself.*

A shepherd lifts up his staff over the sheep to bless them. When Joshua led the Israelites into battle against the Amalekites, Moses went up onto a hill to watch the battle and to pray for victory. Moses said, “I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand” (Exodus 17:9). When Moses held up the rod in his hand, Israel prevailed in the battle; but when Moses lowered his staff, Amalek beat back the forces of Joshua. So two companions held up Moses’ arms until the victory was realized, because the uplifted staff was symbolic of the Father’s blessing.

*Lord, raise Your staff over me.*

There is little comfort in this world. Most don’t think to give comfort to others, because you are busy seeking it for yourself. This is a lonely world with very little love for other people. When you are lonely, scared and looking for help, you need to know that I, the Shepherd, have tools to comfort and protect you in your hour of need.

When everything goes right in your life, you don’t seem to need Me, the Shepherd. You satisfy your appetite in green pastures and drink from pools of still water. You sense no danger, no anxiety and no fear. You think you don’t need Me anymore, and you soon forget about Me. But when the first sign of danger arises, you desperately look around for Me in the dark of night. Isn’t it true that some of the greatest lessons you have learned were in the darkest time of night?

*Lord, help me learn so I don’t need to go through the darkness.*

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you (Isaiah 43:2).*



I, the Shepherd, never promised to shield you from sorrow. But when sorrows come, I will go through the troubles with you. I, the Shepherd, did not promise that you would not die or get sick; but when these things come, I will accompany you through the long, dark night. The Father is true to His Word, so depend on My presence.

*Lord, thank You for Your promise and Your presence.*

## Chapter 12

### I PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE YOU IN THE PRESENCE OF YOUR ENEMIES

**I**N Psalm 23, the sheep do not eat until they have been led through a threatening valley of dark shadows. Exiting danger, the sheep enter a lush green pasture that provides more than enough food. This is a picture of a table of food spread before them. Now the enemies of the sheep can't attack them; they can only watch from a distance as the sheep graze peacefully in a bountiful pasture.

*Thank You, Lord, for the joy of anticipation.*

*You prepare a table full of food to feed me in the presence of my enemies*  
(Psalm 23:5, author's paraphrase).

Notice where your table full of food is located—not in a secluded castle in a faraway land, but in the presence of your enemies. Usually when you come through a scary valley—a dangerous situation—you come out the other side running. Maybe you are not literally running, but on the inside your heart is racing. When running from danger, you are not thinking about a meal. All you are thinking about is escaping the predator that is dogging your footsteps. You are obsessed with the need to escape to some protected spot. You want to climb a tree that death shadows can't climb; you want to hide behind a protective wall that death shadows can't penetrate.

*Thank You, Lord, for Your guidance through my dark days.*

Being scared to death takes your mind off your hunger—frightened people do not think about food. But I, the Shepherd, think differently. I not only want My sheep to feel safe, I want to provide a safe place for them to eat until they are filled. A table full of food makes them feel confident and victorious. Because I, the Lord, am your Shepherd, I will lead you from a threatening situation to where you will enjoy an abundant meal.

*Lord, thank You for making me feel secure.*

Has the Father fixed a good hot meal for you lately? It is there for the eating,

so why don't you sit down and make yourself at home? Come taste the appetizer of love and feel My presence. The table is filled with bowls of salvation, so everyone can eat, no matter what they have done. There is a platter full of hope and excitement for the future. And there are enjoyable desserts of inner happiness. Come drink and you will never thirst again. If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, I will more than satisfy your needs and your heart's deepest desires.

Just as you eat to satisfy your hunger, you will find inner joy at My table. Just as you drink to quench your thirst, you will find complete fulfillment at My table. Just as a good meal makes you healthy, you will find strength and spiritual growth at My table.

But there's one thing better than food at My banquet: it is intimate fellowship you share with someone you love as you eat a meal with Me. You will commune with Me at the banquet table: "My beloved is mine and I am his" (Song of Songs 2:16). At My Shepherd's banquet table, you will get close to Me, learn from Me and become like Me.

*Lord, forgive me for not always feeding on the bread of life.*

Psalm 78 describes Israel's desperate condition from wandering 40 years in the wilderness. The nation had disobeyed the Father by refusing to enter into the Promised Land, so to punish their unbelief He relegated His people to four decades of wandering in the wilderness. During their journey, Israel asked in unbelief, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:19).

Is that a question you ask? When you are being chased by a death shadow, too scared to eat, can I feed you? Can I spread a table in the wilderness? Can I ever be secure again?

What is My answer?

*I prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies...your cup runs over (Psalm 23:5, Amplified).*

As you run from danger, I do not give you a quick squirt of water from a plastic bottle like you're a boxer between rounds. You are not like the marathon runner swigging water, frantically dashing toward the finish line. The next time you are running scared, remember what's waiting for you outside the valley: a full table and an overflowing cup.

*Lord, I hear You saying, "Come, sit down and eat."*

Think of an antelope being chased by a lion—it doesn't have time to drink and eat. When you are in danger, you tend to panic when you feel that time is running out. In desperation you cry, "I must do something!" Your heart pounds...you sweat...you gasp big gulps of air. You keep saying, "I've got to get away!" Stop and let Me feed you and give you a gigantic drink of refreshing water. Relax. You don't need to "eat and run." Take your time for a spiritual feast, because I have spread a table in the presence of your enemies and your cup overflows.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, my problems are getting me down and defeating me. Help me look beyond my problems to see the banquet table when I get out of this valley.*

*Lord, thank You for being with me in my problems and for delivering me from my unique death shadow.*

*Lord, I'm scared of the enemy but You've promised to be with me in the darkness. Help me feel Your presence and deliver me from the evil one.*

*Lord, You've promised me "good times" after the valley. Give me strength to hang on in the darkness.*

*Lord, thank You that there's a banquet table for me in the future. I claim it by faith.*

You need to tell yourself that it's okay to pause and breathe. I have invited you to a great feast of spiritual food, but do you know how to find My restaurant? The meal is called Communion, where you get to know Me intimately. Nothing else in life satisfies like knowing Me; and no food will taste as good as obeying My commandments: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:8).

When you pick out a restaurant, what are you looking for? Good food, good service and a nice atmosphere. The ambiance, or setting, is just as important as

the food, because good food can't be enjoyed in filthy surroundings. Nor can you enjoy a meal when you're surrounded by people yelling or fighting. To enjoy a meal takes more than good food in your mouth; it involves the entire experience. So why do I, the Shepherd, feed you in the presence of your enemies? Isn't that a strange setting in which to throw a feast?

Why would I feed My sheep in the presence of your enemies? Perhaps it's a victory banquet, and I am telling your enemies that I can protect My sheep. Perhaps it's the other way around. Maybe I am telling *you* that I have conquered all your enemies, so you will trust Me the next time you are in a dark valley. I, the Shepherd, know My sheep. I know you will stray again into the dark valley, and I know there will be dark shadows pursuing you in the future.

*Lord, deliver me constantly from the evil one.*

Once I get My sheep through the valley, there's food waiting on the other side. I know where the green pastures are located, and I lead My sheep there. I, the Shepherd, want My sheep to feed when they first get there; that's the reason I brought them through the dangerous valley. I do not take My sheep through the valley just to experience danger or to demonstrate that I can deliver them from danger. I take them through danger to get to the pastures on the other side.

## WHEN I AM YOUR SHEPHERD, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR—PLUS YOU GET A GOOD MEAL AND A FULL CUP.

As I, the Shepherd, lead My sheep through the dangerous valley, predators may have followed. Once you are safe in green pastures you enjoy the tender grass, but in the distance the predators watch. Nevertheless, you don't have to worry. Why? Because I am there to keep the enemy away. My club and staff will protect you. You must remember that as long as you are in good relationship with Me, your Shepherd, you have nothing to fear—plus you get a good meal to eat.

When the psalmist uses the word “presence,” what does he mean? Obviously, when two people meet, they are in each other's presence. But the enemy of the sheep is not sitting next to them at the banquet table. Sheep and predator are not even in the same pasture. Or to put it in today's terminology, they're not even on the same block. When you eat in the presence of your enemies, that means they can see you—but only from a distance. Perhaps the wolf is on a cliff or the bear is lurking in some dark woods. They are in the presence of the sheep, or in their sight line, but sheep and predator are worlds

apart because of Me, the Shepherd. Are you letting Me protect you?

*Lord, I feel safe in the Shepherd's care.*

David uses the words “my enemies” (Psalm 23:5), which refer not to just any enemies but rather *personal* enemies. Perhaps the enemies were those who had a vendetta against David’s life—i.e., Saul or Absalom—or murderers set to kill David. Do you have enemies? Do you have someone who particularly hates you? If you have enemies, I will give you a feast so they can look on to see My protection.

Remember, the feast is nothing if you don’t sit at the table, eat and enjoy yourself. This is how I, the Shepherd, show the predators lurking among the rocks that I take care of My own. Do you complain when I deliver you? Stop it! Do you take credit for getting yourself through dark valleys? Don’t! Why do you take credit for My protection and victory? Be a good testimony to your enemies; eat My food and enjoy My protection. It’s the best way to get back at your enemies. It’s My way.

The word “enemies” has an unusual ring to it. David doesn’t tell us we will eat in the presence of evil persons, although there is much evil in the world. David doesn’t mean you will eat in the presence of robbers. After all, robbers merely want to steal from you; they probably don’t hold a grudge against you. David chose the word “enemies” to show that there is hatred or animosity between the predator and the sheep. Remember, there are people in this world who hate Me, so they hate you, My sheep. They hate sheep just because they’re sheep. And they particularly hate you, because you are My sheep.

*Lord, I belong to You. Protect me.*

Even though the enemy is separated from you as you feed in My pasture, never miscalculate your enemy’s nature or underestimate his craftiness. The devil is a roaring lion seeking to devour you, and lions roar when they are hungry. The enemy wants to devour you not just because he hates you but also because he hasn’t had a meal in quite a while. The enemy is furious that you’re eating while he’s hungry. Nothing would give your enemy more satisfaction than to tear you limb from limb. When you see your enemy lurking in the shadows, lean close to Me, the Shepherd. Every time you feel a little threatened, lean even closer.

*Lord, I feel secure next to You.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I've been wounded by my enemy, and defeat hurts. I come to You for healing.*

*Lord, I have a particular enemy who wants to destroy me. I pray for my victory and his defeat.*

*Lord, my enemy scared me because I kept my eyes on the problem instead of on You. Forgive me for my faithlessness and help me overcome my problem.*

*Lord, I know there is security by Your side, but I tend to stray. Keep me close to You.*

*Lord, thank You for Your banquet. Even though I don't deserve it, may I always feed in Your presence.*

Don't let the enemy deceive you. Even when he's not chasing you or attacking you, he's still your enemy. Max Lucado tells the story of an old man attempting to climb the highest mountain. During his climb, the old man met a snake who asked, "Will you take me with you? I've never been to the top."

The old man said, "No. You'll bite me."

The snake promised, "I'll not bite you." So the old man put the snake inside his shirt and continued climbing.

When he finally reached the top, the old man looked around. It was the fulfillment of one of his life's dreams. He remembered the snake and took it out from under his shirt. Suddenly the snake struck the old man, sinking his fangs into the old man's flesh. As the venom filled the man's veins, he cried out, "But you promised you wouldn't bite me!"

The snake laughed, answering, "You knew what I was when you picked me up."

Many young people pick up a drug because it promises not to bite, but they become addicted. Have you been victimized by satan's lies? Remember that your

enemy may attack you by deceiving you. He's the father of lies, but you are safe resting next to Me, the Shepherd.

*Lord, protect me even when I don't know I need You.*

You probably live your life as a series of threatening valleys and enjoyable banquet tables. Like other believers, you are not exempt from dark days. As Job observed, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). Because I, the Shepherd, love you, I won't let you spend your whole life in the middle of storms. Sun will shine upon you some of the time. You may go through a dark valley, but there will be a sunny pasture waiting for you on the other side of your trouble.

*Lord, help me make it through.*

Why do some sheep have more valley experiences than others? Only I, the Shepherd, know. Why do some sheep have more banquet days than others? I have a different purpose for each life. What's My purpose for you? No one can answer but I, the Shepherd, so get close to Me.

Perhaps you are constantly threatened by death shadows and the night terrifies you because you've never learned to walk alongside Me, the Shepherd. You are in more danger than others because you walk too close to the edge of the precipice.

*Lord, keep me close to You.*

When you have finished eating from My table, do not jump up and start running again. Do not look around nervously for the death shadow or listen for the voice of the enemy. I have said, "Surely goodness and mercy will follow [you] all the days of [your] life" (Psalm 23:6, *Amplified*). If you think the death shadow is still following you and you are still trying to escape, you are looking for the wrong thing.

Learn to look to Me, and when you find Me you'll realize the sound behind you is not the enemy. It's the sound of My goodness and mercy following you according to My promise. And I will send goodness and mercy to follow you all the days of your life. I will protect you and take you to live with Me in heaven when this life is over.

Now, come to My table. Your cup is full, the food is warm and ready, and it's time to sit down and eat. I am there, for I have said, "I will be with you."



## Chapter 13

### I ANOINT YOUR HEAD WITH OIL

**W**HY do you need oil today? Because you came through a death valley where the thorns scratched your legs. You fell in a ravine and ripped your arm. When you came out of the valley, I, the Shepherd, anointed your wounds. I poured oil on them to cleanse them and prevent infection and disease. The oil was soothing. It relieved irritation and began the healing process.

*Lord, cleanse me from any sin or imperfection that would infect me.*

I, the Shepherd, remember that at special banquets, certain honored guests have oil poured upon their heads in recognition of their attendance at the meal. It is an oil of acceptance and honor. The one who is anointed with oil is given special recognition by all the other guests at the banquet.

*Lord, thank You for Your unique anointing on my life. May I fulfill Your purposes for my life.*

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil (Psalm 23:5).*

The first thing on the mind of sheep after they leave a dark, threatening valley is their appetite and thirst. After I have seen to those needs, I, the Shepherd, have another concern. I examine the wounds of My sheep. I know that if impurities are not washed away, a wound will get infected. I also know that oil will speed the healing process. So while the sheep are eating in the pasture, I am busy cleansing their wounds with oil. Each wound is carefully washed. Now healing can begin.

*Jehovah-Rophi, thank You for healing me.*

Do you have any wounds that might fester? Have you received any dirty cuts from gossip? Have you been roughed up by the opposition? Maybe you have some gashes or burn marks because someone told lies about you. What are you going to do about these problems? Let Me, the Shepherd, pour out My oil of cleansing to cleanse you of any dirty sin or damaging wounds. Forgive those who have lied against you and those who have gossiped about you. Pray for those who have abused you.

Sometimes when you pray good for your enemy, you are praying “coals of fire on his head” (Romans 12:20). But don’t just pray for judgment on your enemies; pray instead for Me to bless them. Sometimes the only way for Me to bless them is to deal with their sin. But judgment is not your concern. Get everything between you and Me straight, then let Me deal with things between Me and them. Ultimately, you want your enemies to turn and follow Me, the Shepherd, as you follow Me—even those who have sinned against you the most. When you pray in the Holy Spirit, His oil will cleanse you from impure attitudes that could otherwise destroy your life if you allow them to fester.

*Lord, cleanse my attitude.*

But I, the Shepherd, pour oil on you for more than just cleansing; I know oil feels good. Left unattended, the sheep’s wounds will burn, itch and sting. Sometimes a wound throbs with unceasing pain. Have you ever had a headache you couldn’t get rid of? Have you ever worked so hard around the house that every muscle in your body ached? What about emotional problems? Have you ever had a heartache that wouldn’t go away? Have problems ever invaded your dreams so you could no longer sleep? What you need is My oil. You need the oil of the Holy Spirit to soothe your pain.

*Lord, thank You for pouring the oil of the Holy Spirit on my life.*

Do you need some oil today? Make sure you are resting near Me, the Shepherd, so I can reach out to pour oil into your wounds. There is no advantage to sitting by yourself, away from the flock and away from Me. Don’t hurt just for the sake of hurting—that’s neurotic. Lift your head, look around to find Me, then cozy up close so I can anoint your wounds with oil.

*Lord, here I come!*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I hurt. I feel terrible. I want to feel better and I need Your help. Come anoint me with oil.*

*Lord, there is some dirt in my wounds; I confess to You that it was my sin that put it there. I’m responsible for my impurities. Forgive me of my sin, cleanse me and make me pure.*

*Lord, I need Your presence because I hurt and feel far away from You. Pour the oil of the Holy Spirit on my life.*

As I mentioned earlier, in Bible times honored guests were anointed with oil. They were given a special place at the table and special portions of food that others did not receive. Do you feel like you have been eating at the foot of My table? Maybe you feel like you have been eating in the kitchen! But I have a special place for you, and I have a special plate of food. Come, there is a chair reserved for you. Eat from the best china and use the silver utensils. You are an honored guest, because you are one of My sheep.

*Mmm, this food is good, Lord. Thank You for accepting me.*

Some scholars think an aging David wrote the 23rd Psalm while fleeing from his son, Absalom, who had rebelled against him and taken over the kingdom. Travel back for a moment to steal a glimpse at what David might have experienced during this difficult time in his life.

As David wrote about Me as his Shepherd, his thoughts take him back to when, as a mere 16-yearold boy, he was anointed as the future king of Israel. It was near the Kidron Valley in Bethlehem where the prophet Samuel had come to the house of Jesse, David's father, under the direction of the heavenly Father. There in the presence of David's father and brothers, Samuel poured oil over David's head and anointed him into the office of king (see 1 Samuel 16:1-13).

Now, many years later, David has only a handful of loyal followers, as he is forced to abandon his throne and the security of Jerusalem. The elderly David has been forced to flee down the same Kidron Valley toward the plains of Jordan. Imagine it: As David turns to look back up at Jerusalem, he knows he is leaving the city that stands for the central authority of his kingdom. All the symbols of his power have been stripped from him—there's no throne, no crown, no scepter, no walls of Jerusalem to protect him. David has lost all his outward authority, yet still—*still!*—he can write, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

I had placed David into the office of king, but now his son, Absalom, is trying to kill him. Absalom has taken over the office with crude force. With tears in his eyes, David remembers, "You anoint my head with oil."

In biblical days oil was a symbol of kingly authority, because oil was special to Me. In Israel at that time, candidates for prophet, priest and king were inducted into these divine offices by anointing with oil; prophet, priest and king

all had oil poured on their heads.

What does memory do for David? He remembers that I took the initiative to anoint him. Memory can do the same for you. Remember that it was Me, your heavenly Shepherd, who came looking for you when you strayed from My fold. Remember that it is Me, your Lord, who has always loved you and cared for you. I brought you back to Myself—not to punish you but to give you food to eat and water to drink. In spite of everything you have done, I anoint your head with oil.

*Lord, I don't know why You anoint me with oil, but thank You.*

Do you understand the full meaning of oil upon the head? The angel told Mary that her son Jesus would sit upon the throne of David—her Son would be the *Anointed One*. That phrase, “Anointed One,” is “Messiah” in the Hebrew language and “Christ” in the Greek language. When you use the word “Christ,” you are actually saying “the Anointed One.” When you say “Jesus Christ,” you are saying, “I am Jesus the Anointed One.”

I have already said that prophet, priest and king were the threefold anointed offices in Israel. But what does that mean to you and your walk with Me, the Shepherd? I, the Lord, anoint you with oil to give you a special position in relationship to Me. First of all, because you belong to Jesus, you are “in Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:30). You are in Me, the Messiah, the Anointed One. I told My disciples about their special position: “You in Me, and I in You” (John 14:20) describes the intimacy all believers would have with Me. So when you read about My anointing you with oil, remember that you are in Me and that I am in your heart.

*How close are you to the Father? You are as close as I, His Son, for you are in Me, His Son, and I am in you: “Christ lives in you” (Galatians 2:20).*

*Lord, anoint me with the oil of Your presence.*

There is another meaning associated with oil. In Scripture, oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. When you are anointed with oil, it is a picture of the Holy Spirit coming into your life. When you first accepted Me as your Savior, the Holy Spirit entered your soul, bringing with Him eternal life. When you face special tasks of service, you can be filled with the Holy Spirit to do the job for the Father. The New Testament mentions that the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit when they ministered for Me (see Acts 2:4; 4:8,31). Then there are other

times when you just want the fullness of the Holy Spirit in your life. You want His anointing. Have you had the Holy Spirit poured out on you lately?

*Lord, I want the anointing.*

When I, the Shepherd, anoint My sheep with oil, I don't anoint all My sheep. I can't anoint those that are straying, nor can I anoint those that are busy eating and drinking. If you are out of My reach, how can I anoint you? If you are not in the pasture, there is no way I can anoint you. The key to being anointed by Me, the Shepherd, is relationship. You must be close to Me. Are you within My arm's reach?

## IF YOU ARE OUT OF MY ARM'S REACH, HOW CAN I ANOINT YOU?

*Lord, I'm coming close to You. Will You anoint me?*

To receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit you must recognize that there are steps—things you must do to get it.

*You must want it.* Do you honestly want the Holy Spirit in your life?

*Get within my arm's length of Me, the Shepherd.* You need to be close enough for My loving arm to reach out and pour the oil of the Holy Spirit on you. Isn't this a good time to move closer?

*Seek the Holy Spirit's oil.* You have to know where the spout is located and then stand under the flow. Seeking Me has always been a key to revival—both personal and group revival. Seeking Me means spending time in prayer and meditation. It means worshiping the Father and enjoying fellowship with Him. When you see the oil pouring out somewhere else, go there to stand under the spout. When you see others with oil on their heads, go talk with them, pray with them and find out how they obtained the oil. Maybe they will help you position yourself for the outpouring of My oil.

*Open up your life to the Holy Spirit.* You can't open your life until you pay attention to Me, the Shepherd. This means yielding, surrendering, dedicating or consecrating yourself. You become passive and let Me take over the rule of your life.

*Ask for it.* “You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2). Will you ask for the anointing today?...Now!

*Receive it by faith.* What do I mean by faith reception? Think of pouring syrup from a jar. (This comparison is used because syrup's consistency is similar to that of a heavy oil.) When you tip the jar of syrup it takes a few seconds before the syrup actually starts dripping from the spout onto your waffles. When you have asked for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, you may not get it immediately. It's not because the Shepherd can't give it immediately. Maybe He is not ready to give it because you're not ready to receive it. Maybe you have hidden sin in your life that needs uncovering and cleansing. Maybe you are not yet close enough to Him. Maybe I, the Shepherd, am looking for faith on your part to believe that you will receive. So when the jar is tipped and the oil doesn't come out immediately, keep praying, keep believing—you need patience. Wait for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and it will come if you wait long enough.

*Keep your cup under the spout.* Don't go running all over the place looking for other oils that run out faster. You can't come to church once or try Me for one day or pray once for an answer. I am looking for true believers—those who mean business. If you didn't get your cup filled, don't go looking elsewhere for fun and pleasure. That's not the answer.

*Finally, you must act on the anointing when it comes.* When you get the Holy Spirit, use the anointing for the reason that He was poured out upon you: to receive My blessings and share them with others. Rejoice in the Lord, worship the Father, then serve other people.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I've run all over the place looking for fun and pleasure, but I haven't found deep satisfaction; I know it is found in You.*

*I commit myself to seeking You as hard as I sought a good time in the world. I will seek You with all my heart.*

*Lord, I'm empty and powerless—my life is running on empty. I don't have spiritual ability to live for You or serve You. Pour oil on me today.*

*Lord, I want the Holy Spirit in my life. I'm waiting for Him to anoint me with oil. Fill me now!*

## Chapter 14

### YOUR CUP RUNS OVER

**I**T'S been a long, hot trip through the barren desert. I am your Shepherd up ahead, guiding you and the flock to lush green pastures. You begin to realize how thirsty you are. Then a familiar, welcome scent reaches your nostrils: water. The thought of water makes you walk faster, more confidently. Then you see it—a pasture and a cool, still pond of crystal-clear water. The pasture is like a table spread before you with all the enjoyable food you can eat. The pool of pure water looks like a cup—your favorite cup—that's running over with your favorite drink. The pool is large and deep, but you can see clear to the bottom. You know you could never drink it all. It's all you can drink—and more.

*Lord, thank You for good water to drink when I'm thirsty. Thank You for providing even more than I can drink.*

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies...my cup runneth over (Psalm 23:5, KJV).*

Consider the phrase “my cup.” When you come to My table, you don't see a strange cup, a new cup or a beautiful cup. While these may be nice, when you're thirsty, you want to drink out of *your* cup. Have you ever noticed how many people have a favorite cup for drinking their coffee? Many people keep a favorite coffee cup at work so they don't have to drink from a paper or styrofoam cup.

*Thank You, Lord, for letting me drink from my cup.*

You know it's not your parents' cup—you can't live on your parents' religion. They may be Christians and, if so, I, their Shepherd, have filled their cups on many occasions. But in My house, everyone has his or her own cup. So don't try to drink out of your parents' cup. Get your cup from off the shelf and hold it under the flow until it is filled. Then you can claim the promise, “My cup runneth over.”

The psalmist didn't say, “My cup ran over,” describing the past blessings of God. Some people always talk about what I did for them in the past. Some have never washed out the foam from yesterday's blessing. Each day they go to the

shelf and inspect their cup to see if the foam from a previous blessing is still there. They may even run a finger around the inside of the cup to get any lingering taste. Find the spout that's pouring out today's blessing and get your cup refilled. Then you can praise the Father and say, "My cup is running over now!"

*Lord, let it flow.*

Some say, "My cup *will* run over in the future." Right now their life is empty, and they are thirsty. If you pressed these people, they would have to say, "My cup is empty." But as soon as they confessed their thirst, they might optimistically predict, "My cup will overflow someday." Do you live in the future? Do you plan to have the power of God someday? Do you plan to study the Bible all day or go to a retreat center where you will fast and pray for a day or even several days? Don't rob yourself of today's blessing by living in hope of a future that may never get here. My friend John Maxwell says, "Life is a journey, not a destination." You can have a full cup today.

*Lord, fill my cup now.*

Still other people think they have many cups. They pray optimistically, "Lord, fill up all my cups." But that's not what the psalmist says. He describes *one* cup: "My cup runneth over." Some people have a "church cup," and they want it filled on Sunday. They have another called the "job cup," which they want filled on payday. The student wants his "school cup" filled on exam day. And young people want their "happiness cup" filled on date night. There are almost too many to mention—sports cups, family cups, hobby cups, etc. Many have a cup hidden away in a closet that is locked. It's a lust cup or addiction cup.

The problem is you really only have one cup, and it's *you*. All that you think and do touches every part of your life and then ricochets back to touch the original part. Your one cup is your whole life. I don't just fill one area of your life; I take complete control or nothing at all. I fill all—or nothing at all.

When you say "My cup runneth over," you're saying I influence all of your life with My presence.

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, You've filled my cup continually, but I've been too blind to see Your blessing. I've been too rebellious to drink what You have*



*poured. Forgive me for wasted opportunities and give me one more big drink.*

*Lord, I have only one cup, and it's not very big. I have a powerful thirst. I want to drink deeply from Your blessings.*

*Lord, teach me the theology of the cup, so I will know when to drink, how much to drink and what to do when I'm filled up.*

*Lord, teach me the obligation of now. I have only one cup—I have only today for sure. Fill my cup now, and I will drink immediately.*

What do you think the psalmist means when he says “runneth over”? If this happens on most of our tables, mother runs to wipe up the spill. Most people don't want their cups running over; they don't want spills. If you are the legalistic kind, you are more concerned about what's spilling out of the cup than what is being poured into it!

Perhaps the phrase “runneth over” is just a picture of abundance, and I, the Shepherd, don't intend for you to spill or lose anything. Perhaps the words “runneth over” are a metaphor to communicate fullness and sufficiency. Whatever it means, is your life running over with My blessing?

The phrase “runneth over” could refer to the source of the blessing. Perhaps it means I have so many blessings that I can pour them out on you and still have more. Remember, I don't have a warehouse of blessings that will run empty sometime in the future. I, the Shepherd, don't store up My blessings. I am the Blesser, I am unlimited and My blessings are unlimited. I pour them out continuously. If I had a pitcher of blessings, it would never run empty. Don't worry about getting left out—I will never run out of blessings.

When I was thirsty, sitting on the edge of the well in Samaria, a woman arrived at the well with a bucket. I asked, “Give me a drink” (John 4:7). The woman at the well had been married five times and was now living with a man who was not her husband. She was probably suspicious of men and of Me in particular. After all, I was a Jew and she was a Samaritan.

“How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” she asked.

*I answered, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Me, and I would have given you living water” (John 4:9-10, Amplified).*

Perhaps she thought I meant continuous running water, like the faucets in our modern kitchens. She might have envisioned an artesian well where water continually flows. The woman wanted her bucket filled so she would never have to come to the well again. If you are My sheep, you never have to worry about thirst again. I will fill your cup to overflowing forever. Would you like that?

What does it mean that your cup will always be filled? I will always pour out a blessing. That doesn't mean you won't have financial problems, health problems or family problems; but when troubles come, you will have spiritual blessings from an overflowing cup.

The blessings are always flowing, because the tap is always open. But some are thirsty and choking to death for lack of water. Why? Because they refuse to bring their cup to Me, the Shepherd, so I can fill it. If you are thirsty today, don't blame Me or your friends. Drink is available, but you have to grab the cup, lift it to your lips and take a big gulp. Go ahead, do it.

*Lord, Your water makes me feel good. I sure need it.*

## **GO AHEAD. GRAB YOUR CUP, LIFT IT TO YOUR LIPS AND TAKE A BIG GULP!**

What are you going to do about all that liquid in your cup? It's so full that it's running over. Think about Me, the one who fills your cup. I have been generous with you in the past, just as I am pouring plenty of blessings into your cup at the present time. Isn't it time you think about others? Since God has filled your cup to overflowing, you should share with others. My blessing are not something you can stash away or hide; you have to give it away as you receive it.

*Lord, help me not to look in the bottom of my cup as I drink. Help me to lift my eyes toward others.*

I will give you more than you can drink—more than enough. I give “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

Do you have a cup? Look inside to see what blessing is there from Me. Is it full? Half empty? If your cup is not full, will you let Me fill it for you? It is easy

to get a full cup, because I have more than enough to fill yours and the cup of every other sheep that comes to Me. Not only do I, the Shepherd, have many blessings for you, but I also want to fill the cup of others.

So how do you get your cup filled? First, you have to *want* a full cup. This means you must get honest with yourself and Me. You need to confess, “I’m thirsty, and I want a drink of water.” The Bible says, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Psalm 81:10). If you want a drink of water, I, the Shepherd, will give it to you.

The second step involves loving the Father. Do you love Him who loves You? I said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:23, author’s paraphrase). Receive that promise. If you love Me, both I and the Father will make Our home in your heart. That’s the same as filling your cup. You are the cup, and I fill you with Myself. That’s abundant blessing!

The third step is to ask the Father to fill your life. If you are empty, it’s because you have never asked Me to fill your life. “You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2). Why don’t you pray right now for Me to fill your cup?

*Lord, fill me.*

There’s a fourth step to having an overflowing cup: You must *receive* what I, the Shepherd, offer. When someone offers you a cup of coffee or hot chocolate, what do you do? You reach out and take it! You can’t drink from a cup until you receive it. If you fight the entrance of the Father into your life, then you can’t be filled.

Why would you fight Me? Is it because you know I want you to be holy? To drink from the cup, you will have to rid yourself of sin. I want to fill your mind, so you will have to change your vocabulary and allow Me to purify your thought life.

I, the Shepherd, want to fill your life totally, so you will have to restructure your calendar. You will have to adjust your business and family life according to My principles.

Don’t compromise: You may only want to give Me, the Shepherd, half your life, but I don’t deal with half a cup. In the restaurant you can ask for half a cup of coffee, but I, the Shepherd, will not pour your cup half full. And I won’t compromise with a dirty cup. I will not pour pure water into a dirty vessel. Why should My pure water be contaminated by your dirty cup?

But then, I, the Shepherd, never ask My sheep to “do the dishes.” I know sheep can’t wash dishes! If sheep have dirty cups, they can’t clean them up by themselves. So the task of cleaning the cup belongs to Me, the Shepherd.

*What must you do to get clean? You must ask Me to cleanse your cup. All you have to do is be willing to get rid of sin. Determine that you want a clean cup and ask Me, the Shepherd, to wash out the dirt. “If you confess your sins, I am faithful and just to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).*

*Lord, come wash my dishes.*

Now that you are ready to have your cup filled and overflowing, I hope you have not missed the point that your overflowing cup is your whole life. When I fill your cup, I fill every part of your life. Some people want Me to fill their mouths but not their hearts. So they go to church and say the right things, but they hold evil thoughts in their hearts. Other people want Me to fill their hands for work in church, but their eyes still desire sin. Still others want Me to fill their feet to do good deeds, but they are not willing to have Me cleanse their attitudes. If you don’t offer the total cup to Me—your whole life—I can’t fill it for you. Where is your cup? Why don’t you hold it up to Me with both hands?

Some people want Me to fill their cup to the brim, but not a *smidgen* over. These are believers who fulfill every obligation at church but don’t go the extra mile. They only do what is required of them. They give exactly a tithe of their income but not a penny more. But you can’t bargain with Me. You must give Me everything, so I will fill your life to overflowing. I will pour so much blessing into your life that it will spill over!

Have you ever spilled any blessings into someone else’s cup? When your cup runneth over, splash it around and let some others get wet!

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, stretch my expectation because I’ve settled for a small sip of blessing from the cup in the past. Give me faith to want more, and give me ability to do more.*

*Lord, I love to drink when You fill the cup. It never empties, because*

*You keep it full. May I never become satisfied with little swallows.*

*Lord, You've filled my cup with the water of eternal life, and I will live forever with You. May I always drink deeply of eternity.*

*Lord, help me to live generously. Just as You've been generous in filling my cup, I want to give out more than I take in.*

## Chapter 15

# SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW YOU ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE

CAN you feel spring in the air? Your spirit is refreshed by the gentle breeze that blows over the hills and the palette of clouds that cut the heat, making it a perfect day. I, your Shepherd, am nearby, and there is enough food to eat and water to drink—you don't have a worry in this world.

You never plan to leave Me, the Shepherd, nor do you intend to stray away from the flock. Sometimes you get so busy feeding yourself, however, that you just wander away. But when you begin to stray, goodness and mercy pursue you and bring you back into the fold.

*Lord, thank You for good things that keep me near You and for Your mercy that pursues me when I stray.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life (Psalm 23:6).*

You left the valley of death where death shadows were pursuing you—you could feel them biting at your heels. You thought you were going to be destroyed, but I brought you out of the valley to a lush green pasture. And what do you see? A table loaded with meats, fruits and desserts. You see Me pouring so much into your cup that it is running over. You have all you can eat and drink, but as you get up to leave, where do you plan to go? Don't go back into the valley where the death shadows lurk! Rather, stay close to Me, the Shepherd, so I can lead you to the next destination.

*Lord, thank You for good days when I feel great. May I trust You in good days, as I do in the dark, scary valley.*

As you begin following Me, the Shepherd, something is nipping at your heels. You are scared momentarily, because you think death and destruction are on your trail. But in fact they are My sheepdogs, Goodness and Mercy. They are right behind you to make sure you stay in the flock. Why are you worrying? My goodness is giving you wonderful things to keep you in the flock, and My mercy is overlooking your failures. These two sheepdogs will pursue you—not just

today but for the rest of your life. Don't worry, you have Me, the Shepherd, up front guiding you and My two sheepdogs following you to make sure you keep up with the flock.

*Lord, why am I worrying when You are taking care of me?*

The first sheepdog is Goodness. When I see one of My sheep wander after some foreign grass just a little way from the flock, I send My sheepdog to chase the wandering sheep back to the flock. I don't throw a rock or stick at My sheep to hurt them. I don't want to hit My sheep, nor do I want anything else to hurt My sheep. I don't say, "If the sheep falls into the ravine, that will teach it a lesson."

I, the Shepherd, do *good* things for My sheep—even when they stray too far away. "My goodness leads to repentance" (Romans 2:4). What good thing have I, the Shepherd, done for you lately? Are you in good health? Do you have shelter against the rain? Have you eaten today? Do you have a family who loves you? Look at all the good things you have. My goodness wants to do good things for you.

*Lord, give me an eye to appreciate all the good things You do for me.*

The second sheepdog pursuing you is Mercy. I, the Shepherd, have mercy because "I am rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4). When you are rich with something, you have an abundant supply to share with others—and I have an abundant supply of mercy. Unlike the shepherd who has a few things tucked into a bag to help him with his duties, I have more than just a pocketful of mercy. My very nature is mercy. I have more than just a warehouse full of mercy. I am a factory, a mercy maker, and I will never run out of it.

As a matter of fact, when I began listing My qualities to describe who I am, I listed mercy first. Moses asked to see My glory, so I descended in a cloud to Mt. Sinai to answer him, proclaiming, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

## I, THE SHEPHERD, LOVE YOU AND CHASE AFTER YOU WITH GOOD THINGS.

First, the passage says I am merciful, but I add that I have abundant goodness. That is where the two sheepdogs get their names. And when they are playfully running after you, they don't have a separate agenda from Me. They do the same things I do for My sheep. I have taught My sheepdogs well: They do

good things for My sheep, and they show mercy to My charges.

There are two sides to mercy, just as there are two sides to a door. The first side of the door is My side: Mercy reveals My character. I love you and chase after you with good things. If you have sinned against Me, I have something good for you: I have *forgiveness* in My Shepherd's bag. If you have turned your back on Me, I have *restoration* in My satchel to bring you back into the fold. If you deserve punishment for your rebellion, I have *grace* in My bag, not a whip with which to beat you.

Grace is My way of giving you the exact opposite of what you deserve, rather than punishing you for going astray. In mercy I hug you close to Myself and rejoice over you. What do you and I prescribe when a child misbehaves or runs away? Punishment! What do you get when you run from Me and then come back repentant? Restoration and fellowship! That's mercy.

*Lord, have mercy on me!*

But there is a second side to the door of mercy—your side. You felt threatened in the dark valley with death shadows chasing you, but what do you feel now? *Relief!* When you are relieved, your pain, distress and fears are removed. When I, the Shepherd, show mercy, your anxiety melts and you experience relief.

When you are sick and in pain, I, the Shepherd, bind up your wounds, pouring in healing oil to relieve your suffering. That's mercy. When you are in financial debt and cannot pay your bills, I, the Shepherd, give you a table full of food and a house in which to live. That's mercy. When you've messed up a project at work and you think you're going to be fired, but you work through the project with your boss, you feel relieved. That's mercy. Even more, you feel relieved when you don't get fired. That's mercy. When you say that I have mercy, you are describing the relief I give you from the threat of death shadows. That's mercy. You feel good when I, the Shepherd, bring you out of the storm. That's relief. That's mercy.

Paul understood mercy when he said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief...for this reason I obtained mercy" (1 Timothy 1:15,16). Before his conversion, Paul hated Me. He persecuted the Church and was responsible for the death of Stephen, one of Christianity's most promising young leaders. What a terrible blow to the Church! Did I punish Paul for blasphemy and murder? No! I forgave his sins so he could say, "I have obtained mercy."



What do you deserve from Me? Have you denied Me? Have you strayed from My fold? Have you cursed with My name or broken My commandments? Do you need mercy?

*Yes, Lord, pour mercy on me!*

David demonstrated the meaning of mercy. After he became king, he called a servant to ask, “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?” (2 Samuel 9:3). This seemed a strange request, because Saul had driven David out of Jerusalem and into the wilderness. For 13 years Saul had pursued David, intending to kill him. David had lost his home, family, security and place of service. David could have had revenge in his mind with an eye toward eliminating any heirs of Saul who would have been a threat to David’s throne. But David didn’t want to get even; he understood My mercy and he wanted to show it to others.

David found there was one heir left—a grandson of Saul’s named Mephibosheth. When the boy was quite young, an accident had left him lame for life. David’s servants brought the crippled Mephibosheth to the king’s table, and David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father’s sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually” (2 Samuel 9:7).

David later proclaimed, “As for Mephibosheth...he shall eat at my table like one of the king’s sons” (2 Samuel 9:11). Now that’s mercy! One who deserved to be punished for what his grandfather had done is rescued and brought to the king’s table like one of the king’s own sons. How did Mephibosheth feel? Relieved, joyful, accepted and chosen. How do you feel when I, the Shepherd, bring you to My table and give you all you can eat?

*Lord, it feels good to eat at Your table.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I’m glad You don’t send punishment after me when I sin. Thank You that Your sheepdogs Goodness and Mercy are pursuing me.*

*Lord, I worship You for being good. I magnify You for being merciful. Help me always to see the good things You do for me.*

*Lord, thank You for Your mercy that pardons the evil things I do. I will live a victorious life because of this unbeatable combination.*

You feel so good that you want to pet the two sheepdogs. But you can't, because they are on the move, dashing back and forth to bring stray sheep back into the fold. When all the sheep are safely in the fold and lying down in green grass, the sheepdogs lie quietly next to the shepherd. Now you can pet them. If you do, they'll nuzzle up to your foot as if to say, "Pay attention to us." That's the sheepdogs' way of telling you not to forget My goodness and mercy. Both should be a constant presence in your life's journey, giving you encouragement and peace.

Have you ever noticed how few things in life are "for sure"? Someone once said that nothing is certain except death and taxes. However, the psalmist uses the word "surely." I, the Shepherd, am telling you that some things *are* certain: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow." No matter where you go, they will follow you, sticking to you like glue. You can't shake My sheepdogs—they'll stick with you forever.

The psalmist doesn't say they *might* follow. A conditional promise could become an unfulfilled promise if we were to stray from the Shepherd. If the psalmist had said "might follow," it would have meant, "If we follow the Lord, *then* His sheepdogs will follow us." But that is not the message of Psalm 23. This is a psalm of relationship. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you, even when you stray into the valley of the shadow of death. I, the Lord, am with you, and goodness and mercy will still chase you.

Why goodness and mercy together? Because goodness is what your mother gave you when you were hungry. She prepared hot biscuits, cold iced tea—and there was even a dessert after the meal. The kitchen was warm, your bed was clean and because your mother was good, she gave you good things. Likewise, I, the Shepherd, do good things for you because I am good.

But there was another side to your mother: She was merciful. When you scraped your knee, she applied medicine to the wound and wiped away your tears. She didn't scold you for being careless. When you failed at sports or any other endeavor, your mother listened to you. I, the Shepherd, am like that. I am good to the sheep that follow close to Me, but I am also merciful to those who stray into the dark valley. I bring you back safely to the fold, all the while rejoicing over you.

*Lord, I praise You for being both good and merciful.* When the psalmist says “goodness and mercy shall follow me,” he is painting a picture of being closely followed or pursued. It is a picture of someone chasing another to catch up with them. You have seen a dog chasing a car, and you’ve seen movies about a sheriff’s posse chasing the bad guys in a western. Do you realize that I have two sheepdogs chasing you? They’re not trying to bite you! They want to do good things for you and show you My mercy.

My sheepdogs are following you, but maybe you don’t realize it. Perhaps you don’t see My working in your life. You go around being terrorized by evil, when the Bible says, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4, KJV). You are continually obsessed with the evil death shadow that you think is chasing you. You need to remember that you belong to Me, and I take care of My own.

How far will the sheepdogs pursue you? Maybe you think Goodness and Mercy pursue you only when you go to church or do something good for Me. You think I am not near on a stormy Monday morning or worse, when your car is stuck in a snowbank. You think that I have deserted you, if you think about Me at all. But remember that I am with you in the valley, and I send Goodness and Mercy to chase after you when you slide backwards. On good days and bad, Goodness and Mercy are following you—just turn around and see.

*Lord, open my eyes.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, there are so few things in life that I can count on. Yet You promise me that I can count on Your goodness and mercy. Help me to see it daily in my life.*

*Lord, You have been good to me. You have given me more than I deserve. Thank You for Your bountiful goodness.*

*Lord, You have forgiven me every time I’ve strayed from Your side. Thank You for Your mercy to forgive me and restore me every time I drift away.*

*Lord, forgive me when I look around to see if the devil is catching up to me. Give me faith to look around to see Your sheepdogs, Goodness and Mercy, following me.*

## Chapter 16

# AND YOU WILL LIVE IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER

**A**LTHOUGH David conceived of Psalm 23 when he was only a boy shepherding sheep for his father, he wrote it while fleeing from Jerusalem as an elderly man. As he escaped down the Kidron Valley, David looked back over his shoulder toward the fortified walls that he had built surrounding Mount Zion. Maybe David thought he was getting his last look at the city of David.

He had done everything he wanted to do except build a temple. When David began gathering materials to construct a magnificent temple to the Father, We stopped him, saying, “Your son Solomon will build My temple” (see 1 Chronicles 28:6). As David took his last look at Jerusalem he prayed, “May I dwell in God’s house forever.”

*Lord, that’s my prayer, too. I want to live with You forever in Your home.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6).*

The capstone of rebuilding Jerusalem was the Temple. It was the crowning pinnacle of David’s ministry. But now he was beyond the Jordan with nothing but a dream in his heart: to living in My house. David doesn’t weep over his lost palace, his servants or the adoration of the fickle crowd—the same crowd that was now praising his son, shouting, “Long live king Absalom” (see 2 Samuel 16:16). David has a passionate hope—to live in My house, to be in My presence, Hope will keep him alive as he sleeps this night on the ground.

As long as a man has hope, he’s not dead, nor is he dying. A man with a vision of doing something for Me is more alive than his enemies who do not recognize Me.

*Lord, I have a dream. Help me to realize it.*

To understand the vast ramifications of this final verse of Psalm 23, you must remember where shepherds live. They don't live in a house. They sleep in a tent, usually a cold tent. Many times their only source of heat is a fire—if they have one—at the tent's door. They sleep on hard, unforgiving ground, not in a soft, warm bed. Would you like to live the rest of your life in a tent?

*Thank You, Lord, for a roof over my head, a floor under my feet and a bed to sleep in.*

Sometimes the shepherd has to sleep under the open sky, his roof the stars. His only protection from the cold is the tunic that also protects him from pouring rain and beating sun. Nor does he have a change of clothes. A shepherd sleeps outdoors with no walls to keep out snakes, scorpions and other venomous creatures. So what is the shepherd's ultimate dream in life? "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

*Lord, I want more than a house to live in. I want to live with You.*

I had promised David that his son Solomon will build the Temple and that Solomon will be the next king. David should be happy at the thought of his son carrying on the family name. But David isn't thinking about Solomon or his other son Absalom, who has stolen the kingdom. David still has a dream: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The word "I" has deep meaning for David. *He* will dwell in God's home; *he* will fellowship with Me. He wants it for himself—not for his sons, not for other shepherds, not for Israel in general. This is personal for David.

What do you want from Me for yourself—not for your family or your Sunday school class? Relationship is always personal, and We can have a personal relationship. You can dwell with Me forever.

*Lord, I must know You; I must live in Your presence.*

The word "dwell" here does not mean to sleep. While you do sleep in a house or apartment, the word "dwell" means more. Some seem to think "I will dwell" means "I rent space in My house; it's theirs for a short while." When David pens this remarkable psalm, he is not dreaming of a temporary stay in God's house. He wants to settle down in it and make it his permanent residence.

*Lord, I want to dwell in Your presence forever, never to leave it.*

## YOU NEED TO REST WITH GOD IN HIS HOUSE.

A shepherd camps where the night finds him. Sometimes he camps on a windswept mountain, at other times in a secluded valley. The camp is usually an overnight situation—a temporary place. Think of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness for 40 years—no roots, no familiar surroundings and no permanence. If you were camping as the Israelites camped, you couldn’t even get used to the water supply. You couldn’t even get comfortable with anything. You would live in a constant state of change, over and over picking up and moving from one place to the next. Change would be your bed, your coat, your seat and your table.

*Lord, I thank You for some degree of permanence in my life.*

The word “dwell” suggests a place of rest. Where do you rest best? Usually you rest or sleep most soundly in your own bed at home. While camping is exciting and you relax during a camping vacation, have you ever said, “I need some rest to get over my vacation”? Why is that? Probably because you worked or played too hard on your vacation, and now you need to go home to rest. The word “dwell” suggests you are going to sleep in your home and you’re going to get some rest. Are you tired from too much stress? Maybe you’re tired from too much play. What you need is to rest with Me in My house.

The shepherd knows when his sheep need rest, so he makes them lie down in green pastures. When do I give you rest? I, the Lord, give you the night so you can rest from each day’s heat and work. I, the Lord, give you rest each Sunday, so you can recover from the pressures of the week. Heaven is called a place of rest (see Hebrews 4:1-10). I, the Lord, make a place for you, heaven, where you will one day rest from the trials you have now on Earth.

*Lord, I need rest. Help me take advantage of the opportunities that are mine.*

## YOUR TURN TO PRAY

*Lord, I need rest; I’m weary and life is difficult. Renew my strength*

*for today and help me serve You afresh tomorrow.*

*Lord, I feel like I'm just camping out here on Earth. While I manage to get some physical rest, I need "soul rest," too. Renew me.*

*Lord, I look forward to good sleep tonight and working hard tomorrow. May I get strength from my sleep and new purpose from my rest.*

"Dwell" is a wonderful word to a shepherd. It means more than a place to stay awhile or a place to sleep for the night. The word "dwell" suggests "abiding in a home" or "settling down with your family" or to "feeling secure." Because most shepherds had no home to go to at night, they probably dreamed of a warm, quiet place where they could rest each evening. What is your dream?

David's passion was to live in My house. Remember that as a boy, David tended sheep under the open sky. As a fugitive he was pursued by Saul for 13 years in the Judean wilderness. That's a long time to sleep on the ground. Yet, even before Absalom drove David out of Jerusalem, he had a passion for My home: "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me" (Psalm 27:5). When David is once again pursued by enemies, what is the one thing he wants most?

*One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple (Psalm 27:4).*

David had a passion for My house that Solomon would eventually build. This would be a permanent replacement for the moveable and temporary Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, which was a tent designed to be the meeting place between Me and My people. Let's examine this Tabernacle more carefully. Scholars are not sure where the Tabernacle was located during the time of David's youth. The Tent of Meeting originally housed the Ark of the Covenant in Shiloh (see Joshua 18:1). The Philistines later overran the nation of Israel in battle and took the Ark of the Covenant, placing it in a heathen temple among some of their own pagan idols. But I afflicted the Philistines with painful sicknesses, so they sent the Ark back to Israel (see 1 Samuel 5).

David's first attempt to return the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem was a



miserable failure. He and his men tried to move the Ark on a wagon—contrary to My directions. When the wagon lurched, I struck a man dead who touched the Ark (see 1 Chronicles 13:10). David was determined to do it right the next time, so he consulted the Scriptures. He ordered that the Ark of the Covenant be carried on the shoulders of the Levites, and continual sacrifices were made as the Ark was brought to Jerusalem. A great choir assembled at Jerusalem to greet the procession by singing My praises. Trumpeters were poised on the city walls to announce the coming of the Ark. There at the front was David, dancing mightily before Me. When all the people saw the procession of the Ark coming toward Jerusalem, they praised Me (see 1 Chronicles 15:28).

But when David brought the Ark into Jerusalem, the Tabernacle itself—or what was left of it following the Philistine raid—was not in Jerusalem but, instead, was in Gibeon, a few miles away (see 1 Chronicles 16:39). So David pitched another tent on Mount Zion in Jerusalem specifically to house the Ark.

Many scholars think the separate tent David set up was his own private place of worship. The Bible says:

*Then King David went in and sat before the Lord; and he said: “Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?” (2 Samuel 7:18).*

When David sat before Me, he was sitting before the Ark of the Covenant, that is the presence of God, who “dwelt” above the mercy seat between the cherubim on the Ark (see Numbers 7:89; 1 Samuel 4:4).

According to the Law of Moses, only the Levitical priests were allowed to enter the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. David was king, but he was not a Levitical priest. If it is true that David had a private tent which housed the Ark, David actually circumvented the Levitical law in order to be closer to Me! He sat in My presence and enjoyed fellowship with Me.

*Lord, let me follow You and dwell in Your presence, no matter the cost.*

David understood that My presence dwelt with the Ark, so he wanted the Ark near his house to receive My blessing on his home and life. At night, David wanted to see the people praising Me in the Tabernacle on Mount Zion: “Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the

Lord” (Psalm 134:1, KJV). As David walked about his palace, he could look out over Mount Zion where the Ark of the Covenant was being kept in his personal tent. He saw people standing there praising Me with their hands, blessings and thanksgiving.

*Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord (Psalm 134:2).*

*The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion (Psalm 134:3, KJV).*

David had a passion to live in My presence; intimacy with Me was his constant dream. David wanted to dwell forever in My house, wherever it was located. David constantly worshiped Me from his heart and blessed Me at all times. Do you have the passion of David to dwell in My house and enjoy My presence? The good news for you is that you do not have to travel to Jerusalem or any other specific location to dwell in My presence. I meet My sheep where they live!

*Lord, I love You. I want to dwell in Your presence to worship You.*

When David said “I will dwell,” he was making a *faith promise*. David knew I had blessed him and that I was his Shepherd. David had such a strong relationship with Me that he had confidence he would one day return to the holy city to live with Me.

Notice David didn’t say, “I *want* to dwell.” There are many things in life that you want but don’t get. You may want a new car, a bigger house or the latest electronic gadget. You crave or desire something, not knowing if you will get it. When David said “I will dwell,” he was making a statement in bold faith that I would one day return him to Jerusalem and to My house. He knew he would live with Me forever.

*Lord, I know You will take me to heaven.*

But there’s another important meaning to the phrase “I will dwell.” It is a statement of commitment. David was making a promise to return to My house. This is something he had to do. When David said, “I will dwell,” he was committing his wealth, his armed men, even his own life, to do whatever it

would take to return to Jerusalem and My house. His son Absalom had run him out of his house and out of Jerusalem, away from the Ark and My presence. But when David said, “I will dwell,” he made a promise to return and worship Me on Mount Zion.

Like David, you can conclude by saying, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” This statement is the perfect ending to the most beloved passage of Scripture. Like David, you can be assured that through all of life’s valleys and green pastures, your eternal home awaits—and you will dwell there forever with Me, your Shepherd.

## EPILOGUE

**N**OW that you have finished reading and praying Psalm 23, what's next? Why don't you make the lessons you've observed in this book a part of your daily walk with Me?

First, cultivate a faithful attitude of walking with Me, your Shepherd, every minute of every day, for the rest of your life. It's really quite simple. I am with you all the time, so talk with Me often.

Second, apply the principles of praying Psalm 23 to other portions of Scripture. Just talk to Me as you read Scripture, asking Me to make the truths in My Word real in your life. Talk to Me about the Scriptures as you read them. Then go a step further: Turn the words of Scripture into prayer. Talk to Me using the words of the Bible.

Third, pray Psalm 23 on a regular basis. All of Christianity is in Psalm 23, as the oak tree is in the acorn; therefore, praying Psalm 23 means you are praying about every aspect of your faith. If you can only pray once a day, pray Psalm 23.

## PRAYING THE 23RD PSALM

*Because You are my Shepherd,  
I commit my needs to You.  
Lead me to green pastures to lie in,  
Lead me beside still waters,  
Restore my soul when I'm empty,  
And lead me in right paths for Your name's sake.  
Be with me in danger when I walk  
Through the valley of the shadow of death.  
Deliver me from evil  
And protect me with Your rod and staff.  
Prepare a table to feed me,  
So my enemies can see Your provision.  
Anoint me with the oil of Your healing.  
Let me drink from the full cup of Your provision.  
Send Your sheepdogs of goodness and mercy to bring me home,  
Then I will live with You forever. Amen.*

# PART TWO

50 DAYS WITH THE SHEPHERD OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> PSALM

DEVOTIONAL

## PSALM 23

### 50 DAYS – JUBILEE

**I** am the Shepherd of the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm who will protect and care for you. I am also Jesus your Lord and Savior from sin and I will guide you through this life to heaven. In the next 50 days I will tell you how I will take care of you, so you'll be victorious over sin and useful in My service.

For the next 50 days I'll talk to you to explain all the blessings I promise you in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. I'll encourage you about storms that will threaten you, warn you about the dangers of evil that will destroy you, and all the types of enemies that will try to kill, steal, and devastate you (John 10:10).

But Psalm 23 is not all about the sinful part of life where the devil as a roaring lion will terrorize you. I'll talk about a peaceful meadow of lush grass and a quiet stream where you and I can talk, and you can be refreshed. I'll prepare a table full of your favorite foods as well as healthy foods. My blessings will fill your cup to full and overflowing.

I have two sheep dogs who help tend My flock. The first is the goodness of God who pursues you to keep you within the protection of the flock. The second is the mercy of God to overlook your daily human faults and failings. And should you stray, mercy will restore you to full family standing...again...and again.

Sleeping on the ground may be cold and morning dew is damp. But I will lead you every day and eventually take you to live with Me forever in the House of the Lord.

### WHY 50 DAYS?

In the next 50 days you'll learn more about Me—your Shepherd—more than you ever knew. Now that's wonderful, but you'll also learn many things about yourself you never knew. These 50 days can be life-transforming for you as they were for God's people in Jubilee in the Old Testament.

“Count time of 49 years, seven sets of seven years. The fiftieth year will be the year of Jubilee. Then on the Day of Atonement in the 50th year, blow the

trumpet loud and long throughout the land. Proclaim this a year of Jubilee. All ancestral land is returned to the original family. The fiftieth year will be a year of Jubilee. You must not plant, prune, harvest or store any of the crops. You may eat what the land produces. Show your fear of God by not taking advantage of each other. I am the lord your God” (Lev. 25:8-17, ELT).

God wanted three things to happen on the 50th year of Jubilee during the spiritual celebration of His goodness. You will want the same three things to happen to you during the next 50 days as you talk with Me, the Shepherd of the 23rd Psalm, and when I talk with you

5. **Restoring**. In the next 50 days, you will restore your closeness to Me you experienced when you first got saved and began your Christian walk. In the Old Testament Jews were instructed to celebrate a Jubilee every 50 years. “Return to the land that belonged to your ancestors” (Lev. 25:10, NLT). Your land or inheritance comes back, if sold. “In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession” (Lev. 25:13). In the next 50 days you may spend your time and energy to “buy back” your spiritual possessions.
6. **Rejoice**. The Hebrew word *Yōbhēh* for fifty is from the word for a ram’s horn or rejoicing. The Old Testament believers looked forward to a year’s vacation where they could rejoice in the Lord. When they heard the long and loud blast of the ram’s horn on the Day of Atonement, it meant to “get happy.” Your cup will overflow with blessings each day in the next fifty days. You will learn about all the blessings I—your Shepherd—will do for you.
7. **Life with God**. In the next 50 days I want you to focus on one simple task. Follow Me, your Shepherd. Let Me do all the things for you that I want to do. And you simply obey daily...walk daily...pray daily...and trust Me daily. My people in the Old Testament did not work, prune, harvest, or store into bins. They lived simply off what grew in the barns. They yielded their life to God, so they simply trusted Him. They obeyed His leading and were loyal to Him. And they were independent because no one owned their property.

## 50 DAYS OF JUBILEE

In the next 50 days, I want you to blow a spiritual trumpet of Jubilee and proclaim yourself “owned” by the Shepherd of the 23rd Psalm. If you’ve never



done it, begin immediately. Bow your head, surrender your heart.

“Lord you are my Shepherd, I am Your sheep. I will follow where You lead. I will do what You command. I will eat from your spiritual table...drink cool water...and rest in fellowship with You. I surrender all to You.”

There is a daily reading that will carry you deeper into your walk with Christ. And if you want to go even deeper along with the 50 daily devotions, there is a book to read deeper, *My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Discover Me in the 23rd Psalm*. (To order: Amazon or Destiny Image Publishers).

## Preface

### I WROTE THIS PSALM FOR YOU

**I** am the Shepherd of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. My name is Jesus your personal Shepherd. I had the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm written uniquely for you. Remember, you are different from all My other sheep with unique talents and a different heritage. Make this your personal Psalm.

I am the Shepherd, so you must walk with Me if you want to find green grass to nourish you. You must lie down to get soul rest. I will lead you by cool restful waters where you can get a refreshing drink. Then I'll lead you in "right" paths, this is My promise guaranteed.

But there will not always be cloudless days, sunny skies and peaceful valleys. You will walk with Me through dangerous, death-threatening crises. We will face days with cloudy financial and people storms. There will be lots of evil around you, but I'll be with you to keep you from sinful influences.

I have a rod—walking stick—to drive away predators. I also have a shepherd's staff to guide you and lift you out of trouble or a tough spot.

I'll feed you from a table full of spiritual and physical food. I'll fill your cup with blessings that overflows. If you have wounds, I'll anoint them with My healing oil. This special oil will give you a place of honor.

You can be sure My two sheep dogs, Mercy and Goodness, will run after you to keep you in the fold and you'll not sleep on the hard ground forever. Sleeping under the stars can be enjoyable but eventually you'll live with Me in My house forever.

I, your Shepherd, wrote this Psalm through David, who also was a shepherd. He was the shepherd/king who penned these words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16). The word inspiration means "to breathe." This original Greek word is translated "God breathed." Just as your breath is your life, so My divine breath is the Holy Spirit who breathed life...energy...and vitality into the Bible. So, when you read Psalm 23, you'll find My life and energy moving in your heart. Since the Word of God has life (Heb. 4:12) you can be born again through the words of Psalm 23 (1 Peter 12:23). Also, the words of Psalm 23 can re-vitalize your Christian life (Jer. 23:9; Heb. 4:12).

I am Jesus, the Shepherd of your soul. Read My words and believe them and live them. Then reach out to talk to Me in prayer. You'll find I have already reached out to you and will bless you.

Jesus Your Shepherd

## PRAYING THE 23RD PSALM

*Because You are my Shepherd,  
I commit my needs to You.  
Provide green pastures for me to lie in,  
Lead me beside still waters,  
Restore my soul when I'm empty,  
And lead me in right paths for Your name's sake.  
Be with me in danger when I walk  
Through the valley of the shadow of death.  
Deliver me from evil  
And protect me with Your rod and staff.  
Prepare a table to feed me,  
So my enemies can see Your provision.  
Anoint me with the oil of Your healing.  
Let me drink from the full cup of Your provision.  
Surely your goodness and mercy will always pursue me,  
And I will live with You forever.*

## SEVEN COUPLETS OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> PSALM

	<b>WHAT I DO</b>	<b>WHAT YOU RECEIVE</b>
<b>First</b>	I Am Your Shepherd	You Shall Not Want
<b>Second</b>	I Lead You to Green	You Shall Be Renewed

	Pastures And Cool Water	
<b>Third</b>	I Lead in Right Paths	Your Faith Is Verified in My Word
<b>Fourth</b>	I Walk with You Through Life's Threatening Dangers	You Will Fear No Evil
<b>Fifth</b>	My Rod Protects You and My Staff Guides You	You Are Safe and Comforted
<b>Sixth</b>	I Feed Your Hunger, Satisfy Your Thirst and Anoint Your Wounds	In the Presence of Your Enemies
<b>Seventh</b>	My Sheep Dogs, Goodness and Mercy, Pursue You	You Enjoy My Presence Forever

## Week One

### YOURS

**I**N the first 7 days you will pray a different couplet from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm each day, so that in the first week you start the beginning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and pray through the psalm in 7 days.

Day 1 you will emphasize *I Am your Shepherd*, not some one else's shepherd. Then you will ask Me to lead you to green meadows and past still waters. On the third day I talk to you about pastures that are right for you, and Day 4 we will talk about walking through dangerous valleys. The next day I will describe how I will protect you with My rod and staff. Then if you have been wounded in life's battles, I'll anoint your hand with oil. The 7th day, I'll describe My first sheep dog, Mercy, which is My nature to chase after you even when you fail or stray from Me. The other sheep dog is Goodness, unfailing love. I will always forgive when you return to the flock and I will always restore our fellowship together.

Day 1	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Yours
Day 2	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Leading
Day 3	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: No Wrong Paths
Day 4	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Through the Valley
Day 5	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Protect
Day 6	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Anointing
Day 7	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Goodness

## Day 1

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: YOURS

*“The Lord is my shepherd.”*

Psalm 23:1

**I** am Jesus, your Shepherd. Notice today's verse doesn't say, "The Lord is A shepherd." No! That would mean I am one among many shepherds. I am the only shepherd of salvation (John 10:11, 14). I am the only way to heaven (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). But most importantly, I am your salvation. Also, today's verse doesn't say, "I am THE Shepherd." Yes, I am the most important shepherd because I am your Shepherd. When you called on Me, I became your personal Shepherd. Again, today's verse didn't say, "I am the Father's shepherd." And yes, I have a special relationship with the heavenly Father (John 5:17-37). But, notice the pronoun "my." I belong to you and you belong to Me. You are My personal sheep.

*Lord, thank You for dying for the sins of the world (1 John 2:1-2). But I especially thank You for dying for my sins, for saving me, and coming to live in my life (Gal. 2:20). You are my personal Savior, and I will be Yours forever. Amen.*

I am Jesus, your unique Shepherd. I will do more than save you and give you eternal life (John 10:28). I have a unique plan for your life (Jer. 29:11). Will you seek to know it? I will guide you today (John 10:27). Will you follow Me?

I have given you spiritual gifts (abilities) to serve Me (1 Cor. 7:7; 1 Peter. 4:10). Will you learn how to use them? I have a special growth plan for you to bring forth fruit (Gal. 5:22, 23). Will you let Me grow you to maturity?

*Lord, thank You for being close to me. I feel Your presence and I praise You for saving me. Help me find Your will and do it today. Help me learn to do what You want me to do and help me become the growing Christian You expect of Me. Amen.*

## READING:

John 10:1-30

**Key Thought:** You are not just one among many sheep, you have a personal relationship to Jesus with a unique plan for your life.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 2

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: LEADING

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows. He leads me beside still waters”*

Psalm 23:1, 2, NLT

*“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”*

John 10:11

**I** am Shepherd-Jesus, I will lead you into green pastures. When you take Me as Savior, I do more than save you from hell and sin. I live in your heart (John 1:12; Gal 2:20) to be with you all the time. Out of the many things I do for you, let Me lead you today. If I’m leading, we’ll go to green pastures where I’ll feed you spiritually. Because of the situation where you find yourself today, it may not be the best spiritual food, but I’ll give you joy (inner happiness), and peace (inner assurance) and My food will restore your soul. I’ll lead, the issue...will you follow Me today? No...don’t run ahead of Me. Also, make sure you don’t lag behind. Your soul will be restored if I am with you all day long. And don’t go off to the right side into false doctrine, or to the left side into evil influence. Keep up with Me; let’s walk together.

*Lord, I want to walk with You and talk with You. Guide me today... all day long. Be with me at work, school, or at home, and when I relax. Restore my soul because I’m staying close. Amen.*

I am Shepherd-Jesus, let Me go before you today. You follow! Stay close to see My direction. Then listen to hear My voice as I talk to you. If you stay close to Me, I’ll be with you all day. I’ll be so close you can ask Me about directions, or problems, or we can just talk.

*Lord, You are more than a leader. You have saved this sheep. You*



*have healed my brokenness, and You have shown where I can eat and get strong. I'm happy with You as my shepherd. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Psalm 23

**Key Thought:** Your task is to follow when I lead you, so keep close all day long.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 3

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: NO WRONG PATHS

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.... He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.”*

Psalm 23:1, 3, NLT

I am Jesus your Shepherd who know right paths for everyone, and I know which path is right for you. I will not lead you in wrong paths because I am God. I cannot hurt people or do things that would hurt anyone. Someone argued that I will send them to hell; isn't eternal torment hurtful. Yes, but I didn't make that choice. The person who goes to hell made a choice against God the Father or walking in right ways. They get what they choose. As a matter of fact, I choose for all to go to heaven, but I can't save a person against his/her own will. I choose right paths for all My children. But some have lied and have been punished. The same with those who killed, stole, or committed adultery. They suffer the consequences of their actions on this earth. There are people in heaven who have broken every one of the commandments. The thief on the cross is one; Paul who was guilty of consenting to the death of Christians was another. Everyone is saved by My grace (Eph. 2:8, 9) and were cleansed by the blood (Romans 5:9, 10).

*Lord, I come rejoicing in my salvation because the blood of Christ cleansed all my sin. Thank You for casting my sins as far as the east is from the west and remembering them no more. Thank You for putting me on the right path. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd who will lead you on right paths. Because of My holy nature, I could not lead you on wrong paths. I've seen you stray toward wrong paths, I've warned you to get off those paths. I've even worked in your life to get you off wrong paths. It's easier to guide you into right paths than it is to try to keep you off wrong paths. Follow Me today on the right path I've laid out for

you.

*Lord, I will keep my eyes on You and walk behind You and will not look at wrong paths or even think about taking wrong paths. Life is not about paths, it's about staying in good relationship to You. Amen.*

### **READING:**

James 4:1-17

**Key Thought:** The Shepherd will put your focus on the right path for you; do not even think about wrong paths.

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## Day 4

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: THROUGH THE VALLEY

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...Yea, 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.”*

Psalm 23:1-4

**I** am the Shepherd-Jesus walking with you in the valleys. Notice the reading says you will “walk through the valley.” I won’t lead you there and forsake you. I won’t lead you into a dead-end canyon. Also, I won’t send you in the valley by yourself. I won’t leave you stuck in the valley by yourself, lost without directions. I may lead you in a dangerous valley or a valley of persecution, or a death valley. I’ll go with you and lead you into it and through it.

*Lord, some valleys with shadows scare me. Other valleys are difficult, and I must go through them. No matter what valley I must enter, go with me, guide me, protect me, and bring me out on the other side victorious. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd who has walked through many dangerous valleys. I’ll be with you and bring you out on the other side. For some, I’ll lead them out so they are more healthy and prosperous than when they entered. Some I’ll go with them into the valley of death, but they come out on the heaven side. They are living with Me forever which is far better. I know what will happen in this valley. Because I am God, I know all things actual and potential. I know what will happen in the valley.

*Lord, You know what’s in my dark valley and nothing scares You. I’ll walk with You through this valley. Be my strength and shield (Psalm 28:7). Let’s go!*

## READING:

Psalm 84:1-6;

Isaiah 40:1-31

**Key Thought:** There are all types of valleys in life and you must go through some that you want to avoid. Follow your Shepherd and He will lead you through.

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## Day 5

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: PROTECT

*“Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.”*

Psalm 23:4, NLT

**I** am your Shepherd-Jesus who has a rod to protect you. Most shepherds had two sticks, first a rod (like a walking stick) to beat off wild animals, and a second, a staff (a long shaft to point or grab with a crook on one end to lift a sheep out of danger). Because My sheep are My life, I will not run away when danger threatens (John 10:13). My rod will protect you from danger. But when sheep stray into dangerous places, I can't protect them. When sheep don't stay close to Me, I can't protect them. How close are you to Me today? Stay under My protection because there are wolves out there who will kill you or eat you alive. My rod is like the Word of God, it will protect you.

*Lord, thank You for protecting me in the past from dangerous predators who threatened me. I will stay close to You. I need Your presence; I want Your protection. I ask for Your shekinah glory covering today. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd-Jesus who wants to protect you from wolves and robbers. Let Me protect you by staying close to Me all the time. Feed on My Word in green pastures. Obey My command to walk in “right paths.” Talk to Me in prayer as you walk with Me in fellowship. Feed at My table of good food that is spread before you. Then I can protect you with My rod. Come a little closer so I can reach out to cover you.

*Lord, when I feel threatened, I'll come running for Your protection. I'll get close to You so the world can't reach me, but most importantly, so You can protect me. Ah! Your presence is comforting. Amen.*

## READING:

Exodus 4:1-14, 7:14-22

**Key Thought:** Your Shepherd has ways to protect you, but you must be close enough to Him to be protected.

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## Day 6

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: ANOINTING

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.”*

Psalm 23:1, 5

I am Jesus who anoints you with oil. Young David the shepherd was anointed with oil predicting he would be king. Some anointings are for the future, so when I anoint your head it's because I am preparing you for the future. Why? Because I was anointed in preparation for My ministry on earth. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel” (Luke 4:18). Now you are My special sheep. I have a task for you and you can do it better than anyone else. With My anointing is My call to service, but it is also an anointing of power or the ability to get the task done.

*Lord, You were anointed for Your ministry in the holy land on earth. Now, You have anointed me for a special task. I am humbled and will serve You faithfully. Give me understanding to prepare, wisdom to serve, and send the Holy Spirit to minister through me. Amen.*

I am Jesus who was anointed for My ministry on earth, just as the priests in the Old Testament were anointed. That anointing gave the priests a new self-identity, they were servants of God. Now you have a new identity, you are My servant. Also, the anointing gave priests a new motivation to do their best because they were serving the Lord God. I'm the one you serve. And the anointing gave the priests separation from those not serving God. My anointing separates you from all others because I love you individually, I chose you specifically and I will use you to do something no one else can do. You are My anointed servant.

*Lord, I am weak. Forgive me for the times I have been distracted. I*



*will give You my whole mind, my entire emotions, and I commit my will to do what You anointed me to do. Amen.*

**READING:**

Luke 4:14-37

**Key Thought:** The Shepherd anoints the head of His special sheep when He wants to do a certain thing with them, or for them.

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## Day 7

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: GOODNESS

*“The Lord is my shepherd...my sheep dogs of goodness and unfailing love will pursue you all the days of your life, and you will live in the house of the Lord forever.”*

Psalm 23:1-8, ELT

I, your Shepherd and Lord, will do good things for you because I am perfect goodness. The rich young ruler said, “No one is good but One, *that is*, God” (Mark 10:18). When Moses asked to see Me, I said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you” (Exod. 33:19). The first thing I wanted Moses to know about Me was my goodness. Then I put Moses in the cleft of the rock and passed before him, “The lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness” (Exod. 34:6). My creative act of making humans in My image was good, giving them person-hood, self-perception and self-direction. I put them on earth to feed, clothe, and sustain their life. I wanted them to glorify Me and enjoy life together. Then they rejected Me in sin (Romans 5:12), My good plan before the foundation of the world was to save them, lead them to grow godly and serve Me.

*Lord, I praise You for my life, my health, and the great possibilities for my life. I thank You for salvation from sin, and the merciful gift of eternal life. Because of my sin, I deserve nothing, but You have given me abundant blessings. Amen.*

I, your Shepherd, have two sheep dogs to chase after the flock to keep them safe from danger and predators. The first is My goodness; he doesn't give up on you because you fail or make mistakes. I want to continue doing good things for you. “Whatever is good or perfect comes down...from God Our Father who created all the light in heaven...(and He chose us) out of all creation (to) become His prized possession” (James 1:17, 18, NLT).

*Lord, thank You for choosing me. Since I am Your prized possession, be glorified in me. I worship You, my Creator. Amen.*

**READING:**

James 1:17-27

**Key Thought:** God not only is ultimate goodness, He does good things for you.

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## Week Two

### LEADING

**R**EMEMBER, we will pray through each of the 7 couplets in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm each week. Since there are 7 couplets, by the end of the *50 Days with The Shepherd*, you will have prayed through each of the 7 couplets, 7 times.

On Day 8, the emphasis is on My care “today,” not tomorrow or yesterday. The next day we will discuss My leading and your role in following. The following day we will focus on finding “right” paths. On Day 11 we will pray about shadows and those things that scare you. Day 12 will emphasize the rod you will use on predators as a “walking stick” when you follow Me. The next day the emphasis will be on “fresh” as I use fresh oil on your wounds, or fresh oil to know you. The last day of this second week will describe the two powerful forces that deal with your humanity and frailty, i.e., goodness and mercy. Because I am a faithful Shepherd, I will always pursue you because you are My sheep.

Day 8	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Today
Day 9	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Leading You
Day 10	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: I lead in Right Paths
Day 11	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Shadows or Shade
Day 12	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Walking Stick
Day 13	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Fresh Oil
Day 14	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Mercy Pursuing

## Day 8

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: TODAY

*“The Lord is my shepherd.”*

Psalm 23:1

**I** am Jesus, your shepherd today. Look at today's verses to see when I will be your shepherd. It's not past tense. It doesn't say, "The Lord used to be my shepherd." No! Today I want to lead you because you are My sheep. Today's verse doesn't say in the next life. "The Lord will be my Shepherd when I get to heaven." No! As you are reading, thank Me for being with you right now. And what will I do? I, Shepherd-Jesus can take away unfilled desires because when I am your personal Shepherd, you will be happy with My provision. I, Shepherd-Jesus, will make you happy lying in green pastures. I, Shepherd-Jesus, will give you peace, guiding you in right paths. You won't feel useless or lost when I lead your life.

*Lord, thank You for being here now to give me confidence and reinforcement. I enjoy Your company and I'm strengthened by Your presence. Let me tell You my needs...now. Amen.*

I am Jesus your ever-present Shepherd. I will walk with you through dangers today and will protect you from death's shadows tomorrow when they come. I will feed you spiritually at My table. I will anoint healing oil to your wounds. I will send My sheep dogs of mercy and goodness to keep track of you. Then one day I'll bring you to My home.

*Lord Jesus, why would anyone leave home without You? Thank You for Your atmospheric presence with me. I feel You with me. I will tell You my needs right now. Then, throughout the day when new needs arise, I'll talk to You about them. Amen.*

## READING:

Psalm 42:1-11

**Key Thought:** Don't focus on Jesus' past presence in your life, and don't put all your hope in getting His future presence. Jesus is your Shepherd now.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 9

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: LEADING YOU

*“The Lord is my shepherd...he leads me beside still waters.”*

Psalm 23:1, 2

*“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”*

Romans 8:14

**I** am Jesus your Shepherd who leads you. Do you know where you are going today? Let Me lead you there. Be sure I won't lead you to places of sinful temptation. There will be temptations from situations and people, but I'll not lead you through them. I may lead you in hard difficult places, but I'll be with you. You have many tasks facing you today. Let Me lead you in doing what you've got to do. I'll lead you to be patient...to work diligently...to rejoice in all you do (Phil. 4:4). I am your Shepherd, it's My task to lead you.

*Lord Jesus, go before me today to prepare me for the tasks I've got to do. Walk with me to give me purpose in life, victory over discouragement, and joy in doing a job well. Lord, make this day profitable for everyone I know. Amen*

I am Jesus your Shepherd who will lead you today. Do you know how to follow Me? Do you know where you are going? Next, you find My will in My Word so study the Word of God. Second, pray about all the things you do and pray while you do them. Third, walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7) which is obeying My Word. Fourth, testify to others what I have done for you. And finally, you will find My will in doing the tasks required by your job and doing things for your family, and fulfilling your obligations. I will lead you, make sure lines of communication are open between you and Me.

*Lord Jesus, I have committed my life to You. I want to do Your will, so I'll follow You today. Guide me where to go, guide me what to say, guide me how to respond in all situations. Amen.*

**READING:**

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

**Key Thought:** I will lead you daily, ask Me for special guidance for this day.

**REFLECTION**

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## Day 10

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: I LEAD IN RIGHT PATHS

*“The Lord is my shepherd.... He guides me along right paths.”*

Psalm 23:1, 3, NLT

I am the right Shepherd for you because I will lead you in right paths. Everyone has a path to follow in their life. Some are given harder paths, others have easier paths. Some are born into wealthy paths, others take a pauper's path. Don't you think I know what path you're on, and what challenges you face? What about those who are born into physically challenging paths...blindness...lameness...low IQ...physical deformities. I know what path they are on and I know what physical strength and mental alertness they need to walk their path. I know the path of children, teens, the strong and the aged. I know what each need and now they must follow their path for today. So, there's a "right" path for you today. I know it, but do you know it? I know what you need. But do you know it? I know what I want you to accomplish, but do you have purpose and plans? Ask Me about all these needs.

*Lord, I need help to make it on my path today. Lead me, Shepherd, at the right speed, at the right place, at the right time, and do the right thing in the right way. I need Your help right now. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd leader. There are several paths facing you today. I know which one you ought to take. I know when you should take it, and how fast you should walk on your path. I know what you should accomplish today. Stay close to Me—your Shepherd—I'll lead you at the right speed. I've got answers to lots of your questions. I even know the answers to questions you haven't raised and issues you don't know about.

*Lord, I not only need You, I'll be in trouble without You. Today, I'm faced with the problem of speed, how fast should I walk? How must*

*should I accomplish? When should I go, and when should I work.  
Guide me at the right speed, to the right destination, and the right  
time and I'll praise You for all you do. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Psalm 91:1-16

**Key Thought:** Not only must you find the right path for today, you must go at the right time, at the right speed, to accomplish the right results in the right way.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 11

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: SHADOWS OR SHADE

*“When I walk in the valley of death’s shade, I will fear no evil.”*

Psalm 23:4, Young’s Literal Translation

I am your Shepherd-Jesus, let Me tell you about shadows. A shadow is not real, it’s shade. As you watch a shadow, it will move. Then it’s gone. The sun’s rays are blocked by an object, and the shadows or shade you see is an outline of that object. A shadow or shade is illusionary, you see something that is not there. Many times you feel threatened with death, but nothing happened. You know you did not die because the Bible says, “Our days are numbered” (Psalm 39:4). Only God knows the day of your death. So you are afraid of dying, but many of the “shadows” are just an illusion. Don’t live looking for shadows. Look to Me, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). I know the time and place of your death. Just trust Me and walk with Me through the valley of the shadow of death.

*Lord, I’m human which means I do everything to not die and to live as long as I can. That also means I’m scared of dying. Teach me to trust You with my life and death. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd-Jesus. Walk with Me and you’ll not be afraid. I’ll show you the illusion behind shadows. Keep your eyes on Me, not on the shadows. I will guide you to walk in the light (1 John 1:7), you’ll know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:12). And with that confidence, you can be a great testimony to others.

*Lord, forgive me for focusing on shadows that scare me. Thank You for saving me and giving me eternal life. I’ll enjoy my new life here on earth, and I’ll look forward to it in eternity. Amen.*

## READING:

1 John 1:1-2:11

**Key Thought:** Many people focus on shadows and they are terrified by the potential of danger. Look to Jesus the Light, then believe in the Light, walk in the Light and enjoy its confidence.

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## Day 12

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: WALKING STICK

*“Lord, You are my Shepherd, I shall not want...Your walking stick is my protection, and your shepherd’s staff guides me and rescues me.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4, ELT

I am your Shepherd who protects you with My rod, also called in modern language—walking stick. Among its many uses by a shepherd, it’s a weapon to protect sheep from predators. It’s also a physical aid in walking. Also, like Moses’ rod, I use it as an extension of My shepherd’s task to guide My sheep. The genealogy of the shepherd was carved into the walking stick/rod (Num. 17:2) and passed from father to son. The next son would carve his family crest into the rod. Therefore, the rod daily reminded the next generation of its heritage. The walking stick was passed on to the son at the death of the father. My personal rod will protect you.

*Lord, Your rod reminds me of my spiritual heritage. Thank You for all my benefits from previous generations. May I live humble and righteously to fulfill their expectations, but mostly, may I live out Your expectations of me. Amen.*

I, your Shepherd, used My rod to protect against an enemy. But I also used it to educate My sheep. When scripture speaks of the “rod of discipline” on children (Prov. 13:24), it meant when the child was punished, it communicated the expectations of all his fore fathers. Their character, attainment, and expectations were put on the child being punished. And emotional punishment on the young is greater than physical correction.

*Lord, help me stand on the shoulders of my family who lived before me and may I reach higher and do more for You. I praise You for all they accomplished and pray I will do more and do it better. Amen.*

## READING:

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

**Key Thought:** The rod was both an effective protective and teaching tool.

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## Day 13

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: FRESH OIL

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need...anointing my head with oil.”*

Psalm 23: 1, 5, NLT

*“I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”*

Psalm 92:10, KJV

I am Jesus your Shepherd who anoints you with fresh oil. Fresh oil is new oil, never been used before. It's never been poured on someone else, and it's not left over from a previous time it was poured on you. You are My sheep, I've never had anyone just like you in the past, so I can't treat you just like I treated someone else. I have fresh oil for you. Fresh oil means it hasn't been stored in a bottle for a long time. Some people might hoard up their oil, keeping it for a special day or a unique celebration, or a once in a lifetime anniversary. No! I have special oil—fresh oil—fresh for you today, fresh for your new needs, fresh for this time in your walk with the heavenly Father. Nothing could be better than fresh oil. Let's rest, let's fellowship, let Me pour some fresh oil on you for this new day.

*Lord, it seems like every day there are new problems. I sometimes think no one in the world has ever done what I have done. So, come help me today, I need a fresh new beginning, a fresh new challenge, and find fresh new strength. I need fresh oil. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd who comes to you with fresh oil. I don't treat you like anyone else in My world. I don't give you the same oil I give to the other sheep. I don't give you the same answers to your problems like I am a recording. No, you are different; I make you different, and I know where you are different. You have a unique problem and you face a unique challenge, and you want to do something for Me that is unique. I have fresh oil for you.

*Lord, these are so many people in the world and they give so many challenges, and there is so much to do. Hear my special request today and give me fresh oil. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Psalm 92:1-15

**Key Thought:** There are all kinds of oil for all kinds of purposes, but the Shepherd has special oil for you today.

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## Day 14

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: MERCY PURSUING

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”*

Psalm 23:6

**I** am your Shepherd with two sheep dogs pursuing you to come to follow Me. Because I am good (Exod. 33:14; 34:6ff ) I give good things to you. Because I am merciful, I never give up on you. I will always receive you back into fellowship when you repent and return. And what is mercy? “It is compassion and patience with an offender.” I am called the God of mercy (2 Cor. 1:3. Hebrews promises you can “come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy” (Heb. 4:16). Other religions have a cruel god who is judgmental. I am both holy (including judging sin) and merciful at the same time. I have two powerful forces that govern My decisions. In My holiness and unfailing love, I died for your sins and now I receive you back into fellowship. Come to Me now, My blood was shed for you.

*Lord, thank You for Your love to die for my sins. Thank You for Your mercy that welcomes me back into fellowship with You. Forgive this lost wandering sheep. Thank You for Your merciful embrace. Amen.*

I am Jesus your Shepherd. My nature is mercy and it is called a sheep dog that will chase after you to bring you back into the fold. And daily as you walk following Me, the sheep dog, Mercy, is running around to make sure you stay close.

*Lord, thank You for coming after me in mercy when I drifted away. Thank You for keeping me in step with You when my eyes looked around and my feet thought about walking the wrong way. Your*

*fellowship is warm. Amen.*

**READING:**

Jacob strayed but the Lord pursued him (Gen. 28:10-22).

**Key Thought:** The Shepherd in mercy goes after wayward sheep to bring them back into the fold.

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## Week Three

### I LEAD IN RIGHT PATHS

**I**N this 3<sup>rd</sup> week, we again will discuss the 7 couplets of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, and this week we will return to focus on each of the 7 couplets in success as we did previously. But the emphasis will be new each day. Day One will focus on the passive pronoun “my.” I am your Shepherd, I am uniquely yours and I will care for you. The next day—Day 15—I will talk of green meadows or deserts and its benefit to you. On Day 16 you will see that “I am the way” (John 14:6) which is the right path. The next day you will learn how to “fear no evil.” That is a great lesson to give you confidence. Then you will see on day 19 “My rod” will protect you, but the rod has to be in “My” hand, not your hand. When we come to the couplet on “oil” we will talk about the oil of the Holy Spirit in your life. The final day of the week—day 21—we will talk about “your cup” not just any cup, but your particular cup.

Day 15	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Your Lord
Day 16	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Promised Green Meadows
Day 17	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Right Paths
Day 18	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: No Evil
Day 19	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Rod of God
Day 20	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Holy Spirit
Day 21	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Your Cup

## Day 15

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: YOUR LORD

*“The Lord is My Shepherd.”*

Psalm 23:1

*“I am the good shepherd and know My sheep, and am known by My own.”*

John 10:14

**I** am your Shepherd and your Lord. The traditional English reading says, “The Lord is my shepherd” (23:1). It doesn’t say, “God (Elohim) is your shepherd.” That’s My powerful name as Creator. Don’t you need care today from your person shepherd? It doesn’t say, “The Lord-Master (Adonai) is your shepherd.” You don’t need a master telling you what to do. It doesn’t state, “The Rock is your shepherd.” Yes, your Lord is called a Rock (2 Sam. 22:2, Ps. 94:22). But a rock is impersonal; you need intimate care. Also, it doesn’t call Me Most High God (Possessor of Heaven and Earth), or even King, or the Lord of Host, Sabaoth (God of the Fighting Angels). Psalm 23 calls Me your Lord and Shepherd, My relational name.

*Lord, You’ve got many titles and names. Each tells me something different about Your nature and what You do for me. Today, I call You Lord, my personal Shepherd, because You know me and will take care of me. Amen.*

I am the Lord, your Shepherd. I can help you in many different ways. But today I will refresh your soul with “still waters.” I will guide you in “right paths.” I will give you spiritual rest in “green pastures.” Do you face a threat of death? I will lead you into and out of “the shadow of death.” Stay close as you walk.

*Lord, thank You for being my personal Shepherd. Thank You for*

*being with me as I travel through life. Thank You for guiding and protecting me. One day I want to “dwell in Your house forever.” Amen.*

**READING:**

Luke 15:1-7;

John 10:1-6

**Key Thought:** You will have the attention of your personal Lord-Shepherd who will meet your needs spiritually, and otherwise.

**REFLECTION**

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## Day 16

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: PROMISED GREEN MEADOWS

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.”*

Psalm 23:1-2, NLT

I am your Shepherd/Jesus who promises to lead you to “green meadows.” Did you notice I didn’t lead you on to a busy highway to leave you there? There’s danger and you might get lost and have nothing to eat. I will lead you to green meadows. Have you ever ended up in a hot, dry desert, a place you didn’t choose? You can die of thirst in the desert. Follow Me, “your cup will be running over and waiting.” Have you ever ended up in a dry parched field of dead grass? Who likes to eat dry hay? If you follow Me, I promise green meadows. The grass is tender and the meadow is lush; it’s not patchy with some poison ivy, or deadly toxic stalks. Trust Me, your Shepherd, I’ll find a meadow of tender green grass that will make you healthy and you will grow strong. The secret to finding the right meadow is relationship to Me, your Shepherd.

*Lord, I’ve had some terrible meals in my life, but Your food is good tasting and good for me. I’d rather have a little bit of Your delicious food than a table full of sinful stuff that will make me sick or destroy my health or poison my happiness. Lord, Your food is good. Amen.*

I promise you green meadows. I’ll not harvest your food, or cook it, serve it or clean up after you. I lead some sheep to a green meadow, but they starve because they have not learned the secret of life is work. You must take care of your family, and yourself, with the strength you get from “green meadows.” The key to happiness, prosperity and life is relationship. I’ll lead you to green meadows, you eat...then rest...and then get up to face another day.

*Lord, I am not a shepherd. I trust You to lead me to the right “green*

*meadow,” and beside still waters, and to walk “right paths’ and through the valley of death’s shadows. I’ll follow You. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Psalm 27:1-14

**Key Thought:** The Shepherd knows your strength and needs, He will find refreshing places for you.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 17

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: RIGHT PATHS

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need...He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.”*

Psalm 23:1, 3, NLT

I am the Shepherd of right paths. As soon as I point at a right path, realize you live in an evil world that has wrong paths, where satan is still the “god of this world” (Eph. 2:1, 2). There is the wrong path of feeding the lust of the flesh, where you can satisfy unbiblical passions. There is the path of the lust of the eyes where “stuff” gets your eyes off Me—your Shepherd—and you’ll be tempted with greed, and the things of this world. Also, there is the wrong path of self-glorification where your ego becomes the center of your universe and I, your Savior, is not honored, but forgotten (1 John 2:15, 16). All these paths are filled with pleasure, sexual excitement, possessions, and accumulation of wealth. Every time you see a wrong path, remember there is a right path. You’ll find Me there and I’ll guide you on right paths.

*Lord, I have been on wrong paths and I don’t want to go back there again. Outwardly I was happy, but inwardly I knew I was wrong and I was miserable. I enjoy walking with You on right paths. Where are we going today? Amen.*

I am Jesus, the One called “The Way, the truth and the life” (John 14:2). My way is the right way which says, all other ways are wrong ways. When you walk My path, you follow My example (1 Peter 2:21) and follow the Word of God (Joshua 1:8, 9), and you’ll enjoy fellowship with Me as I indwell your life and you live in Me (John 14:19, 23). The “right path” is where I am working. If you’re not walking with Me, you’re not on the right path. Let’s walk together and talk awhile.



*Lord, I love walking and talking with You. When we are together, I know I'm doing the right thing, and I'm going the right way. Don't leave me, and don't lose me; I need You every step of the way. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Ephesians 2:1-10

**Key Thought:** In a world of truth, there is a reaction for every action. There is a false path when there is a right path. Find the Shepherd's right path and follow Him.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 18

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: NO EVIL

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Yea, 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.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4

I am your Shepherd-Jesus. What is there about evil that scares people? Evil is opposite of good and holy. I am Jesus—good and holy. Evil is the opposite of the moral laws of the universe. I am Jesus who with My Father gave the 10 commandments. Evil brings suffering, disaster, and death. I am Jesus, I have all life in My hands (John 1:1-3). Evil is the energy of satan to deliver corruption, depravity, immorality and ultimately, death. I am Jesus, full of righteousness, purity, and eternity. When you walk through storm clouds or shadows of death, I am the opposite of those things that scare you. I give you peace, happiness and the promise of life eternal. Will you choose Me today?

*Lord, this is a rough world. There are a lot of evil people and sinful experiences that call to Me. But I have chosen You as My Savior, and now I want You to guide me through the valley of the shadow of death. Amen.*

I am Jesus, your Savior from sin. Cling to Me for righteous living and I will guide you through a world filled with evil attractions. Walk with Me through the valley of the shadow of death and I will protect you from evil acquaintances and sinful practices. Just keep walking till you get to the other side. I have given you eternal life and that will last forever. Hold tight...here we go!

*Lord, it is peaceful to trust You in a world of sin and evil people. I'll keep my eyes on You—lead me. I'll walk with You—guide me. I want to make it through all my difficulties—help me. Amen.*

## READING:

Jude 1-25

**Key Thought:** There is much evil in the world, including sinful people and harmful pleasures that will try to destroy you. Walk with Jesus through the valley of death and you will fear no evil.

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## Day 19

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: ROD OF GOD

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.... Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4, NLT

**I** am your Shepherd with My rod. Moses' rod (Exod. 4:2) was called a simple rod, i.e., a shepherd's rod. But when the heavenly Father used it, it became “the rod of God” (Exod. 4:20). Any rod can be used by God so that it becomes His tool. Moses used it to give direction to God's people (Exod. 14:16), to display God's power (Exod. 8:5, 4), and to inspire and instruct God's people (Num. 20:8, 9). It was nothing but a piece of growing wood that died. But in the hands of both Moses and God, it changed history. If God can use any old piece of wood, He can use your church; perhaps even your city or nation. But surely God can change your history by changing you. How do you want God to change you today? Why don't you dream something big for Him?

*Lord, I'm ordinary and I'm not great in myself, but when You take over my life You can do great things. The question was asked, “Is anything too hard for the lord?” (Gen. 18: 14). I believe in Your greatness and I'll not limit what You can do through me. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd and I have a shepherd's rod in My hand. But you can be the rod I hold in My hand. I can use you to give direction to My people, to display My power, to instruct and inspire My people, or I can change history with you. What do you want Me to do with you today?

*Lord, I'm just like an old stick, I'm just like everyone else. I surrender to You. Fill me with Your presence and power. Direct me into service. Now use me today. Amen.*

## READING:

Exodus 4:1-31

**Key Thought:** A shepherd's rod was just an ordinary stick, but in the hand of God it became powerful and was used by Him.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 20

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: HOLY SPIRIT

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need . . . anointing my head with oil.”*

Psalm 23:1, 5

*“I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.”*

Joel 2:28

*“And He will cause...the latter rain...and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.”*

Joel 2:23, 24

I am the Shepherd who wants to revive My hurting sheep to live again. I am Jesus who sends revival when the oil of the Holy Spirit is poured out on My people. Revival is defined as “God pouring His presence on His people to revive them, so they will rejoice as they did when they first were saved. Or, when they will serve with power like the churches in Acts 2 as the Holy Spirit was poured out on them.” Are you a sheep that has wounds from battle, or do you have “hurts” by being attacked by wolves and hypocrites? Let Me pour the oil of the Holy Spirit on you to revive you and get you ready to face the next new day. When you get healthy spiritually, it’s amazing how you begin to heal physically. Let Me get the oil and pour Him on all the places you need oil.

*Lord, I sometimes get tired and need reviving. Sometimes sin beats me down and I need a new start. Sometimes I lose my zeal for kingdom work. Pour some oil on me...now. Amen.*

I am the Shepherd who knows your needs and hurts. Getting tired is not a sin and getting hurt is not always your fault. Let Me pour the oil of the Holy Spirit on you to revive your spirit and renew your zeal. Now is the time to relax and eat

from the green pastures. Drink cool water from quiet waters and eat from My table spread before you. Tomorrow is another day and a new opportunity.

*Lord, I rest by Your side for fellowship just as I walk by Your side in “right paths.” I’m glad You know the future because I trust Your leadership. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Joel 2:13-32

**Key Thought:** The oil of the Shepherd is a symbol of the Holy Spirit who revives the spirit of sheep and gets them serving again.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 21

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: YOUR CUP

*“The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing.... You set a table for me right in front of my enemies. You bathe my head in oil; my cup is so full it spills over!”*

Psalm 23:1, 5, CEB

I am the Shepherd who provides you with your own special cup. Sometimes you may complain that your cup is not as big as the cups of others. Look at it in another way, your cup is much bigger than some other cups. I am your shepherd who knows how big your cup ought to be. A little body with a gigantic milk bottle (cup) is a waste of milk. A giant man with a little baby bottle of milk is not enough nourishment for his health and happiness. Have you ever thought I knew My sheep (John 10:14), and I give them the appropriate size? So, I can fill your cup to overflowing with blessings and happiness. If your cup were bigger, you would never get filled with blessings, much less be overflowing. I am Jesus your Shepherd, My blessings are unlimited. I can always fill your cup. Do you want more today?

*Lord, thank You that my cup is not smaller or bigger. Thank You for making my cup the size it is. Fill me today with enough so the blessings overrun. It would be terrible to live a life of unfulfilled happiness. Today I'm happy and blessed. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd who gives you a bigger cup as you grow in life. You are no longer a child, so I can pour more blessings into your bigger cup. Keep on growing because I have a lot of blessings planned for you in the future. You'll need a bigger cup. I want you to have more in the future, become more mature in your faith and do more for the kingdom. I have unlimited blessings for you. You must grow your cup more to get more from Me.

*Lord, thank You for teaching me in the past and causing me to grow*



*in my faith. Fill my cup today and I'll do more for You tomorrow.  
I'm waiting...my mind is open to learning...my heart is ready to  
love...my will is ready to obey. I'm waiting for the overflow. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Psalm 42:1-11

**Key Thought:** We have different sized cups at the various growth stages in life. As we continue to grow in faith, God will pour more into us.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Week Four

### THROUGH THE VALLEY

**T**HIS week will follow the same format of previous weeks. We will pray a different couplet each of the 7 days in this week. Yet we will emphasize a different application in each couplet. You will not be repeating the couplets, you will review that couplet and make it a part of your thinking.

On the first day of this week—Day 22—the emphasis is “*I Am Your Shepherd To Satisfy You.*” Then the emphasis is resting in green meadows and beside still waters. The 24<sup>th</sup> day will emphasize on walking, not just on “right paths.” The emphasis in shadows is “I am with you.” On Day 26, the focus is on “comfort” and the next day “healing oil.” The last couplet will talk about “constantly with you.”

Day 22	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Your Wants
Day 23	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: I Lead to Rest
Day 24	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Now Walk
Day 25	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: With You in Shadows
Day 26	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: I Comfort
Day 27	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Healing Oil
Day 28	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Constantly With You

## Day 22

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: YOUR WANTS

*“I am the Shepherd who satisfies your wants.”*

Psalm 37:4, ELT

**P**SALM 37:4 tells you, “Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart’s desire” (Ps. 37:4, *NLT*). When your full attention is on your Shepherd-Jesus, He will satisfy you. Some sheep want no restraints, they want to run any place, even if evil lurks there. Some sheep want to eat anything; even if it has dangerous drugs, or addictive attractions. Some sheep want to hang out with any sheep they chase, at any place they choose, doing any activity they desire. But I, your Shepherd, want you to follow closely My leading; rest near waters, and follow “right” paths. When you do that I will satisfy your heart’s desire.

*Lord, I have made some bad choices in the past, and I was wrong. I’ve done some things I shouldn’t, and I was hurt. I’ve wasted time at places that have dragged me down. I’m sorry! Can I come close? Amen.*

I am the satisfying Shepherd-Jesus. When you eat My bread of life, you’ll never hunger. When you drink My living water, you’ll never thirst. When you follow closely, you’ll never stray to the wrong place, nor end up in the wrong fold with those who are not My sheep. Even if you stray to the wrong sheep fold, I’ll send My sheep dogs of goodness and mercy to bring you back. But the Christian life is more than protection, it’s all about relationship. You are My sheep, and I am your Shepherd. I love you and have given My life for you. Will you give Me your time, talent, and treasure? I don’t want to take these good things away from you. Yield them to Me; take delight in Me and let Me use them for the kingdom of heaven.

*Lord, I know the pleasures of the world are temporary, but Your happiness is lasting (Ps. 1:1, 2). I will live my life in You and I will serve You today. Make this the greatest day of my life. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Psalm 37:1-40

**Key Thought:** You will find eternal happiness in your Shepherd-Jesus Christ. His joy is better than anything the world offers.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 23

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: I LEAD TO REST

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.”*

Psalm 23:1-2

I am your wise Shepherd who leads you beside still waters or peaceful streams. I don't lead you into the water, it's not time to vacation at the beach or play in the water. I don't lead you to a well where you must work to draw water from the well. There are times when everyone needs a deep well of cool water where they satisfy their thirst to get them on their journey. But I will lead you beside still, peaceful waters where you can rest. Again, it will not be a waterfall where you vacation to enjoy the sights and are amazed at the power of rushing water. Right now, you don't need a vacation with others where you talk with them or enjoy the experience. You need rest and you rest by yourself and you rest for yourself. So, this verse is for you and Me. Enjoy your rest, so I can restore your soul.

*Lord, thank You for leading me to certain locations on earth that seem “perfect” for me. I'll rest now! I'll pray for strength and a new vision. I'll receive Your new energy for my ministry. I'll rest then; I'll serve again. Amen.*

I am Jesus your Shepherd who understands your need. Remember, the scripture described My rest, “Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime” (John 4:6, NLT). Your body is not infinite, your mind and energy are finite. So, enjoy rest time when I give it. But I also challenge you, enjoy your time of walking and working. Rest well so you'll work refreshed.

*Lord, thank You for knowing me (John 16:14) and thank You for down time and rest time. I will rest in You so I can arise to walk in*

*You, and work in You. Amen.*

**READING:**

John 4:1-38

**Key Thought:** I, the wise Shepherd, know when you need rest and I know when you ought to walk.

**REFLECTION**

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## Day 24

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: NOW WALK

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, 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.”*

Psalm 23:1-4

**I** am your Shepherd-Jesus, walk with Me. We are going to green pastures and by peaceful streams, then continue walking in “right paths.” Also, walk with Me in dangerous valleys with death shadows. The key phrase is “*with Me.*” Don’t run ahead of Me because you may presume wrongly where you should go. When you lag behind, it may mean you don’t like where I am leading you, or how I’m leading, or when I’m leading you. Obey the challenge, “Trust in the Lord” (Prov. 3:5), it means trust My directions for this day and the next day. Some sheep have “dancing feet,” they run to the left for sinful opportunity. Other sheep have “straying feet,” going after pleasure, “stuff,” bodily fulfillments, or even addictions.

*Lord, I feel comfortable walking close to You. I feel protected from danger and stress. Hold my hand so I don’t stray. Hold tight for all eternity. Amen.*

I am Shepherd-Jesus your walking guide. “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, and built up in Him and established in the faith” (Col. 2:6, 7). You will get many benefits walking in Me. You’ll be stronger, focused, assured, and the Father can use you in service. But most of all, you’ll bring praise and worship to Him and the rest of the Trinity.

*Shepherd-Jesus, I will walk and follow You because You command*

*it. Thank You for all the benefits I get just from obedience. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Colossians 2:1-23

**Key Thought:** You should walk close to the Shepherd because of His protection, but also know there are many other benefits to following Him.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 25

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: WITH YOU IN SHADOWS

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Yea, 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.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4

**I**, your Shepherd-Jesus, am with you as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Look again at the promise, “You are with me.” That means I will be with you in the darkest hours, or the blackest night, with the greatest danger, where you stand the most to lose. I promise “I will be with you.” I do not make you promise, “to be with Me.” No! The responsibility is Mine to walk with you, to make sure you know the right paths. Also, it is My responsibility to indwell you so you have My presence in your life (Gal. 2:20). Also, I will guide you according to the plan We the Trinity have for you (Jer. 29:11). You are guaranteed eternal life because the Holy Spirit has sealed you and is your earnest money guaranteeing eternal life (Eph. 1:13, 14). Since it is My responsibility to be with you, how will you respond?

*Lord, I bow in thankful worship for Your goodness to me. Forgive me for any doubts or complaints. I rest in Your presence and will follow Your guidance. Amen.*

Actually, you have a double transference for your journey. I promised in the Upper Room, “You in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20). This has been called the *Exchange Life*. I will indwell your life, entering your heart at salvation (Ephesians 3:17). Then you will be placed into Me. This is a non-experiential event as described many times by Paul as “in Christ.” This is your standing “in Me” before the heavenly Father. When you are “in Me,” you have My perfection listed on your record. The Father will look at you as though you have My

perfection and righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).

*Lord, I am overwhelmed with Your goodness to me. I don't deserve any good thing or perfect standing before the Father. I accept it, thank You for grace. Amen.*

### READING:

**Key Thought:** When you face the shadow of death in the valley, I will be with you to walk through to the other side.

### REFLECTION

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## Day 26

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: I COMFORT

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.... Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4, NLT

I am your Shepherd-Jesus, My staff will comfort you. It is a long shepherd's staff. I use it to point the way or direct My sheep. The staff has a crook and I use it to lift a fallen sheep. So, you ought to have peace of mind knowing I am ready to lift you up each time you are trapped in a hole or each time you need help. Even when you don't need it, you will be comforted knowing it's available. Also knowing who I am will comfort you. I show My love in what I do for you. I am faithful, so you can depend on My promises. I am holy, so you can rely on Me to separate from evil and punish sinful disobedience.

*Lord, I thank You because You have always come after me when I strayed from the fold. Thank You for coming after me when I was lost. Thank You for always loving me, I depend on it. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd-Jesus who is ready to pick you up from danger with My staff. I not only love you, I love all My sheep...equally. I not only come after you when you stray, I go after each lost or straying sheep...it's My nature. When I find a lost sheep, I put him on My shoulder and take him home shouting, "Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6). Why? "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

*Lord, thank You for your heart. The shepherd's staff represents Your love for me and Your faithful care for me. I don't deserve it but in return I worship You as my Savior and praise You for my salvation. Amen.*

## READING:

Luke 15:1-32

**Key Thought:** The crook in the shepherd's staff represents His love for you and His faithful care when you stray.

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## Day 27

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: HEALING OIL

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need...anointing my head with oil.”*

Psalm 23:1, 5, NLT

*“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”*

James 5:14

**I** am the Shepherd who heals you. Also, “I am the Lord who heals you” (Exod. 15:26). Healing comes many ways. A mother heals with *preventative medicine* of warm clothes in cold weather, healthy food, and a warm hug. Doctors heal with *corrective medicine of surgery* and *miracle drugs*. How does a shepherd heal? By placing oil on wounds to clean out germs and impurities. Also, there is healing in certain oils and it restores as it soothes away the hurt. Church leaders can pray for healing and they anoint you with oil. Is the oil symbolic of the Holy Spirit, or is it medicine? Both. No one knows how I, your Lord and Shepherd, heal. Sometime by medicine, sometime by prayer, sometime by corrective measures in the life of those hurting. Sometime only rest will heal. Come...sit down...rest...let Me pour some oil on you.

*Lord, I will pray about all my sickness and health problems. I promise to live healthy...eat healthy...and act healthy. Guide me to do the right thing about my physical problems. And also, pour some oil on my wounds. Amen.*

I am the Shepherd who always has the oil of the Holy Spirit with Me. He indwells you and wants to fill you, heal you, and use you. Will you seek Him and His healing now?

*Lord, I come asking for the healing oil of the Holy Spirit on my life for my hurts, problems and longings. Pour the oil of the Holy Spirit on me now and I will be healthy. Amen.*

**READING:**

James 5:13-20;

Luke 10:30-37

**Key Thought:** The Shepherd anoints the wounds of his sheep to heal them and show His love.

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## Day 28

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: CONSTANTLY WITH YOU

*“The Lord is my shepherd.”*

Psalm 23:1

**I** am Jesus, your constant Shepherd, who loves you, cares for you and protects you. I am not called a wrangler who only rounds up sheep. I walk with you all day long. I am not called cowboy who works with sheep for a living. I stay with you through emotional storms and with you through blazing spiritual heat. I am not called a farmer who grows crops and may have a few sheep. I am not a herdsman, he only gathers sheep. I am a full-time shepherd, 24-7. I will never leave you. I am the door to the sheep fold (John 10:9) guarding and protecting you through the temptation and dangers of the night. I don't just watch over sheep or escort sheep, or direct sheep. I am with you today, all day, forever.

*Lord, thank You for Your presence in my life. Be with me in good times and dark stormy times. Thank You for caring for me, loving me, and leading me. Guide me today. Amen.*

I am Jesus, your loving Shepherd. I prepare good things in life that will satisfy you like a table of wonderful food. I am with you when the shadow of death threatens. I will anoint your wounds with the oil of the Holy Spirit. I will send My sheep dogs of goodness and mercy to keep you close. And I have a home in heaven where you will live together forever.

*Lord, thank You for being my Shepherd. I trusted You with my eternal soul when I was saved. Now I trust You to lead me today. I'll trust You when I die to take me to live with You in heaven. Amen.*

**READING:**

Isaiah 40:1-31

**Key Thought:** Because I am with you 24-7, I, your Shepherd, am like no other one to you.

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## Week Five

### PROTECTOR

**R**EMEMBER each day of the coming week will emphasize another couplet in Psalm 23, so that in each week you will pray through Psalm 23 from the beginning to the end.

On Day 1 this week—the 29<sup>th</sup> day—you will see how special you are to Me because I am your Shepherd and you are My sheep. The next day will emphasize “rest.” Sometimes you need more rest than at other times. Day 3 of this week—the 31<sup>st</sup> day—talks about future assurances because of My promise. Remember, you can trust the promises of your Shepherd. That is good because the next day we will analyze “shadows.” Some shadows only scare you, other shadows make you hurt yourself.

The next day—the 33<sup>rd</sup> day—will describe the extraordinary rod. Why is it so great? Because it is My rod. Then we will talk about healing that demands “lots of oil.” I will never run out of oil. The last day in this week will feature “no fear” because of all I do for you, you should have “no fears.” If you have them, it is because you are not following Me closely, now are you letting Me protect you?

Day 29	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: You Are Special
Day 30	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: I Let You Rest
Day 31	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: I Promise
Day 32	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Shadow
Day 33	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Extraordinary Rod
Day 34	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Lots of Oil
Day 35	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: No Fear

## Day 29

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: YOU ARE SPECIAL

*“O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do.”*

Psalm 139:1-3, NLT

I am your Shepherd-Savior, the emphasis is on *your*. Did you read today’s verse, “The Lord is my shepherd.” No! My shepherding is about you. It didn’t say the Lord is my family’s shepherd. No! I love you. Again, it does not say “The Lord is my pastor’s shepherd: Yes, I am his shepherd, but I am also focused on each and every one of My sheep. I don’t have more love for any one sheep over another. You can’t pray like an orphan who says, “No one loves me.” I am your shepherd, “The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep” (John 10:11). This psalm is about Me and My special relationship to you. Right now, you are the most important person in the world to Me.

*Lord, sometimes I get so busy I don’t think about You, and at that time, I’m feeling You are not thinking about me. But I believe “the Lord is my shepherd” so by faith I will live today knowing I am in the center of Your thinking. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd/Jesus. I, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, created the first human, and then made woman from his side. By birth you came from My creation, and I had you in mind before the foundation of the earth. You were born at the time I chose, in the culture I chose, and you were born in the family I chose. I died to provide you salvation. Now make today count. Live above your limitations of time...culture...family. Live supernaturally for Me today.

*Lord, because You are my shepherd, that makes me special. I will live for You today. I will fulfill Your plan for my life. I will rise above my circumstances and live for You. Amen.*

**READING:**

Psalm 139:1-24

**Key Thought:** Because you belong to the Shepherd/Jesus, you are unique.

**REFLECTION**

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## Day 30

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: I LET YOU REST

*“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”*

Psalm 1:12, NLT

I am your Shepherd-Jesus; I let you rest in green meadows. The *Old King James* says, I “make” you lie down. That’s a picture of a shepherd riding a sheep to make him lie down, or a shepherd pushing a sheep to the ground, or kicking the legs out from under a sheep. The *New Living Translation* captures My heart, “I let you rest.” Instead of driving you to travel far in one day, I’ll let you rest when I know you’re tired. I’m a shepherd who knows you. I’m not a drill sergeant to drive you. When I know there is a green meadow up ahead, I’ll lead you there. Be careful to follow Me, for you’ll find a restful meadow there. Also, green grass to eat. It’s all a matter of relationship. If you trust Me, and follow Me, and don’t wander off, I’ll lead you to a green meadow. I know you’re hungry and you have needs; I’ll gently lead you to the perfect meadow for you today. So, rest in the meadow, but best of all, rest in My care and guidance for you.

*Lord, forgive me when I thought I knew better where You were leading. Forgive me for looking for far-off meadows that didn’t exist. And forgive me for being stubborn about Your leading to green meadows. Teach me to trust. Amen.*

I am your wise Shepherd that knows when you need rest. Don’t run ahead of Me to an illusionary meadow. I have a special one for you. Don’t listen to other sheep who promise greener meadows, or a prettier meadow, or a better smelling meadow. Do you know how to find My will for your life? Check your map and carefully follow the directions that lead to the will of God for you. I am your guiding Shepherd. I will lead you to green meadows. I know what’s good for you, and I know what will prepare you for the future. Trust Me, your Shepherd.

*Lord, I trust You. Forgive me for lagging behind. Pull me back when I stray. Don't let me run ahead of Your pace for my life. Lead me to green meadows. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Exodus 14:1-7

**Key Thought:** Since your Lord/Shepherd knows God's plan for your life, then follow Him to green meadows.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 31

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: I PROMISE

*“The Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need.... He guides me in the right paths, as He has promised.”*

Psalm 23:1, 3, GNB

**I** am your Shepherd who has promised to lead you in right paths. The *Old King James Version* declares, “For His name’s sake” (Ps. 23:3). That phrase could be translated, “As He has promised.” The result of walking in right paths is that God’s name is recognized and glorified. I have promised in My Word to be honored when you walk the right way in the right direction. So, what about today? I am your Shepherd, you can count on Me to lead you in “right paths” because I promised to do it. I’ll lead you in right paths.

*Lord, I have staked my eternity on Your Word. Because I believe Your Word, I repented of sin and accepted Christ as Savior. You promised me eternal life, and I plan to live forever with You in heaven. How do I know it will happen? Because I have You in my heart, Your presence is my assurance. Amen.*

I am Jesus, your Shepherd. Because I have always led you in right paths, you can trust My promise of future guidance. Because you’ve experienced salvation in your heart and you know I dwell there, you can trust My promises. Because I am Creator, Sustainer of the universe, and have all power over death and life; you have no other course of action. Trust Me because there is nothing else to trust. I am light to guide you (John 8:12). When you walk in My light, you’ll know where you’re going. I’ll shine light on right paths.

*Lord, I trust Your Word because it has worked in the past. I’ll trust Your Word because I like what You’ve always done in my life. I’ll trust Your Word because You’re God and You know everything about me. Shine light for my next step. Amen.*

## READING:

1 John 1:1-2:5

**Key Thought:** You should trust the Shepherd's promise to always lead you in right paths because He has always done it.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 32

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: SHADOW

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Yea, 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.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4

I am your Shepherd-Jesus. Did you ever think where shadows come from? A shadow is not real, it has no existence. A shadow is an image on a surface that blocks out light. A shadow is darkness, some shadows are darker than others. You see shadows of black leaves, but they are red up in the tree. So, you will walk through a “shadow of death” here on this earth. But the death shadow you see is the reflection of God who is light (1 John 1:5). So, look at death from God’s perspective. It is just a shadow you must pass through to enter His light.

*Lord, I understand shadows in my head, but my heart is still afraid. Walk with me as I face death. Stay close, hold my hand. I need Your presence in the “valley of the shadow of death.” Amen.*

I am your Shepherd-Jesus. Read again today’s verse. “I’ll be with you” when you walk into the fearful shadow. I walked into the shadow of death and was in the grave for three nights. But I didn’t stay in death’s grip. I walked out on Sunday morning and I conquered death (1 Cor. 15:54-55). So, I will walk with you...where? I’ll walk with you as you face death...fear not! I’ll walk with you into the shadow of death, but we will come out on the other side. Oh, glorious morning!

*Lord, I trust You to keep me through death’s shadow. Who else can I trust? Hold on to me so I can hold onto You. We’ll face it together. Amen.*



## READING:

Psalm 91:1-16

**Key Thought:** Jesus walked notoriously through the shadow of death. He will walk with you through it too.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 33

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: EXTRAORDINARY ROD

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.... Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4, NLT

I am your Shepherd who chooses an ordinary stick to be My personal rod. In the same way, I chose you to be an instrument in My hand to do My will. When is a rod most useful? When it does exactly what I intend for it to do. Whether I use it to teach, or to lead My sheep, or to protect. You can be My walking stick today. It's foolish to imagine a rod telling the shepherd “no,” or trying to soften its blows on a fierce animal. The best thing a rod can do is yield to the shepherd. I have a job for you to do. Are you willing to do it today? Are you willing to do it My way? Are you willing to do it when I need you, how I need you and where I need you?

*Lord, I will be Your rod today. Thank You for choosing me and for preparing me and for using me. I am ready to serve You today at the time you need me, in the way you need me and at the place you need me. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd. Many days I don't need you to do anything. I just need My walking stick to be with Me as I walk. Will you walk with Me today? Will you be My companion throughout the day? I want fellowship with you just as you seek fellowship with Me. Here's a comfortable place, let's sit down. I want to see the carvings of former generations. Think about how I used them. I can use you in the same way today.

*Lord, I'll be Your walking stick. Use me in any way that serves the kingdom. May I use today to glorify and worship You. Thank You for*

*choosing me. Let's go walking! Amen.*

**READING:**

Psalm 27:1-14

**Key Thought:** A plain ordinary walking stick can be used in extraordinary ways. Are you willing to be used?

**REFLECTION**

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## Day 34

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: LOTS OF OIL

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need . . . anointing my head with oil.”*

Psalm 23:1, 5

*“The rock poured out rivers of oil for me”*

Job 29:6

**I** am the Shepherd-Jesus who will pour oil on your head. Do you have a wound? My oil can heal it. Am I calling you to a special task? My anointing oil will consecrate you. Are you worn out from a long hot journey? My refreshing oil will renew your aching body. Are you empty of spiritual power, or spiritual initiative to serve Me? My oil will supply you with revival and the Holy Spirit. How big is your need? I am almighty God, I have more than enough. Don't worry about running out of oil, My source is limitless. The Holy Spirit is with Me, He is oil. How much? Read what Job said, “Rivers of oil.”

*Lord, I come to You when I hurt, pour some oil on it. I come to You when I have a task to do, pour the Holy Spirit on me (Joel 2:28). I am empty and hungry, pour oil out for me. I need Your oil to keep me going. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd-Jesus who knows how much oil to pour on your wounds. I also know when you hurt, and I even know why you hurt. My oil is just enough and is applied at the right place. Don't worry, I'll never run out of oil and I'll always be here for you. The Shepherd never leaves His sheep. So, lay down in green pastures, drink cool water from a gentle stream and eat from My table. Now let Me look at those wounds; here is some oil.

*Lord, forgive me for thinking You would run out of oil. Forgive me for thinking You wouldn't look after my wounds. Forgive me for*

*worrying about little things like that. Teach me to trust Your healing touch when You anoint my head with oil. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Leviticus 2:1-11, 14-16

**Key Thought:** There is plenty of anointing oil and the Shepherd will never run out because He knows the Holy Spirit who is oil.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 35

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: NO FEAR

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...Yea, 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.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4

**W**ALK with Me, your Shepherd and you can say with David, “I will fear no evil” (Psalm 23:4). The dictionaries define fear as “a painful feeling of imminent danger.” When you are with Me, no real danger will touch you. That does not mean no problems, no difficulties, and no tears. The worst danger of all is physical death, but I died for you and I conquered death. So, if you die, I’ll walk with you through death to heaven to be with your heavenly Father. What can be better than that? Some martyrs have been tortured, burned at the stake and killed. I was with them in death. You may suffer physical accidents, diseases, and illnesses. I will be with you in all of these “shadows of death.” I’ll not mention financial dangers, relationship problems and just the stress of modern expectations. I may allow these pressures—like discipline—to make you stronger. But I will be with you in all of them.

*Lord, I’m not good with pain. Just the thought of a hypodermic needle scares me. Thank You for Your reassurance. My pain could never be as worse as Your suffering for me. Thank You for Your presence and words of comfort. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd who will be with you in pain and stress. Don’t let fear control your life. How many scary things in the past frightened you but they never materialized? Look to Me for strength and guidance. I’ll lead you through the shadows of threatening death. We’ll go through dark experiences together.

*Lord, I trust You in dark days and in the sunshine. I trust You in the fun trips, and the dangerous trips. Since I have trusted You with my*

*soul forever, I'll also trust You with my physical body. Amen.*

### **READING:**

John 16:32-33; 20:19-23

**Key Thought:** Fear is a human experience, and some experience more fears than others. When you walk with Me through death shadows, you will not have fears.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Week Six

### PROVISION

**Y**OU have already prayed through five weeks of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. As you come to this new week, you will again pray through the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm from beginning to end. Each day of this week you will emphasize another couplet in Psalm 23. But you will emphasize each couplet in a new and deeper way. You will continue to see new truths and you will become more intimate with Me, your Shepherd.

On Day 1 of this week—Day 36—you will see the “name” priority of your Shepherd. The next day’s emphasis I on “rest and renewal,” that is the whole point of green pastures and still waters. When you are rested, you will be up and ready to follow Me on “today’s paths.” Not yesterday paths or tomorrow paths. Today’s path is the “right” path for you. But you will walk through the shadow of the valley of death. What do you need? My presence! Then on Day 40, you will need a new walking stick, i.e., rod. You will study the rod—walking stick—of other people of God in Scripture.

Then we will talk about your cup, your personal cup, no other cup and no cup belonging to any one else. Finally, on the last day of this week, we will talk about “house dwelling.” You will be up off the cold camp ground to live in My house forever.

Day 36	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Name Priority
Day 37	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Rest for Renewal
Day 38	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Paths
Day 39	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Presencel
Day 40	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: New Walking Stick
Day 41	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Personal Cup
Day 42	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: House Dwelling



## Day 36

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: NAME PRIORITY

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”*

Psalm 23:1-3

**M**Y name, Shepherd-Jesus is important to Me. You will know I am your Saving Shepherd because you asked Me to forgive your sins. Now experience Me as your personal Shepherd as you pray each day. When you pray in My name, I will answer (John 14:13, 14). When you speak or preach in My name, I will use you (Acts 3:6). Why is My name so powerful and important? Because My name represents who I am. My name should invoke your love for Me and you should never deny My name. Remember at My name Jesus, you along with all saved people of every age will bow at My second coming. Even those who deny My existence and deny My rule over their life will bow, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10, 11).

*Lord, I bow to the name Jesus and confess it publicly to Your glory.  
Thank You for saving me. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd-Jesus. You will continue bringing honor to My name when you trust Me to fulfill all your needs and you rest in Me in green pastures, and when you follow Me by peaceful streams. When you leave the former things of life to follow Me in “right paths,” you honor My name by your intimate fellowship with Me.

*Lord, I will follow You and lie down with You and eat in green pastures. Then I will follow You in “right paths.” Amen.*

## **READING:**

Philippians 2:5-18

Key Thoughts: The name of Shepherd-Jesus is important to Him because it represents who He is, and what He does for you.

## **REFLECTION**

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## Day 37

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: REST FOR RENEWAL

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams, He renews my strength.”*

Psalm 23:1-3, NLT

I am the Shepherd who lets you rest. The *Old King James* says, “He makes me lie down,” which suggests I command you to lie down or force you down. The correct interpretation pictures a shepherd who stops going forward so the sheep stop walking. Then they lie down. It’s what they want to do because they have been on their feet following the shepherd. It’s what they need to do because they are tired and most of their strength is gone. Have you gotten to the place where you need a break because you are worn out? You had pushed so hard, but you just don’t feel like pushing any longer. You could press on but if you did, you wouldn’t do as well as you’ve done in the past. You wouldn’t be as happy as you have been in the past. I, your Shepherd, know when it’s time to rest. So, I allow you to lie down.

*Lord, I’ve never laid down on my job. I’ve tried to be faithful and be loyal. But when I’m pooped, I need some rest. Thank You for taking the pressure off. Thank You for rest. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd, I know when you need to renew your energy. I see your life from the beginning to the end. I’ve known you through childhood, plus those preparatory years in your teens and twenties. I know when it’s necessary to lie down to restore your soul, so you can get back up to push ahead again. Rest... don’t feel guilty. Everyone needs sleep at night. Everyone needs a vacation. I even told My disciples, “Come...apart...and rest a while” (Mark 6:31, KJV). Some call it “getting your batteries re-charged.” Psalm 23 calls it, “He restores my soul.” Rest well so you can go back to working well.

*Lord, thank You for resting time. Thank You for working time. I agree with Moses, “My times are in Your hand” (Ps. 31:15). So, I’ll stop when you say, “Stop.” I’ll work when you say, “Time’s up, time to work.” Thank You for knowing me (John 10:14). Amen.*

### **READING:**

Psalm 90:1-17

**Key Thought:** I, the good Shepherd, know when you need rest and need to restore yourself.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 38

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: PATHS

*“The Lord is my shepherd...He leads me beside peaceful streams. He restores my strength. He guides me along right paths.”*

Psalm 23: 1, 2, 3, ELT

I lead in right paths. People choose all types of paths to travel in their life. Some are yesterday's paths, they live in the past. Don't live there, don't repeat the dumb things you did back then. Some people always seek tomorrow's paths. They live in the future and gain their happiness on what they hope will happen then. Sadly, much of tomorrow's dreams end up as yesterday's heartaches because people don't make things happen today, so the future plans can materialize. If you follow your parent's path, you never live for yourself. If you follow the paths of friends, neighbors or your boss, when do you live for yourself? Notice I lead in many paths, and right paths.

*Lord, forgive my wrong choices of paths of the past. Help me make good choices of a path for today so that tomorrow will take care of itself. I want to follow the path with Your name on it. Amen.*

I am your guiding Shepherd, here to help you choose the right paths for today. Choose based on your Christian convictions and calling. Choose based on My plan for your life and the principles of the Bible. Listen to your friends (if they are godly) and listen to your heart. Most of all, remember the right paths you have chosen in the past and continue in the direction I'm leading.

*Lord, sometimes I don't even trust my ability to choose, so help me find the right focus and give me the right burden and guide me moments by moment. Amen.*

**READING:**

## Genesis 24:1-60

**Key Thought:** There are all kinds of paths facing you today. Find the paths I want you to choose and glorify Me in doing it.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 39

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: PRESENCE

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4, NLT

I am your Shepherd-Jesus, I will walk with you through shadows. What shadow is scaring you today? You have My presence with you, remember I promised to “be with you.” Remember the dark night on the Sea of Galilee when My disciples were afraid of the storm? They were rowing as hard as they could to save themselves. Is not this a picture of you trying to solve your problems? I came walking on the water to My disciples through the storm in the dark night. I said, “Fear not.” When I joined them in the boat, the storm ceased. Do you need My presence in your life today? I am here in the midst of your storm; call out to Me. Seek My presence. Let’s walk through this storm together.

*Lord, sometimes my life is dark like the night. All I see are problem storms. And when I row as hard as I can, remind me of Your presence. Come to me in the storm and help me get through it. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd-Jesus who comes through the shadows of night to remind you, “Fear not.” There was the threat of death from drowning. But My presence took away fear. If I am with you, we’ll walk through the shadow of death into heaven’s light. We’ll walk through earth’s problems and we’ll face insurmountable problems together. When I am with you, if you lose your life, you win. If you win in this life, you’ll be victorious. I’ll be with you and indwell you (Gal. 2:20) and will use you.

*Lord, the greatest thing about Christianity is that You’ll be with me always (Matt. 28:20), and Your presence lives in me (John 14:19),*

*and then You guide me. Amen.*

**READING:**

Matthew 14:22-36

**Key Thought:** One of the greatest promises to Christians is that Christ will be with you and will live in you.

**REFLECTION**

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## Day 40

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: NEW WALKING STICK

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.... Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.”*

Psalm 23:1, 4, NLT

**I** am your Shepherd who wants to use you to demonstrate My supernatural life. There was a time when I had to tell the children of Israel which tribe would have the honor of being a priest to Me. Obviously, every tribe wanted to have its own minister as priest. I instructed each of the leaders of each tribe to place his rod/walking stick in the Holy of Holies overnight. These were dead sticks and they had no life in them. The following morning Aaron's rod budded. It had growing live buds as though it were a live bush growing out of the ground. I can give new life to dead things. I gave you new life when you were born again (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Peter 1:23). I give you new life each morning to serve Me. How will you show your new spiritual life today?

*Lord, I was just like a dead piece of wood without life. You came in my heart with love, enthusiasm, and a vision of serving You. Thank You for new life. I want to be used by You today. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd. Do you need a walking stick today? Will you serve Me today? I can give you new life just as I made Aaron's rod sprout new living buds. Would you like new living sprouts today? When Aaron's rod budded, he served Me in intercession. Will you pray for others today? Also, when Aaron's rod budded, he sacrificed to Me. What sacrifice will you make for Me today?

*Lord, I will let my new “born-again” life flow through me today. I will pray and intercede for my lost friends. I will give up (sacrifice) for You today. Amen.*

## READING:

Numbers 17:1-18:7

**Key Thought:** God chose Aaron's rod and gave it new life as a testimony to His choice, so God can choose you and give you new life to be a testimony to His powers.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 41

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: PERSONAL CUP

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.... You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over.”*

Psalm 23:1, 5

I am Jesus your Shepherd who will give you to drink from your own personal cup. I have a shepherd's cup, but you'll not drink from My cup, but from your cup. Some shepherds have one cup for the whole flock to drink. But I'll give you water from your private cup. Some young sheep drink from their father's or mother's cup, but I will fill your own cup up with so much blessings, it'll overflow. And then there is a community cup. In some place a whole neighborhood goes to a well or water supply and everyone drinks out of a public cup. But I am your Shepherd and Lord. I know you and have a special blessing for you. You're different from all My other sheep. Today, drink your own blessings from your own personal cup.

*Lord, I thank You for my parents, the culture in which I was raised and the many teachers who each taught me different things. I surrender all my talents to Your use. You know my weaknesses, teach me what I need to know, and give me strength to serve You. Amen.*

I am Jesus the Creator of the heavens, earth and human beings. Everything I created is unique and different from all other members, tribe, or family. No one else has your unique physical appearance or your inner personality. You have unique spiritual gifts (talents) to serve the kingdom. No one else has your heritage or has experienced all your activities growing up. Because I am God with unlimited knowledge and ability, go get your personal cup. I have an unlimited supply of blessings to pour into your personal cup. Hold it under the spout.

*Lord, thank You for personal attention to my special needs. Thank You for blessing me because of my unique heritage and I praise You for designing special blessings for my unique talents. Amen.*

**READING:**

Psalm 139:1-34

**Key Thought:** The Shepherd will fill your unique cup with an unlimited supply of unique blessings for you.

**REFLECTION**

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## Day 42

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: HOUSE DWELLING

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”*

Psalm 23:1, 6, KJV

**I** am your Shepherd who walks with you by still waters and leads you in right paths and into the valley of the shadow of death. But remember, I lead you through it. I give you a feast, anoint your head and send My two sheep dogs to pursue you when straying all of this so you finally will live with Me in My House forever. Why is that a life goal? Because the House of the Lord is My presence. The Psalmist cried out, “When shall I come and appear before God?” (Ps. 42:2). Then he answers, “Then I went into the house of God” (v. 4). You can have My presence every day as you pray Psalm 23. I will talk with you through scripture and you will talk with Me through prayer.

*Lord, I want that close relationship You desire in Psalm 23. I will walk obediently with You and I will talk to You about my life and my problems. Thank You for Your presence, thank You for Your goodness and mercy that get me to the House of the Lord. Amen.*

I am the Shepherd who sleeps by My sheep fold on hard ground. I'll lead you through financial storms, and family problems. There are many threats from death's shadows, but I'll lead you through them all. I will anoint your wounds with oil and prepare a banquet table for your health and enjoyment. But one day you will live in My heavenly house...forever.

*Thank You for indwelling my life with Your presence. Thank You for victory over sin and Your two sheepdogs who have chased after me to keep me in Your fold. Thank You for everything. Amen.*

## READING:

Psalm 42:1-11.

**Key Thought:** The Shepherd will lead you in good days and through threatening circumstances but will eventually lead you to live in His house forever.

## REFLECTION

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## Week Seven

### GOODNESS AND MERCY

**A**S you come to the last week of praying the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, review what you have learned in the cycle of 50 days. Resolve to follow the Shepherd all the days of your life and to pray the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm for the rest of your life.

On Day 43—the first day of this week—the emphasis will be “you don’t need any more” when you have Jesus. The next day, focus on “renewed strength” and on Day 45, remember I am Jesus, your Shepherd. I will keep every promise I make to you. The next day we will not dwell on shadows in the valley of death, we will look at high mountains that created valleys. You’ll learn how to travel through mountains, and sometimes you have to move mountains by faith (Mark 11:35-37). Just as mountains are barriers to your travel, so are enemies. On the 47<sup>th</sup> day we will look at how I deal with your enemies.

The next day—Day 48—the emphasis will be on a full cup, or life full of blessings. Then Day 49 talks about “I restore” which is a specialty of Mine. Finally, on the last of 50 days, I will talk to you about “I give strength.” Hasn’t that become a theme of Mine since day one?

Day 43	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: What More do You Need?
Day 44	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: I Renew Strength
Day 45	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: True
Day 46	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: High Mountains
Day 47	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Enemies
Day 48	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: Full Cup
Day 49	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: I Restore
Day 50	My Name is Shepherd-Jesus: I Give Strength

## Day 43

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: WHAT MORE DO YOU NEED?

*“The Lord is my shepherd, I have all that I need.”*

Psalm 23:1, NLT

I am your Shepherd who supplies all you need. Note, I don't supply all you want. No one could do that. Billionaires have all the money they need, but they don't have all they want. Top Hollywood stars have all the publicity and attention they need, but don't have all they want. Washington, D.C. politicians may have all the legislation influence they need, but they don't have all they want. A millionaire was once asked how much money would make him happy. He quickly answered, “More.” The human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9), which means it is controlled by self or ego. Some people just want more things, possessions, and everything else. What in life do you want more than anything else? What would you do or sacrifice to fulfill your life's dream?

*Lord, teach me the futility of living for money, fame, power, sex, adventures, or pleasure. Give me what Paul wanted, “That I may know Him” (Phil. 3:16). Give me the most important thing in life... Christ. Amen.*

I am Jesus, your Shepherd. I may allow you to get many things the world seeks, but don't live for them. Live for Me, Jesus Christ. When you have Me, you have all you need. You have eternal life which will last forever. You have a purpose in life which will give you serenity and assurance. You have motivation to do your best for your family and those you work for. You have a value system to guide every decision. You have spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit to use for the kingdom. You have a calling in your life to follow Me, and I have a plan for your life that is good (Jer. 29:11). When you have Me, you have all you need.



*Lord, forgive me for making money, pleasure and people the most important things in life. Teach me how to put You first and put everything in its place. Teach me priorities and give me Jesus. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Philippians 3:21

**Key Thought:** When you give Jesus, your Shepherd, first place in your life, you can say, “I have all that I need.”

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 44

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: I RENEW STRENGTH

*“The Lord is my shepherd...He renews my strength.”*

Psalm 23:1, 3

I am the Lord who knows what kind of strength you need, when you need it, and how much you need. The baby needs strength from milk to crawl and learn motor skills. I don't give a baby the strength of a young man. A child needs strength to learn the lessons of school and energy to grow muscles, mind, and character. Again, they don't have the strength of a fully-grown adult. Read again what the aging apostle says, “I have written to you who are young in the faith because you are strong” (1 John 2:14, NLT). Today I will renew your strength. How much” As much as you need for the challenges you face. Remember, how much strength was promised to the tribe of Asher. “As your day demands so should your strength be” (Deut. 33:25, ELT). I give babies what they need, the same to teens and to the old men and women. What are you given to do for Me today? How much strength do you need? Ask for it!

*Lord, I want strength to do all I plan to do. When you give me more to do, and I have greater responsibilities, give me what I need, at the time I need it, at the place I need it. I need You and can't do it without Your strength. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd who will lead you to green grass that will give you needed strength. I will supply refreshing water to renew your will. You'll need rest, grass to grow spiritual muscles, and water to replenish your tired stamina. You'll need a peaceful environment to prepare you for stressful work situations. When you pray for energy, also pray for conditions and food that will give you strength. “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew *their* strength...they shall run and not be weary” (Isa. 40:31). Rest now, run later.

*Lord, thank You for rest and restoration. Thank You for giving it when I need it. Lord, thank You for work and its challenges. It makes me grow. Meet all my needs this day...rest and work...I will follow Your leading. Amen.*

### **READING:**

Isaiah 40:1-31

**Key Thought:** There are times you had rest and times when you need work. I know you and I will lead you on accordingly.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 45

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: TRUE

*“You are true to your name.”*

Psalm 23:3, CEV

**I** am your Shepherd-Jesus who promises to lead you in “right paths for My name’s sake.” The *Contemporary English Version* translates it, “True to my name” (v. 3). Because My name represents who I am, therefore I will lead you rightly (method) in right paths (destination). That means I can’t lead you wrongly (using wrong methods) to the wrong destination. I will always be true to My Word, or My name. Are you a person of your Word; do you always walk on right paths because of your character or reputation? Do you always walk in right paths because of your name sake?

*Lord, I want to be true to my family and my name. I want to be true to You because I am a Christian. When I want to deviate my steps, bring me back to right paths, for Your name sake. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd-Jesus who will always lead you in right paths. If you end up in “wrong paths,” you missed My leadership along the way. Repent and get back in the “right path.” I want you to be truthful in all you do because “I am the truth” (John 14:6). To be truthful, always walk in the right paths for the right motivation, at the right time, in the right way. Live your life making a name for your truthfulness, then spend the rest of your life being true to your name.

*Lord, You are my standard. I will be truthful because You are true and faithful. When I have not been truthful, forgive me. When I am weak, strengthen me. When I do right and talk right, be glorified in me. Amen.*

**READING:**

James 4:1-17

**Key Thought:** Build a good reputation for your life by always being truthful because your Lord is your standard of truthfulness.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 46

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: HIGH MOUNTAINS

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Yea, 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.*

Psalm 23:1, 4

I am your Shepherd-Jesus. I will walk with you through the valley of the shadow of death. Remember, a valley is hemmed in by mountains on each side. Throughout Scripture, mountains are pictured as barriers to block our travel, or hinder travel in life. Got any mountains today? Is it a high forbidding peak that’s got you hemmed in? Is your mountain too dangerous to travel? Are you afraid of dying on the mountain, or would you rather die in the valley of the shadow of death? Of course, no one wants to die! But like taxes and troubles, death is inevitable. Only I, your Lord, knows when you will die. But fear not, “I will walk with you through death’s shadow. Whether you die in terrorizing mountain or in the peaceful valley, I will be with you.

*Lord, no one wants to die, and no one wants to die with pain. Be with me and give me Your assurance when I go through the valley of the shadow of death. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd-Jesus who knows all about you (Ps. 139:13-16). I have a plan for your life (Jer. 29:11), and you will not die until you finish My task for your life. So, trust Me today with your life. But more importantly, trust Me with the time you have left on earth.

*Lord, I’m not ready to die. I want to serve You with all my might, for all the years I have left. I want to glorify You with my worship and praise. And when that day comes, I want to walk with You through the valley of the shadow of death. Amen.*

## READINGS:

Psalm 139:1-24

**Key Thought:** Life's valleys are hemmed in by mountains that are barriers and are filled with obstacles. The Shepherd will walk with you through mountains or valleys.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 47

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: ENEMIES

*“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.”*

John 10:11-13

*“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”*

John 10:10

*“You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies.”*

Psalms 23:5

**I**, your Shepherd, will protect you from your enemies. A sheep has no teeth to attack and tear, no claws to rip, no fangs with poison. Of all the animals, sheep are among the most defenseless. They absolutely need a shepherd to protect them from their enemies. Also, a sheep does not have an internal instinct to detect danger and they are called “dumb.” They eat with their head down and follow their food. They stray into poison herbs or insects, or near a wolf’s den or they will innocently step on a venomous snake. Why do sheep have enemies? They can be eaten by wolves and bears and other predators (1 Sam. 17:34-36). They can fall to their death off cliffs or wander into swift running water that sweeps them away to drown. You have many enemies and you’re not always aware of what they want to do to you. I am your Shepherd to protect you.

*Lord, thank You for saving me from sin and protecting me from spiritual enemies that I know about. Thank You for protecting me*



*when I didn't realize danger was near. I feel comfortable walking under Your protection. Amen.*

I am your Shepherd who also gives you protection. I indwell you to guide you away from sin and danger (John 14:20) and I give you the Holy Spirit who convicts you of sin (John 16:7-11). Study the Word of God because it gives you principles to keep you from sin (1 Cor. 10:13). Also, I will answer your prayer requests to live a holy, spiritual life.

*Lord, I want to be holy, separated to You. I want to be spiritual pursuing a godly life. Thank You for being my victory over all my enemies (2 Cor. 2:14). Amen.*

### **READING:**

2 Corinthians 2:1-15

**Key Thought:** Sheep have many enemies, therefore stay close to the Shepherd who will protect you.

### **REFLECTION**

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## Day 48

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: FULL CUP

*“The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing.... You set a table for me right in front of my enemies. You bathe my head in oil; my cup is so full it spills over!”*

Psalm 23:1, 5, CEB

I am your Shepherd that fills your cup of blessings so full that it runs over. You may not be the healthiest person in the world, but I bless you with the health you have. When you think of all those with poorer health than you, be thankful that your health cup is full. You may not be a PhD. or Einstein, but you can think your way through many problems and you know a lot. Be thankful for the intelligence you have. You may not have the wealth of a millionaire who has more money that he/she can spend. But be thankful for the happiness you have. No one has all the happiness in the world, or the best health in the world, or knows everything about everything. So, don't look at what you don't have in life. Be thankful for all the things you do have. I have poured your cup full to overflowing. If you take advantage of everything I have given you, I'll give you more.

*Lord, thank You for the mind that I have. I don't know everything, but I'll apply myself and learn more for You, so I can do more for You, so I can be more for You. Thank You for the overflow of life. Amen.*

I, your Shepherd, don't focus on a half-full cup. My aim is to fill the cup of every one of My sheep. I want them to grow in every area of their life. I want each sheep to grow as much as they can and do as much for the kingdom as they can, so each can be as godly as possible. I've got an unlimited container of blessings to pour on you. Come stand close to Me under the spout.

*Lord, forgive me for looking at the things I don't have. Help me look*

*at all the blessings You have given me. I want to grow as much as possible, in as many areas as possible. Thank You for Your unlimited challenge of blessings. Amen.*

**READING:**

Palm 100

**Key Thought:** An overflowing cup represents God giving unlimited blessings.

**REFLECTION**

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## Day 49

### MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: I RESTORE

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.”*

Psalm 23:1-3, NLT

I am your Shepherd who restores you., When I lead you beside still waters, and I provide green pastures to lie in, I then restore your soul. I’m in the restoration business. First, I gave you the Lord’s Day at the end of a week to rest...that’s to restore your tired physical body and restore your stamina for another week of work. Next, I gave you the night, and created a human body that needed sleep and rest each evening. So, I restore your aching muscles as you find rest each evening with sleep. But the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm seems to mean something different. There will be time when you need special leading by still waters, and you need My personal guidance to green pastures. After you’ve eaten from the table spread before you and drunk from the overflowing cups I have rest for you. It’s spiritual renewal! Do you see it now?

*Lord, I can’t go without eating and I can’t work without rest, so I will work while it is day—my open door of opportunity today. You know when I really need some rest so it’s then I’ll rest in You. Amen.*

I am Jesus who said, “Come to me all you who are weak and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28). When sin wears you down, I’ll give you rest. If it’s your sin, confess it (1 John 1:9) and change your lifestyle. I’ll forgive and restore and give rest. If it’s the sin of others that wears you down, seek My face and pray for them. I’ll give you rest. Then when your life is over, I’ll bring you to heaven for eternal rest.

*Lord, I get tired because I’m human. Provide physical rest and add to it spiritual rest. Take away stress...fatigue...and disillusionment. I*

*rest in You. Amen.*

## READING

Hebrews 4

**Key Thought:** Everyone is human so they need several kinds of rest, so they can continue living and serving.

## REFLECTION

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## Day 50

# MY NAME IS SHEPHERD-JESUS: I GIVE STRENGTH

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength.”*

Psalm 23:1-3, NLT

**I** am your Shepherd/Jesus who renews your strength. What strength do you need today...emotionally...spiritually...physically...financially? The key to strength is found in relationship to Me, Jesus, your Shepherd. First make a decision to become My sheep by making Me your only shepherd. Say with Paul, “For me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). Next, tell everyone of your new-found commitment to Me, “Not I but Christ” (Gal. 2:20). Then I will lead you to green meadows where you can eat for physical strength and rest for mental strength. I can guide you in “right” paths to gain spiritual strength. When those priorities are in order, you will work hard to provide financial strength, plus clothing, housing and food for physical strength. But strength begins with Me. If you have little strength, come back to Me and let’s get started right.

*Lord, every night I get physically tired and sometimes I’m only mentally and emotionally tired. I yield to Your priorities. Help me put everything in order so You can give me strength in every area of life. Amen.*

I am your strength—look at John’s priorities of strength. “I have written to you who are young in the faith because you are strong, God’s Word lives in your hearts” (1 John 2:14, ELT). The secret is My promise in the Bible. If you follow My formula, you will be strong.

*Lord, renew my strength for today. Give me strength of mind and strength of emotions. Even when I’m tired, help me do the things I need to do. May You be glorified in my accomplishments. Amen.*

## READING:

1 John 1:1-2:20

**Key Thought:** God created the human body to be strong and each human body needs strength in every area of life, i.e., physical emotional mental and spiritual.

## REFLECTION

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## EPILOGUE

**N**OW that you have finished reading and praying Psalm 23, what's next? Make the lessons you have observed in this book part of your daily walk with the Father.

First, cultivate a faithful attitude of walking with Me every minute of every day for the rest of your life. It is really quite simple. I am with you all the time, so talk with Me often.

Second, apply the principles of praying Psalm 23 to other portions of Scripture. Just talk to Me as you read Scriptures, asking Me to make the truths in My Word real in your life. Then go a step further: Turn the words of Scriptures into prayer. Talk to Me using the words of the Bible.

Third, pray Psalm 23 on a regular basis. All of Christianity is in Psalm 23, just as an entire oak tree is in the acorn. Therefore, praying Psalm 23 means you are praying about every aspect of your faith.



# PART THREE

50 DAYS WITH THE SHEPHERD OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> PSALM

LESSONS

## Lesson 1:

### ANSWER KEY

## YOURS

### A. WHY IS THIS THE FAVORITE PSALM?

1. **Easy to memorize.** These six verses are a short “self-contained” picture of our relationship with God.
2. **Intimate fellowship.** Promises God’s comfort and protection when we remain close to the Shepherd.
3. **Personalized identification.** Demonstrates how our spiritual needs are met in the Lord.
4. **It’s a story.** Has action, testimony, characterization and plot.
5. **Tells about the Lord.** Israel knew God primarily by His power and holiness, but in Psalm 23, they learn of His personal love and compassion.

### B. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

1. What is meant, if you don’t call him Lord?
  - a. If He is called God, *Elohim*, i.e., **creative power**, it implies an impersonal mighty Being. But this Psalm is about **relationship**.
  - b. If He is called Master, *Adonai*, i.e., it implies **slaves to serve**. But we are sheep **to be cared for by the Lord**.
  - c. If He is called King, Rock, Fortress, Almighty, or Holy One, it implies impersonal terms. But the term *Lord* is a term of **personal relationship** meaning you can get close to Him.
2. What does the word “is” imply?
  - a. Some only testify to **past** experiences with God, i.e., Duncan Campbell. “The Lord was my Shepherd.”

- b. Some only plan to get close to the Lord-Shepherd in the **future**, i.e., the Lord *will be* my Shepherd.
3. What two things can I count on when you use the verb “*IS*”?
- a. **Right now**. The Lord will care and protect you today.
  - b. **Right here**. You don’t have to go some place else to get into the Shepherd’s care.
4. What would it mean if the pronoun *my* were left out?
- a. The Lord is *a* shepherd, means He is **one among many**. Who or what is your shepherd? Job? Family? Retirement fund?
  - b. The Lord is *the* shepherd means He has the priority, but He is not **personal**. “The shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).
  - c. The Lord is *our* shepherd means He relates to me in a **crowd**. “I’m only one among many.”
5. Why are we likened to sheep?
- a. **Stray**. “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6). “What man having a hundred sheep, if he lost one...will go after that which was lost” (Luke 15:4).
  - b. **Satisfy self**. Sheep will only eat what is in front of them.
  - c. **No sense of danger**. Sheep have no instinct to warn them of snakes, wolves, bears, parasites, etc.
  - d. **Defenseless**. Sheep have no weapons to defend themselves, no claws, teeth, fangs, etc. “The wolf catcheth them” (John 10:12).
  - e. **Dumb**. “As a sheep before a shearer is dumb” (Isa. 53:7).
  - f. **Target of the enemy**. “Grievous wolves shall enter, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29).
6. Why is the Lord likened to a shepherd?
- a. **He knows us**. “I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14).
  - b. **He relates to us**. “He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out and when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice” (John 10:3-4).
  - c. **He loves the sheep**. “He (Jesus) was moved with compassion on

them, because they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

- d. **He provides for the sheep.** “I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).
- e. **He sacrifices for the sheep.** “The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:10). “I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15).
- f. **He protects the sheep.** “Thy servant (David) kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went after him...and caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him” (I Sam. 17:34-35).
- g. **He feeds the sheep.** “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies” (Ps. 23:5).

Does not apply to:

I want **fun**, because He gives satisfaction.

I want to **fulfill my lust**, because He cannot tempt us.

I want **money**, but He gives what money buys.

I want **better circumstances**, but He gives abundant life.

## Lesson 1:

### QUESTIONS

## YOURS

### A. WHY IS THIS THE FAVORITE PSALM?

1. \_\_\_\_\_. These six verses are a short “self-contained” picture of our relationship with God.
2. \_\_\_\_\_. Promises God’s comfort and protection when we remain close to the Shepherd.
3. \_\_\_\_\_. Demonstrates how our spiritual needs are met in the Lord.
4. \_\_\_\_\_. Has action, testimony, characterization and plot.
5. \_\_\_\_\_. Israel knew God primarily by His power and holiness, but in Psalm 23, they learn of His personal love and compassion.

### B. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

1. What is meant, if you don’t call him Lord?
  - a. If He is called God, *Elohim*, i.e., \_\_\_\_\_, it implies an impersonal mighty Being. But this Psalm is about \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. If He is called Master, *Adonai*, i.e., it implies \_\_\_\_\_. But we are sheep \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. If He is called King, Rock, Fortress, Almighty, or Holy One, it implies impersonal terms. But the term *Lord* is a term of \_\_\_\_\_ meaning you can get close to Him.
2. What does the word “is” imply?
  - a. Some only testify to \_\_\_\_\_ experiences with God, i.e., Duncan Campbell. “The Lord was my Shepherd.”
  - b. Some only plan to get close to the Lord-Shepherd in the \_\_\_\_\_,

i.e., the Lord *will be* my Shepherd.

3. What two things can I count on when you use the verb “*IS*”?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord will care and protect you today.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. You don’t have to go some place else to get into the Shepherd’s care.
4. What would it mean if the pronoun *my* were left out?
  - a. The Lord is *a* shepherd, means He is \_\_\_\_\_. Who or what is your shepherd? Job? Family? Retirement fund?
  - b. The Lord is *the* shepherd means He has the priority, but He is not \_\_\_\_\_. “The shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).
  - c. The Lord is *our* shepherd means He relates to me in a \_\_\_\_\_. “I’m only one among many.”
5. Why are we likened to sheep?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6). “What man having a hundred sheep, if he lost one...will go after that which was lost” (Luke 15:4).
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. Sheep will only eat what is in front of them.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. Sheep have no instinct to warn them of snakes, wolves, bears, parasites, etc.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_. Sheep have no weapons to defend themselves, no claws, teeth, fangs, etc. “The wolf catcheth them” (John 10:12).
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_. “As a sheep before a shearer is dumb” (Isa. 53:7).
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_. “Grievous wolves shall enter, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29).
6. Why is the Lord likened to a shepherd?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. “I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14).
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. “He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out and when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice” (John 10:3-4).
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. “He (Jesus) was moved with compassion on them, because they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

- d. \_\_\_\_\_. “I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).
- e. \_\_\_\_\_. “The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:10). “I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15).
- f. \_\_\_\_\_. “Thy servant (David) kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went after him...and caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him” (I Sam. 17:34-35).
- g. \_\_\_\_\_. “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies” (Ps. 23:5).

Does not apply to:

I want \_\_\_\_\_, because He gives satisfaction.

I want to \_\_\_\_\_, because He cannot tempt us.

I want \_\_\_\_\_, but He gives what money buys.

I want \_\_\_\_\_, but He gives abundant life.

## Lesson 2:

### ANSWER KEY

## LEADING

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. The shepherd's main task is **leadership**.
2. What type of leader was Jesus?
  - a. Not **dictatorial**. He let Judas betray, and Peter deny.
  - b. Not **democratic**. He never took a vote.
  - c. Not Laissez Faire. He doesn't let sheep do what they want to do.

### B. WHY MUST THE SHEPHERD LEAD ME?

1. Sheep have no **sense of direction**. "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6).
2. Sheep don't know **where to go**. "We have turned everyone to his own way" (Isa. 53:6).
3. There are necessary places **sheep don't want to go**. "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them" (John 10:4).
4. Sheep are not **sure-footed**.
5. The shepherd wants to encounter **our dangers first**.
6. The shepherd knows **where** to go, (direction). **How** to get there (method), **why** we are going, (purpose) and **when** to move (timing).

### C. WHAT THE SHEPHERD DOES NOT DO

1. **Call to us** from the destination.



2. **Drive us** to the right paths.
3. **Paces us** to walk faster.
4. **Measures us** to see how far we walk.
5. **Challenges us** to walk further each day.

It's not how fast or how far

We walk with Him.

He wants us to follow right paths

And arrive at the destination with Him.

#### D. WHAT ARE RIGHT PATHS?

1. The word righteous scares us or doesn't have any meaning. The original suggests **right paths**.
2. Since "he leads in right paths," then there are **wrong paths**.
  - a. **Ignore** God's Word.
  - b. **Violate** your conscience.
  - c. **Go against** good advice.
  - d. **Disobey** God's commandments.
  - e. **Feed** on the wrong food.
  - f. **Search** for the wrong goals.
  - g. **Follow** ungodly friends.
3. How does the shepherd lead?
  - a. **Slowly**. The shepherd does not lead too fast for lambs to keep up.
  - b. **Straight**. The shepherd would not lead astray.
  - c. **Purposefully**. The shepherd does not waste time or energy.
4. How can you find God's choice of "right paths?"
  - a. **Follow**. "Come after Me" (Mark 1:17).
  - b. **Get close** to the shepherd. "Come unto Me" (Matt. 11:28).

- c. **Remain**. “Abide in me” (John 15:4).
5. What does “right paths” mean? God’s choice is best.
- a. There is a “right path” **for you**.  
Someone else’s “right path” is probably a wrong path.
  - b. There is a “right path” **today**.  
Yesterday’s “right path” may be today’s wrong path.
  - c. There is a “right path” **tomorrow**.  
It’s hard to find tomorrow’s “right path” if you are on the wrong path today.
  - d. Are you on the right path **now**?

#### E. FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE

- 1. The name of God represents the **reputation of God**. Therefore, you can depend on God to do what He promises.
- 2. Put your name of your **workmanship**, i.e., Stradivarius, Baldwin, etc. God puts His name on us. “I will write upon him, the name of my God” (Rev. 3:12).
- 3. How dependable are the promises of Psalm 23? As dependable as **God Himself**. “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24).

## **Lesson 2:**

### QUESTIONS

## LEADING

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. The shepherd's main task is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What type of leader was Jesus?
  - a. Not \_\_\_\_\_. He let Judas betray, and Peter deny.
  - b. Not \_\_\_\_\_. He never took a vote.
  - c. Not Laissez Faire. He doesn't let sheep do what they want to do.

### B. WHY MUST THE SHEPHERD LEAD ME?

1. Sheep have no \_\_\_\_\_. "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6).
2. Sheep don't know \_\_\_\_\_. "We have turned everyone to his own way" (Isa. 53:6).
3. There are necessary places \_\_\_\_\_. "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them" (John 10:4).
4. Sheep are not \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The shepherd wants to encounter \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The shepherd knows \_\_\_\_\_ to go, (direction). \_\_\_\_\_ to get there (method), \_\_\_\_\_ we are going, (purpose) and \_\_\_\_\_ to move (timing).

### C. WHAT THE SHEPHERD DOES NOT DO

1. \_\_\_\_\_ from the destination.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ to the right paths.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ to walk faster.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ to see how far we walk.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ to walk further each day.

It's not how fast or how far

We walk with Him.

He wants us to follow right paths

And arrive at the destination with Him.

#### D. WHAT ARE RIGHT PATHS?

1. The word righteous scares us or doesn't have any meaning. The original suggests \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Since "he leads in right paths," then there are \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ God's Word.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ your conscience.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ good advice.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ God's commandments.
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ on the wrong food.
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ for the wrong goals.
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ ungodly friends.
3. How does the shepherd lead?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. The shepherd does not lead too fast for lambs to keep up.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. The shepherd would not lead astray.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. The shepherd does not waste time or energy.
4. How can you find God's choice of "right paths?"
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. "Come after Me" (Mark 1:17).
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ to the shepherd. "Come unto Me" (Matt. 11:28).

- c. \_\_\_\_\_. “Abide in me” (John 15:4).
5. What does “right paths” mean? God’s choice is best.
- a. There is a “right path” \_\_\_\_\_.  
Someone else’s “right path” is probably a wrong path.
- b. There is a “right path” \_\_\_\_\_.  
Yesterday’s “right path” may be today’s wrong path.
- c. There is a “right path” \_\_\_\_\_.  
It’s hard to find tomorrow’s “right path” if you are on the wrong path today.
- d. Are you on the right path \_\_\_\_\_?

#### E. FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE

1. The name of God represents the \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, you can depend on God to do what He promises.
2. Put your name of your \_\_\_\_\_, i.e., Stradivarius, Baldwin, etc. God puts His name on us. “I will write upon him, the name of my God” (Rev. 3:12).
3. How dependable are the promises of Psalm 23? As dependable as \_\_\_\_\_.  
“Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24).

## Lesson 3:

### ANSWER KEY

## I LEAD IN RIGHT PATHS

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. What are our two greatest needs?
  - a. **Food**, i.e., green pastures.
  - b. **Drink**, i.e., still waters.
2. How can the Shepherd meet our needs? **Relationship**.

### B. WHY DOES THE LORD LEAD BY STILL WATERS?

1. What does the word “lead” suggest?
  - a. Not **drive** the sheep. He knows the way.
  - b. Not **force** the sheep. He faces danger first.
  - c. Not **point the way**. We do not obey well.
  - d. Not **tells us when to find water**. He takes us to water.
2. What does the word “by” suggest?
  - a. Not **into** the water.
  - b. Not **within sight** of water.
  - c. Not **maketh us** drink from still water. We all have a thirst “indicator” that lets us know when we are thirsty.
  - d. He leads beside still waters so we can drink when thirsty.
3. What does the word “still” suggest?
  - a. Able to drink without **choking**.
  - b. Not to a **river or waterfall** to feel its **power**.
  - c. Not to a lake to enjoy its **beauty**.
  - d. “Still” suggests a place to **rest and relax**.

4. What does “water” do for us?
  - a. Keeps us **alive**. “A well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).
  - b. **Refreshes**. “As the deer thirsteth after a stream of water, so panteth my soul for you, O God” (Ps. 42:1, ELT).
  - c. **Enjoyment**. “Oh that one would give me a drink of water of the well of Bethlehem” (2 Sam. 23:15).
  - d. **Cleansing**. “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps. 51:7).

### C. WHY DOES THE SHEPHERD MAKE US LIE DOWN?

1. What does the word “maketh” not mean?
  - a. To **face down**.
  - b. To ride down
  - c. To pull down.
2. What does the Lord not use to make us lie down?
  - a. Sheep dog.
  - b. His club.
  - c. His strength.
  - d. Punishment.
3. The word “maketh” means, “to cause me to lie down.” The emphasis is on “me.” What does this picture?
  - a. **God creates circumstances**. The green grass looks so good the sheep want to lie down. Mother feeds and rocks the baby to get the baby to lie down and sleep.
  - b. **God creates appetite**. After a long walk, the hungry sheep want to lie down.
  - c. **God creates desire**. When Israel would not obey, God sent the hornets to make them willing to obey.

### D. LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES

1. Why do sheep lie down?
  - a. **Natural**. Standing people naturally want to lie down.
  - b. **Tired**. The Lord gives us rest in green pastures.
  - c. **Sleep**. We need rest to replenish our strength.
  - d. **Hide**. Sheep want to hide from danger.
  - e. **Stop working**. When we lie down, we stop working.
  - f. **To be in His presence**. Sometimes we want to be near the one we love.
2. Why chose green pastures?
  - a. Chosen pastures. The original language suggests, “Choice pastures.”
    - (1) Why not the pastures of another? **Best for our need**.
    - (2) Why not the pastures of the past? **Not help us today**.
    - (3) Why not the pasture of next year? **We are not ready**.
    - (4) Why not lie in the desert? The Shepherd always **gets us home**.
  - b. His choice. The Shepherd knows us...knows the pastures...knows the future; so His choice is best.
3. The original words suggest “tender new green grass.” What vegetables are best tasting? **New tender is best**.
4. What does the Lord not do with the grass?
  - a. Does not choose **what grass for us to eat**.
  - b. **Pick it for us**. He leads us to the Scriptures, but we must, (1) listen, (2) read, (3) study, (4) memorize, (5) meditate.
  - c. We must **lie in it and eat it**.  
The Shepherd chooses the pasture for us.  
We choose when, how much, and what to eat.
5. What does it mean because the word “*lie down*” is a continuous verb form?
  - a. **Repeated**. The Lord will feed us “this day our daily bread.”
  - b. **Not just once**. Every time the Lord gets us to a pasture of green grass, He gives us food.
  - c. **Daily**. We get food, protection, fellowship and strength every day.



## Lesson 3:

### QUESTIONS

## I LEAD IN RIGHT PATHS

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. What are our two greatest needs?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_, i.e., green pastures.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_, i.e., still waters.
2. How can the Shepherd meet our needs? \_\_\_\_\_.

### B. WHY DOES THE LORD LEAD BY STILL WATERS?

1. What does the word “lead” suggest?
  - a. Not \_\_\_\_\_ the sheep. He knows the way.
  - b. Not \_\_\_\_\_ the sheep. He faces danger first.
  - c. Not \_\_\_\_\_. We do not obey well.
  - d. Not \_\_\_\_\_. He takes us to water.
2. What does the word “by” suggest?
  - a. Not \_\_\_\_\_ the water.
  - b. Not \_\_\_\_\_ t of water.
  - c. Not \_\_\_\_\_ drink from still water. We all have a thirst “indicator” that lets us know when we are thirsty.
  - d. He leads beside still waters so we can drink when thirsty.
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  - a. Able to drink without \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Not to a to feel its \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. Not to a lake to enjoy its \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. “Still” suggests a place to \_\_\_\_\_.

4. What does “water” do for us?
  - a. Keeps us \_\_\_\_\_. “A well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. “As the deer thirsteth after a stream of water, so panteth my soul for you, O God” (Ps. 42:1, ELT).
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. “Oh that one would give me a drink of water of the well of Bethlehem” (2 Sam. 23:15).
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_. “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps. 51:7).

### C. WHY DOES THE SHEPHERD MAKE US LIE DOWN?

1. What does the word “maketh” not mean?
  - a. To \_\_\_\_\_.
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  - c. His strength.
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3. The word “maketh” means, “to cause me to lie down.” The emphasis is on “me.” What does this picture?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. The green grass looks so good the sheep want to lie down. Mother feeds and rocks the baby to get the baby to lie down and sleep.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. After a long walk, the hungry sheep want to lie down.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. When Israel would not obey, God sent the hornets to make them willing to obey.

### D. LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES

1. Why do sheep lie down?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. Standing people naturally want to lie down.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord gives us rest in green pastures.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. We need rest to replenish our strength.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_. Sheep want to hide from danger.
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_. When we lie down, we stop working.
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_. Sometimes we want to be near the one we love.
2. Why chose green pastures?
  - a. Chosen pastures. The original language suggests, “Choice pastures.”
    - (1) Why not the pastures of another? \_\_\_\_\_.
    - (2) Why not the pastures of the past? \_\_\_\_\_.
    - (3) Why not the pasture of next year? \_\_\_\_\_.
    - (4) Why not lie in the desert? The Shepherd always \_\_\_\_\_**e**.
  - b. His choice. The Shepherd knows us...knows the pastures...knows the future; so His choice is best.
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4. What does the Lord not do with the grass?
  - a. Does not choose \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. He leads us to the Scriptures, but we must, (1) listen, (2) read, (3) study, (4) memorize, (5) meditate.
  - c. We must \_\_\_\_\_.

The Shepherd chooses the pasture for us.

We choose when, how much, and what to eat.
5. What does it mean because the word “*lie down*” is a continuous verb form?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord will feed us “this day our daily bread.”
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. Every time the Lord gets us to a pasture of green grass, He gives us food.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. We get food, protection, fellowship and strength every day.

## Lesson 4:

### ANSWER KEY

# THROUGH THE VALLEY

## A. INTRODUCTION:

### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT VALLEYS?

1. Surrounded by **high mountains**. There are cliffs or obstacles that will keep you in shadows or the dark.
2. There are mountain barriers to keep you from reaching your goal, but a valley goes **through them**.
3. There are **wrong paths** through the mountains that end up in box canyons or a wrong trail just evaporates.
4. Only **a shepherd** can get sheep through dark valleys.

## B. YEA, THOUGH I WALK

1. The dark valleys are my choice; the shepherd does not **lead into them**.
2. Adam and Eve chose **death and darkness** (Rom. 5:12).
3. Sheep **ignorantly stray** into the valley of trouble, “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6).
  - a. They do not see **danger**.
  - b. They follow their **food**.
  - c. They are **defenseless**.
4. Sheep are **always selfish**. “And have turned to their own way” (Isa. 53:6).

## C. THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

1. A deep narrow valley is **dark**. Why darkness scares us.
  - a. We are afraid of the **unknown**.
  - b. Darkness covers **the evil** of evil people (John 3:19).
  - c. We **stumble or fall**.
  - d. We **remember**.
  - e. Darkness is **Satan's kingdom**.
2. What causes shadows? A barrier to the light or a **distortion to the light**.
3. The original suggests it is a “valley of shadows” not a valley of death. What do shadows do to us?
  - a. Our **active imagination** scares us. “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.”
  - b. Our **guilty memory**.
  - c. We imagine the **worse not best**.
  - d. Shadows make us **hurt ourselves**.
  - e. Shadows **steal happiness**.
4. Shadows are **illusions**, what we imagine is not there.
5. Shadows cannot hurt us, but they **make us hurt ourselves**.
6. What is the greatest shadow to scare us? **Death**.
7. Since shadows are caused **by light**, what should be our response?
  - a. **Come** to the light, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).
  - b. **Walk** in the light, “He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness” (John 8:12).
  - c. **Trust** the Lord. “Shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).
8. **“Death Shadows.”** Don’t scare the Lord. Why? He was born with a death shadow on the manger. “He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).
9. Remember, our death is **only a shadow**. Why does death scare even believers?
  - a. We cannot **see what is there**.
  - b. We do not want **physical pain**.

- c. We do not want to **give up anything**.
  - d. Because of sin, we **have doubts**.
  - e. We have not **finished everything**.
10. When the bony hand of death reaches for you, **it is the hand of Jesus**. “I am alive forever more and I have the keys of death” (Rev. 1:18).

## D . THE WONDERFUL WORD *THROUGH*

11. What does the shepherd not do?
- a. Lead us into the valley and **leave us there**.
  - b. Watch us from **outside** the valley.
  - c. Does not call to us from **the other side**.
  - d. The shepherd is with us *through* the valley to the other side.
12. Death is real to the unsaved, but a **shadow to believers**.
- Death momentarily obscures the light when we pass through the shadow of death, but instantly on the other side we enter the light.
13. Our present troubles are mountains – barriers that block us. What you need to know about mountains.
- a. There is a **valley** through problems (John 14:6).
  - b. People make their **problems**, not God.
  - c. Valleys have shadows that **scare us**.
  - d. Shadows make us **hurt ourselves**.
  - e. The Lord is **with us** in shadows and valleys.
  - f. He will lead me through **if I let him**.

## **Lesson 4:**

### QUESTIONS

## THROUGH THE VALLEY

### A. INTRODUCTION:

#### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT VALLEYS?

1. Surrounded by \_\_\_\_\_. There are cliffs or obstacles that will keep you in shadows or the dark.
2. There are mountain barriers to keep you from reaching your goal, but a valley goes \_\_\_\_\_.
3. There are \_\_\_\_\_ through the mountains that end up in box canyons or a wrong trail just evaporates.
4. Only \_\_\_\_\_ can get sheep through dark valleys.

### B. YEA, THOUGH I WALK

1. The dark valleys are my choice; the shepherd does not \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Adam and Eve chose \_\_\_\_\_ (Rom. 5:12).
3. Sheep \_\_\_\_\_ into the valley of trouble, “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6).
  - a. They do not see \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. They follow their \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. They are \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Sheep are \_\_\_\_\_. “And have turned to their own way” (Isa. 53:6).

### C. THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

1. A deep narrow valley is \_\_\_\_\_. Why darkness scares us.
  - a. We are afraid of the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Darkness covers \_\_\_\_\_ of evil people (John 3:19).
  - c. We \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. We \_\_\_\_\_.
  - e. Darkness is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What causes shadows? A barrier to the light or a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The original suggests it is a “valley of shadows” not a valley of death. What do shadows do to us?
  - a. Our \_\_\_\_\_ scares us. “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.”
  - b. Our \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. We imagine the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. Shadows make us \_\_\_\_\_.
  - e. Shadows \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Shadows are \_\_\_\_\_, what we imagine is not there.
5. Shadows cannot hurt us, but they \_\_\_\_\_.
6. What is the greatest shadow to scare us? \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Since shadows are caused \_\_\_\_\_, what should be our response?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ to the light, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ in the light, “He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness” (John 8:12).
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord. “Shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).
8. “\_\_\_\_\_.” Don’t scare the Lord. Why? He was born with a death shadow on the manger. “He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).
9. Remember, our death is \_\_\_\_\_. Why does death scare even believers?
  - a. We cannot \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. We do not want \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. We do not want to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. Because of sin, we \_\_\_\_\_.



- e. We have not \_\_\_\_\_.
10. When the bony hand of death reaches for you, \_\_\_\_\_. “I am alive forever more and I have the keys of death” (Rev. 1:18).

#### D. THE WONDERFUL WORD *THROUGH*

11. What does the shepherd not do?
- a. Lead us into the valley and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Watch us from \_\_\_\_\_ the valley.
  - c. Does not call to us from \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. The shepherd is with us *through* the valley to the other side.

12. Death is real to the unsaved, but a \_\_\_\_\_.

Death momentarily obscures the light when we pass through the shadow of death, but instantly on the other side we enter the light.

13. Our present troubles are mountains – barriers that block us. What you need to know about mountains.
- a. There is a \_\_\_\_\_ through problems (John 14:6).
  - b. People make their \_\_\_\_\_, not God.
  - c. Valleys have shadows that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. Shadows make us \_\_\_\_\_.
  - e. The Lord is \_\_\_\_\_ in shadows and valleys.
  - f. He will lead me through \_\_\_\_\_.

## Lesson 5:

### ANSWER KEY

## PROTECTOR

### A. INTRODUCTION: TWO POWERFUL HELPERS

1. This world is not our home, there is **little comfort**, but the Lord has, “a rod and staff to comfort you.”
2. Usually, people think “rod and staff” are the **same thing**. But each is a different instrument.
3. The word “rod” is more than a stick; it is a **club** to beat off enemies, i.e., the wolf, bear, or robbers. It is protection against negative attacks.
4. The word “staff” is used as a **positive tool**. It is used for direction, assistance in walking, pointing, lifting, etc.
5. Historically, these two tools are called **battling and building**.

### B. COMFORT ME

1. What do most first think of the word “comfort?” A **blanket** or **being at ease**.
2. The old word is “comfort” but the original language suggests help.
3. Think “cause and effect” to understand comfort.

#### Cause

Thy rod **helps me**.

Thy staff **directs me**.

#### Effect

I feel **comforted**.

I feel **assured**.

4. Jesus called the Holy Spirit a helper when he used the title “comforter.” “I will pray the Father and He will give you another comforter...even the

Spirit of Truth” (John 14:16-17).

5. A “comforter” is *parakletos*, i.e., “one called alongside to **help**.” The Lord comes to our help in both positive and negative situations.
6. What are some positive ways the Holy Spirit uses the “rod and staff” to help us?
  - a. **Teaching**. “Leading into truth”
  - b. **Guidance**. “Walking in the Spirit”
  - c. **Abundance**. “Fullness of the Spirit.”
  - d. **Power**. “Anointing of the Spirit”

### C. ROD OR CLUB?

1. In the dangerous valley, the shepherd is:
  - a. **With me** and He has something.
  - b. To **protect me**.
2. The rod is kept for the **enemies of the sheep**, never to beat the sheep.
3. Negative ways the Lord helps me:
  - a. **Aware of sin**. Conviction of sin.
  - b. **Lead around danger**. Providential grace.
  - c. **Protection**. Guardian angel.
  - d. **Uncomfortable with sin**. Grieving the Holy Spirit.
  - e. **Keeps away evil**. Intercessory prayer.
  - f. **Inner confidence**. Assurance of salvation.
4. Who are the enemies of the sheep?
  - a. The thief (John 10:10) **false religious teachers**.
  - b. The stranger (John 10:5) **non-committed ministers**.
  - c. The hireling (John 10:12) **unprepared ministers**.
  - d. The wolf (John 10:12) **satan**.
5. The shepherd has as much trouble with **internal attacks** from his fellow-workers, as he does from without by **known enemies**.

6. The family genealogy was carved in the rod. “Write thou every man’s name upon his rod” (Numb. 17:2).
  - a. Spanked with **family history**. “He that spareth his rod, spoileth his son” (Prov. 13:24).
  - b. Corrected with **family authority**. “I will visit their transgression with a rod” (Psa. 89:32).
  - c. The **standard** for correction, “Shall I come to you with the rod” (1 Cor. 4:21).

#### D. THE STAFF

1. The staff is the **positive instrument** used by the shepherd in tending his flock.
2. The shepherd led the sheep with the staff, **direction**.
3. The staff was used to lift sheep, **rescue**.
4. The staff was used to divide sheep, **separate to himself**.
5. The staff was used in walking, **assistance**.
6. The uplifted staff **blessing**. “I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand...when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed” (Ex. 17:9-11).

## Lesson 5:

### QUESTIONS

## PROTECTOR

### A. INTRODUCTION: TWO POWERFUL HELPERS

1. This world is not our home, there is \_\_\_\_\_, but the Lord has, “a rod and staff to comfort you.”
2. Usually, people think “rod and staff” are the \_\_\_\_\_. But each is a different instrument.
3. The word “rod” is more than a stick; it is a \_\_\_\_\_ to beat off enemies, i.e., the wolf, bear, or robbers. It is protection against negative attacks.
4. The word “staff” is used as a \_\_\_\_\_. It is used for direction, assistance in walking, pointing, lifting, etc.
5. Historically, these two tools are called \_\_\_\_\_.

### B. COMFORT ME

1. What do most first think of the word “comfort?” A \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The old word is “comfort” but the original language suggests \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Think “cause and effect” to understand comfort.

#### Cause

Thy rod \_\_\_\_\_.

Thy staff \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Effect

I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Jesus called the Holy Spirit a helper when he used the title “comforter.” “I will pray the Father and He will give you another comforter...even the Spirit of Truth” (John 14:16-17).

5. A “comforter” is *parakletos*, i.e., “one called alongside to \_\_\_\_.” The Lord comes to our help in both positive and negative situations.
6. What are some positive ways the Holy Spirit uses the “rod and staff” to help us?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. “Leading into truth”
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. “Walking in the Spirit”
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. “Fullness of the Spirit.”
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_. “Anointing of the Spirit”

### C. ROD OR CLUB?

1. In the dangerous valley, the shepherd is:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ and He has something.
  - b. To \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The rod is kept for the \_\_\_\_\_, never to beat the sheep.
3. Negative ways the Lord helps me:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_. Conviction of sin.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. Providential grace.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. Guardian angel.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_. Grieving the Holy Spirit.
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_. Intercessory prayer.
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_. Assurance of salvation.
4. Who are the enemies of the sheep?
  - a. The thief (John 10:10) \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. The stranger (John 10:5) \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. The hireling (John 10:12) \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. The wolf (John 10:12) \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The shepherd has as much trouble with \_\_\_\_\_ from his fellow-workers, as he does from without by \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The family genealogy was carved in the rod. “Write thou every man’s name

upon his rod” (Numb. 17:2).

- a. Spanked with \_\_\_\_\_. “He that spareth his rod, spoileth his son” (Prov. 13:24).
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- c. The \_\_\_\_\_ for correction, “Shall I come to you with the rod” (1 Cor. 4:21).

#### D. THE STAFF

- 1. The staff is the \_\_\_\_\_ used by the shepherd in tending his flock.
- 2. The shepherd led the sheep with the staff, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3. The staff was used to lift sheep, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4. The staff was used to divide sheep, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5. The staff was used in walking, \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6. The uplifted staff \_\_\_\_\_. “I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand...when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed” (Ex. 17:9-11).

## Lesson 6:

### ANSWER KEY

## PROVISION

### A. INTRODUCTION: WHEN THE TABLE IS SPREAD

1. You have just come back from **straying**.
2. You have just come from a **dark valley**.
3. You have just escaped **death shadows**.
4. You get the opposite of punishment **grace factor**.

### B. WHY A TABLE?

1. Not a **picnic**, it is just temporary.
2. Not a **TV table**, it is just for one.
3. Not a **hot dog**, you eat a snack standing up.
4. **Rest**. You get to sit down after a long walk.
5. **Fellowship**. You can enjoy others at the table.
6. **Choices**. A table means lots of food and lots of different kinds.

### C. THOU: WHO PREPAREST THE TABLE?

1. **You do it**. In the green pastures.
2. **You do without**. In the valley of shadows.
3. “Give me this day my daily bread.” It is good to know that you have a **bread maker**, rather than a warehouse of stale bread.”



4. **God is your chief.** The Lord does not get an angel, prophet or king to cook for you.

#### D. HOW DOES THE LORD PREPARE YOUR FOOD?

1. **Repeatedly.** The word “preparest” is continuous action.
2. **Continuously.** The Lord prepares food more than once.
3. **Daily.** The Lord prepares food daily because we get hungry daily.

#### WHAT FOOD DO WE LIKE?

- a. **Fresh.** Preparest.
  - b. **Ready.** Table.
  - c. **Personal.** For me.
  - d. **Celebrate** with others.
  - e. **Good.** A good God prepares good food.
1. What is your favorite meal? \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. “O taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). “And Jesus said unto them, ‘I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst’ (John 6:35).

#### E. IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES.

1. **For God.** To show your enemies God’s care and provision.
2. **For you.** To celebrate your deliverance, i.e., V. J. DAY.
3. **For your enemies.** To demonstrate God’s power.
4. **For your peace.** They can see you but cannot touch you.
5. **For your testimonies.** Your table tells others they can have one.
6. The word **enemies** is plural, remember you have **more than one.**

## F. ANOINTEST MY HEAD.

1. **Messiah**. The word *anoint* is the Hebrew Old Testament word for Messiah or Deliverer.
2. **Christ**. The Greek New Testament word.

## THE 3 - FOLD ANOINTED OFFICE

- a. **Prophet**. He is the Word of God.
  - b. **Priest**. He did the work of redemption.
  - c. **King**. He rules us.
3. The anointing has a two-fold meaning:
    - a. To **honor**. A respected guest was given the best seat and honored with oil.
    - b. To **heal**. Oil was medicine for those who got wounds in the valley.

## Lesson 6:

### QUESTIONS

## PROVISION

### A. INTRODUCTION: WHEN THE TABLE IS SPREAD

1. You have just come back from \_\_\_\_\_.
2. You have just come from a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. You have just escaped \_\_\_\_\_.
4. You get the opposite of punishment \_\_\_\_\_.

### B. WHY A TABLE?

1. Not a \_\_\_\_\_, it is just temporary.
2. Not a \_\_\_\_\_, it is just for one.
3. Not a \_\_\_\_\_g, you eat a snack standing up.
4. \_\_\_\_\_. You get to sit down after a long walk.
5. \_\_\_\_\_. You can enjoy others at the table.
6. \_\_\_\_\_. A table means lots of food and lots of different kinds.

### C. THOU: WHO PREPAREST THE TABLE?

1. \_\_\_\_\_. In the green pastures.
2. \_\_\_\_\_. In the valley of shadows.
3. “Give me this day my daily bread.” It is good to know that you have a \_\_\_\_\_, rather than a warehouse of stale bread.”

4. \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord does not get an angel, prophet or king to cook for you.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord prepares food more than once.
3. \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord prepares food daily because we get hungry daily.

#### WHAT FOOD DO WE LIKE?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_. Preparest.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. Table.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. For me.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ with others.
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_. A good God prepares good food.
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5. \_\_\_\_\_. Your table tells others they can have one.

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  - b. \_\_\_\_\_. He did the work of redemption.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_. He rules us.
3. The anointing has a two-fold meaning:
- a. To \_\_\_\_\_. A respected guest was given the best seat and honored with oil.
  - b. To \_\_\_\_\_. Oil was medicine for those who got wounds in the valley.

## Lesson 7:

### ANSWER KEY

## GOODNESS AND MERCY

### A. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

1. **Stopped following.** “He leadeth me.”
2. **Straying.** “Yea though I walk through the valley.”
3. **Death shadows.** “The valley of the shadow of death.”
4. **Protected.** “I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.”
5. **Deliverance.** “He leadeth me beside still waters.”
6. **Feasting.** “Thou preparest a table before me.”
7. **Testimony.** “In the presence of mine enemies.”
8. **Abundance.** “My cup runneth over.”

### B. MOVING ON

You have been feasting in a protected pasture, but now it is time to move on.

### WHY MUST WE MOVE ON

1. Growth **produces new needs.**
2. Food **is gone.**
3. Weather **changes.**
4. Challenge **of growth.**

## 5. God's will.

As you move from one pasture to another, you feel something nipping at your heels. Because we are sinful and guilt ridden, we think it is a “death shadow” chasing us again. But it is God’s two sheep dogs, i.e., goodness and mercy.

### C. TWO SHEEP DOGS, I.E., GOODNESS AND MERCY.

1. Why does God send sheep dogs after us?
  - a. Not to scare us.
  - b. Not to hurt us.
  - c. To keep us in the fold.
  - d. To guide us to the next pasture.
  - e. To scare off predators.
  - f. Because He loves us.
2. When you begin to stray, what God doesn’t do or say?
  - a. He does not yell at you.
  - b. He does not throw a rock at you.
  - c. He does not send a pit bull after you.
  - d. He does not say, “Serves you right if you get lost.”
  - e. He does not leave you.
3. The sheep dog named goodness. “The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). What good things has God done for you?
4. The sheep dog named mercy. Where do the sheep dogs get their names? From God. When Moses asked to know God, this was the answer, “The Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness” (Ex. 34:6).

### THE TWO SIDES OF MERCY

- a. **Forgiveness**, The Lord will restore you.
  - b. **Grace**, The Lord gives you the opposite of what you deserve.
1. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief...for this cause I obtained mercy” (1 Tim. 1:15-16).
  2. When the two sheep dogs lay at your feet and wag their tails, what are they saying? **Pay attention to us.**
  3. Can you shake the sheep dogs? No! They will follow: **all the days of your life.**
  4. When you tried to ride a bicycle that was too big for you, and you fell, what did your mother do? Did she yell and punish you? With mercy, she **patched you up** and in goodness, she gave you **a hot biscuit and milk.**

#### WHERE DO THE SHEEP DOGS PURSUE YOU?

- a. Only to **church**?
- b. Only **when you do right**?
- c. No, they follow you **everywhere all the time.**

#### D. DWELLING IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER

1. Where do shepherds usually sleep?
  - a. On **the ground.**
  - b. Under the **open sky.**
  - c. In **all kinds of weather.**
  - d. Away **from their loved ones.**
2. Where did David want to dwell?
  - a. In **God’s house.**
  - b. Enjoying **God’s presence.**
  - c. Protected **from the elements.**
  - d. In **peace and security.**



## Lesson 7:

### QUESTIONS

## GOODNESS AND MERCY

### A. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

1. \_\_\_\_\_. "He leadeth me."
2. \_\_\_\_\_. "Yea though I walk through the valley."
3. \_\_\_\_\_. "The valley of the shadow of death."
4. \_\_\_\_\_. "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."
5. \_\_\_\_\_. "He leadeth me beside still waters."
6. \_\_\_\_\_. "Thou preparest a table before me."
7. \_\_\_\_\_. "In the presence of mine enemies."
8. \_\_\_\_\_. "My cup runneth over."

### B. MOVING ON

You have been feasting in a protected pasture, but now it is time to move on.

### WHY MUST WE MOVE ON

1. Growth \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Food \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Weather \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Challenge \_\_\_\_\_.

5. \_\_\_\_\_.

As you move from one pasture to another, you feel something nipping at your heels. Because we are sinful and guilt ridden, we think it is a “death shadow” chasing us again. But it is God’s two sheep dogs, i.e., goodness and mercy.

### C. TWO SHEEP DOGS, I.E., GOODNESS AND MERCY.

1. Why does God send sheep dogs after us?
  - a. Not to \_\_\_\_\_ us.
  - b. Not to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. To keep us \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. To \_\_\_\_\_.
  - e. To scare \_\_\_\_\_.
  - f. Because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. When you begin to stray, what God doesn’t do or say?
  - a. He does not \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. He does not \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. He does not send a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. He does not say, “\_\_\_\_\_.”
  - e. He does not \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The sheep dog named \_\_\_\_\_. “The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). What good things has God done for you?
4. The sheep dog named \_\_\_\_\_. Where do the sheep dogs get their names? \_\_\_\_\_. When Moses asked to know God, this was the answer, “The Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness” (Ex. 34:6).

### THE TWO SIDES OF MERCY

- a. \_\_\_\_\_, The Lord will restore you.
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1. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief...for this cause I obtained mercy" (1 Tim. 1:15-16).
  2. When the two sheep dogs lay at your feet and wag their tails, what are they saying? \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. Can you shake the sheep dogs? No! They will follow: \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. When you tried to ride a bicycle that was too big for you, and you fell, what did your mother do? Did she yell and punish you? With mercy, she \_\_\_\_\_ and in goodness, she gave you \_\_\_\_\_.

#### WHERE DO THE SHEEP DOGS PURSUE YOU?

- a. Only to \_\_\_\_\_?
- b. Only \_\_\_\_\_?
- c. No, they follow you \_\_\_\_\_.

#### D. DWELLING IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER

1. Where do shepherds usually sleep?
  - a. On \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Under the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. In \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. Away \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Where did David want to dwell?
  - a. In \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Enjoying \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. Protected \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. In \_\_\_\_\_.

# PART FOUR

50 DAYS WITH THE SHEPHERD OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> PSALM

POWERPOINT GUIDE



# *My Name is Shepherd - Jesus*

By: Elmer Towns  
Co-founder, Liberty University

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# *My Name is Shepherd - Jesus*

Lesson 1:  
Yours

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## A. WHY IS THIS THE FAVORITE PSALM?

1. Easy to memorize. These six verses are a short “self-contained” picture of our relationship with God.
2. Intimate fellowship. Promises God’s comfort and protection when we remain close to the Shepherd.



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3. Personalized identification. Demonstrates how our spiritual needs are met in the Lord.
4. It’s a story. Has action, testimony, characterization and plot.
5. Tells about the Lord. Israel knew God primarily by His power and holiness, but in Psalm 23, they learn of His personal love and compassion.



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## B. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

1. What is meant, if you don't call him Lord?
  - a. If He is called God, *Elohim*, i.e., creative power, it implies an impersonal mighty Being. But this Psalm is about relationship.
  - b. If He is called Master, *Adonai*, i.e., it implies slaves to serve. But we are sheep to be cared for by the Lord.
  - c. If He is called King, Rock, Fortress, Almighty, or Holy One, it implies impersonal terms. But the term *Lord* is a term of personal relationship meaning you can get close to Him.

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2. What does the word "*is*" imply?
  - a. Some only testify to past experiences with God, i.e., Duncan Campbell. "The Lord was my Shepherd."
  - b. Some only plan to get close to the Lord-Shepherd in the future, i.e., the Lord *will be* my Shepherd.



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3. What two things can I count on when you use the verb “*is*”?
- a. Right now. The Lord will care and protect you today.
  - b. Right here. You don’t have to go some place else to get into the Shepherd’s care.



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4. What would it mean if the pronoun *my* were left out?
- a. The Lord is *a* shepherd, means He is one among many. Who or what is your shepherd? Job? Family? Retirement fund?
  - b. The Lord is *the* shepherd means He has the priority, but He is not personal. “The shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).
  - c. The Lord is *our* shepherd means He relates to me in a crowd. “I’m only one among many.”



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- c. No sense of danger. Sheep have no instinct to warn them of snakes, wolves, bears, parasites, etc.
- d. Defenseless. Sheep have no weapons to defend themselves, no claws, teeth, fangs, etc. “The wolf catcheth them” (John 10:12).
- e. Dumb. “As a sheep before a shearer is dumb” (Isa. 53:7).
- f. Target of the enemy. “Grievous wolves shall enter, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29).



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6. Why is the Lord likened to a shepherd?
- a. He knows us. “I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14).
  - b. He relates to us. “He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out and when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice” (John 10:3-4).



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- c. He loves the sheep. “He (Jesus) was moved with compassion on them, because they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).
- d. He provides for the sheep. “I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).
- e. He sacrifices for the sheep. “The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:10).  
“I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15).



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- f. He protects the sheep. “Thy servant (David) kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went after him . . . and caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him” (1 Sam. 17:34-35).



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- g. He feeds the sheep. “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies” (Ps. 23:5).



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Does not apply to:

- I want fun, because He gives satisfaction.
- I want to fulfill my lust, because He cannot tempt us.
- I want money, but He gives what money buys.
- I want better circumstances, but He gives abundant life.



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## *My Name is Shepherd - Jesus*

### Lesson 2: Leading

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#### 5. Why are we likened to sheep?

- a. Stray. “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6). “What man having a hundred sheep, if he lost one . . . will go after that which was lost” (Luke 15:4).
- b. Satisfy self. Sheep will only eat what is in front of them.



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## A. INTRODUCTION

1. The shepherd's main task is leadership.



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2. What type of leader was Jesus?
  - a. Not dictatorial. He let Judas betray, and Peter deny.
  - b. Not democratic. He never took a vote.
  - c. Not Laissez Faire. He doesn't let sheep do what they want to do.



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## B. WHY MUST THE SHEPHERD LEAD ME?

1. Sheep have no sense of direction. “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6).
2. Sheep don’t know where to go. “We have turned everyone to his own way” (Isa. 53:6).
3. There are necessary places sheep don’t want to go. “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them” (John 10:4).



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4. Sheep are not sure-footed.
5. The shepherd wants to encounter our dangers first.
6. The shepherd knows where to go, (direction). How to get there (method), why we are going, (purpose) and when to move (timing).



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### C. WHAT THE SHEPHERD DOES NOT DO

1. Call to us from the destination.
2. Drive us to the right paths.
3. Paces us to walk faster.
4. Measures us to see how far we walk.
5. Challenges us to walk further each day.



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It's not how fast or how far we walk with Him.  
He wants us to follow right paths  
and arrive at the destination with Him.



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## D. WHAT ARE RIGHT PATHS?

1. The word righteous scares us or doesn't have any meaning. The original suggests right paths.
2. Since "he leads in right paths," then there are wrong paths.



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## How to find wrong paths?

- a. Ignore God's Word.
- b. Violate your conscience.
- c. Go against good advice.
- d. Disobey God's commandments.
- e. Feed on the wrong food.
- f. Search for the wrong goals.
- g. Follow ungodly friends.



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3. How does the shepherd lead?

- a. Slowly. The shepherd does not lead too fast for lambs to keep up.
- b. Straight. The shepherd would not lead astray.
- c. Purposefully. The shepherd does not waste time or energy.



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4. How can you find God's choice of "right paths?"

- a. Follow. "Come after Me" (Mark 1:17).
- b. Get close to the shepherd. "Come unto Me" (Matt. 11:28).
- c. Remain. "Abide in me" (John 15:4).



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5. What does “right paths” mean? God’s choice is best.
- There is a “right path” for you. Someone else’s “right path” is probably a wrong path.
  - There is a “right path” today. Yesterday’s “right path” may be today’s wrong path.
  - There is a “right path” tomorrow. It’s hard to find tomorrow’s “right path” if you are on the wrong path today.
  - Are you on the right path now?



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## E. FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE

- The name of God represents the reputation of God. Therefore, you can depend on God to do what He promises.
- Put your name of your workmanship,  
i.e., Stradivarius, Baldwin, etc.



God puts His name on us.

*“I will write upon him, the name of my God” (Rev. 3:12).*

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3. How dependable are the promises of Psalm 23? As dependable as God Himself. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).



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*My Name is  
Shepherd - Jesus*

Lesson 3:  
I Lead In Right Paths

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## A. INTRODUCTION

1. What are our two greatest needs?
  - a. Food, i.e., green pastures.
  - b. Drink, i.e., still waters.
2. How can the Shepherd meet our needs? Relationship.



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## B. WHY DOES THE LORD LEAD BY STILL WATERS?

1. What does the word “lead” suggest?
  - a. Not drive the sheep. He knows the way.
  - b. Not force the sheep. He faces danger first.
  - c. Not point the way. We do not obey well.
  - d. Not tells us when to find water. He takes us to water.



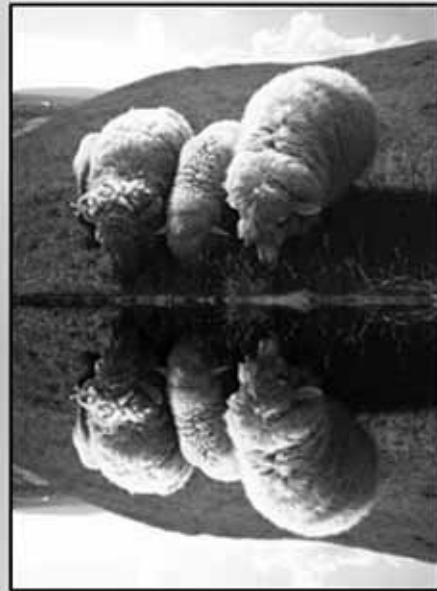
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2. What does the word “by” suggest?
- a. Not into the water.
  - b. Not within sight of water.
  - c. Not maketh us drink from still water.  
We all have a thirst “indicator”  
that lets us know when we are thirsty.
  - d. He leads beside still waters so we can  
drink when thirsty.



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3. What does the word “still” suggest?
- a. Able to drink without choking.
  - b. Not to a river or waterfall to feel  
its power.
  - c. Not to a lake to enjoy its beauty.
  - d. “Still” suggests a place to  
rest and relax.



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4. What does “water” do for us?
- Keeps us alive. “A well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).
  - Refreshes. “As the deer thirsteth after a stream of water, so panteth my soul for you, O God” (Ps. 42:1, *ELT*).
  - Enjoyment. “Oh that one would give me a drink of water of the well of Bethlehem” (2 Sam. 23:15).
  - Cleansing. “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps. 51:7).



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### **C. WHY DOES THE SHEPHERD MAKE US LIE DOWN?**

- What does the word “maketh” not mean?
  - To face down.
  - To ride down
  - To pull down.



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2. What does the Lord not use to make us lie down?

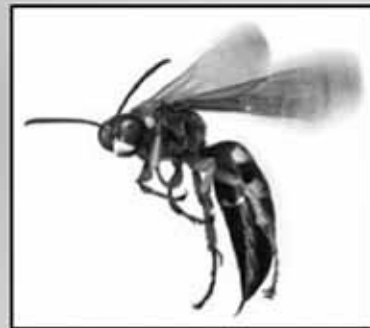
- a. Sheep dog.
- b. His club.
- c. His strength.
- d. Punishment.



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3. The word “maketh” means, “to cause me to lie down.” The emphasis is on “me.” What does this picture?

- a. God creates circumstances. The green grass looks so good the sheep want to lie down. Mother feeds and rocks the baby to get the baby to lie down and sleep.
- b. God creates appetite. After a long walk, the hungry sheep want to lie down.
- c. God creates desire. When Israel would not obey, God sent the hornets to make them willing to obey.



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## D. LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES

1. Why do sheep lie down?
  - a. Natural. Standing people naturally want to lie down.
  - b. Tired. The Lord gives us rest in green pastures.
  - c. Sleep. We need rest to replenish our strength.
  - d. Hide. Sheep want to hide from danger.
  - e. Stop working. When we lie down, we stop working.
  - f. To be in His presence. Sometimes we want to be near the one we love.



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2. Why chose green pastures?
  - a. Chosen pastures. The original language suggests, “Choice pastures.”
    - (1) Why not the pastures of another? Best for our need.
    - (2) Why not the pastures of the past? Not help us today.
    - (3) Why not the pasture of next year? We are not ready.
    - (4) Why not lie in the desert? The Shepherd always gets us home.



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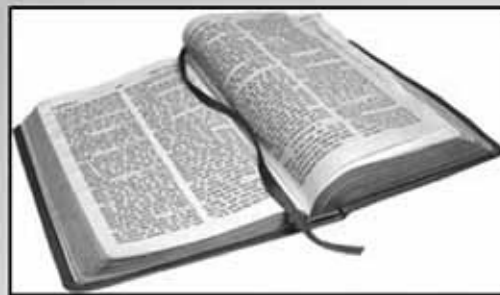


- b. His choice. The Shepherd knows us . . . knows the pastures . . . knows the future; so His choice is best.



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3. The original words suggest “tender new green grass.” What vegetables are best tasting? New tender is best.
4. What does the Lord not do with the grass?
- a. Does not choose what grass for us to eat.
  - b. Pick it for us. He leads us to the Scriptures, but we must, (1) listen, (2) read, (3) study, (4) memorize, (5) meditate.
  - c. We must lie in it and eat it.



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The Shepherd chooses the pasture for us.  
We choose when, how much, and what to eat.



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5. What does it mean because the word “*lie down*” is a continuous verb form?
- a. Repeated. The Lord will feed us “this day our daily bread.”
  - b. Not just once. Every time the Lord gets us to a pasture of green grass, He gives us food.
  - c. Daily. We get food, protection, fellowship and strength every day.



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*My Name is  
Shepherd - Jesus*

Lesson 4:  
Through The Valley

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**A. INTRODUCTION: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT VALLEYS?**

1. Surrounded by high mountains. There are cliffs or obstacles that will keep you in shadows or the dark.
2. There are mountain barriers to keep you from reaching your goal, but a valley goes through them.



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3. There are wrong paths through the mountains that end up in box canyons or a wrong trail just evaporates.
4. Only a shepherd can get sheep through dark valleys.



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## **B. YEA, THOUGH I WALK**

1. The dark valleys are my choice; the shepherd does not lead into them.
2. Adam and Eve chose death and darkness (Rom. 5:12).



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3. Sheep ignorantly stray into the valley of trouble, “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6).
- a. They do not see danger.
  - b. They follow their food.
  - c. They are defenseless.



4. Sheep are always selfish. “And have turned to their own way” (Isa. 53:6).

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### C. THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

1. A deep narrow valley is dark. Why darkness scares us.
- a. We are afraid of the unknown.
  - b. Darkness covers the evil of evil people (John 3:19).
  - c. We stumble or fall.
  - d. We remember.
  - e. Darkness is Satan's kingdom.



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2. What causes shadows? A barrier to the light or a distortion to the light.



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3. The original suggests it is a “valley of shadows” not a valley of death. What do shadows do to us?
- a. Our active imagination scares us.  
“We have nothing to fear but fear itself.”
  - b. Our guilty memory.
  - c. We imagine the worse not best.
  - d. Shadows make us hurt ourselves.
  - e. Shadows steal happiness.



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4. Shadows are illusions, what we imagine is not there.
5. Shadows cannot hurt us, but they make us hurt ourselves.
6. What is the greatest shadow to scare us? Death.



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7. Since shadows are caused by light, what should be our response?
  - a. Come to the light, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).
  - b. Walk in the light, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness" (John 8:12).
  - c. Trust the Lord. "Shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).



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8. “Death Shadows.” Don’t scare the Lord. Why? He was born with a death shadow on the manger. “He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).



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9. Remember, our death is only a shadow. Why does death scare even believers?
- a. We cannot see what is there.
  - b. We do not want physical pain.
  - c. We do not want to give up anything.
  - d. Because of sin, we have doubts.
  - e. We have not finished everything.



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10. When the bony hand of death reaches for you, it is the hand of Jesus. "I am alive forever more and I have the keys of death" (Rev. 1:18).



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#### **D. THE WONDERFUL WORD *THROUGH***

1. What does the shepherd not do?
- a. Lead us into the valley and leave us there.
  - b. Watch us from outside the valley.
  - c. Does not call to us from the other side.
  - d. The shepherd is with us *through* the valley to the other side.



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2. Death is real to the unsaved, but a shadow to believers.



Death momentarily obscures the light when we pass through the shadow of death, but instantly on the other side we enter the light.

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3. Our present troubles are mountains – barriers that block us.

What you need to know about mountains.

- a. There is a valley through problems (John 14:6).
- b. People make their problems, not God.
- c. Valleys have shadows that scare us.
- d. Shadows make us hurt ourselves.
- e. The Lord is with us in shadows and valleys.
- f. He will lead me through if I let him.



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*My Name is  
Shepherd - Jesus*

Lesson 5:  
Protector

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#### **A. INTRODUCTION: TWO POWERFUL HELPERS**

1. This world is not our home, there is little comfort, but the Lord has, “a rod and staff to comfort you.”
2. Usually, people think “rod and staff” are the same thing. But each is a different instrument.
3. The word “rod” is more than a stick; it is a club to beat off enemies, i.e., the wolf, bear, or robbers. It is protection against negative attacks.



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4. The word “staff” is used as a positive tool. It is used for direction, assistance in walking, pointing, lifting, etc.
5. Historically, these two tools are called battling and building.



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## **B. COMFORT ME**

1. What do most first think of the word “comfort?” A blanket or being at ease.



2. The old word is “comfort” but the original language suggests help.
3. Think “cause and effect” to understand comfort.

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Cause

Thy rod helps me

Thy staff directs me

Effect

I feel comforted

I feel assured



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4. Jesus called the Holy Spirit a helper when he used the title “comforter.” “I will pray the Father and He will give you another comforter . . . even the Spirit of Truth” (John 14:16-17).



5. A “comforter” is *parakletos*, i.e., “one called alongside to help.” The Lord comes to our help in both positive and negative situations.

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6. What are some positive ways the Holy Spirit uses the “rod and staff” to help us?
- a. Teaching. “Leading into truth”
  - b. Guidance. “Walking in the Spirit”
  - c. Abundance. “Fullness of the Spirit.”
  - d. Power. “Anointing of the Spirit”



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### C. ROD OR CLUB?

- 1. In the dangerous valley, the shepherd is:
  - a. With me and He has something.
  - b. To protect me.
- 2. The rod is kept for the enemies of the sheep, never to beat the sheep.



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3. Negative ways the Lord helps me:

- a. Aware of sin.  
Conviction of sin.
- b. Lead around danger.  
Providential grace.
- c. Protection.  
Guardian angel.
- d. Uncomfortable with sin.  
Grieving the Holy Spirit.
- e. Keeps away evil.  
Intercessory prayer.
- f. Inner confidence.  
Assurance of salvation.



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4. Who are the enemies of the sheep?

- a. The thief (John 10:10)  
false religious teachers.
- b. The stranger (John 10:5)  
non-committed ministers.
- c. The hireling (John 10:12)  
unprepared ministers.
- d. The wolf (John 10:12)  
satan.



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5. The shepherd has as much trouble with internal attacks from his fellow-workers, as he does from without by known enemies.



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6. The family genealogy was carved in the rod. "Write thou every man's name upon his rod" (Numb. 17:2).
- a. Spanked with family history. "He that spareth his rod, spoileth his son" (Prov. 13:24).



- b. Corrected with family authority. "I will visit their transgression with a rod" (Psa. 89:32).
- c. The standard for correction, "Shall I come to you with the rod" (1 Cor. 4:21).

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#### D. THE STAFF

1. The staff is the positive instrument used by the shepherd in tending his flock.
2. The shepherd led the sheep with the staff, direction.
3. The staff was used to lift sheep, rescue.
4. The staff was used to divide sheep, separate to himself.
5. The staff was used in walking, assistance.
6. The uplifted staff blessing. "I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand . . . when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed" (Ex. 17:9-11).



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*My Name is  
Shepherd - Jesus*

Lesson 6:  
Provision

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## A. INTRODUCTION: WHEN THE TABLE IS SPREAD

1. You have just come back from straying.
2. You have just come from a dark valley.
3. You have just escaped death shadows.
4. You get the opposite of punishment grace factor.



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## B. WHY A TABLE?

1. Not a picnic, it is just temporary.
2. Not a TV table, it is just for one.
3. Not a hot dog, you eat a snack standing up.
4. Rest. You get to sit down after a long walk.
5. Fellowship. You can enjoy others at the table.
6. Choices. A table means lots of food and lots of different kinds



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### C. THOU: WHO PREPAREST THE TABLE?

1. You do it. In the green pastures.
2. You do without. In the valley of shadows.
3. “Give me this day my daily bread.” It is good to know that you have a bread maker, rather than a warehouse of stale bread.”
4. God is your chief. The Lord does not get an angel, prophet or king to cook for you.



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### D. HOW DOES THE LORD PREPARE YOUR FOOD?

1. Repeatedly. The word “preparest” is continuous action.
2. Continuously. The Lord prepares food more than once.
3. Daily. The Lord prepares food daily because we get hungry daily.



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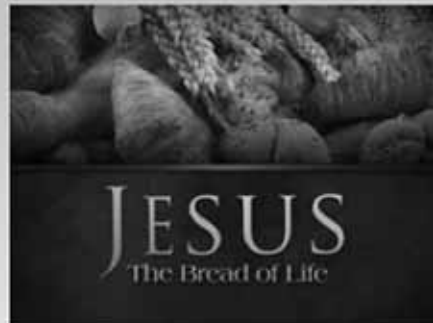
## WHAT FOOD DO WE LIKE?

1. Fresh. Preparest.
2. Ready. Table.
3. Personal. For me.
4. Celebrate with others.
5. Good. A good God prepares good food.



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4. What is your favorite meal? \_\_\_\_\_.
5. “O taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). “And Jesus said unto them, ‘I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst’” (John 6:35).



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## **E. IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES.**

1. For God. To show your enemies God's care and provision.
2. For you. To celebrate your deliverance, i.e., V. J. DAY.
3. For your enemies. To demonstrate God's power.
4. For your peace. They can see you but cannot touch you.
5. For your testimonies. Your table tells others they can have one.
6. The word enemies is plural, remember you have more than one.



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## **F. ANOINTEST MY HEAD**

1. Messiah. The word *anoint* is the Hebrew Old Testament word for Messiah or Deliverer.
2. Christ. The Greek New Testament word.

### **THE 3-FOLD ANOINTED OFFICE**

Prophet. He is the Word of God.

Priest. He did the work of redemption.

King. He rules us.

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3. The anointing has a two-fold meaning:
- a. To honor. A respected guest was given the best seat and honored with oil.



- b. To heal. Oil was medicine for those who got wounds in the valley.

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*My Name is  
Shepherd - Jesus*

Lesson 7:  
Goodness and Mercy

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## A. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

1. Stopped following. "He leadeth me."
2. Straying. "Yea though I walk through the valley."
3. Death shadows. "The valley of the shadow of death."
4. Protected. "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."
5. Deliverance. "He leadeth me beside still waters."
6. Feasting. "Thou preparest a table before me."
7. Testimony. "In the presence of mine enemies."
8. Abundance. "My cup runneth over."



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## A. MOVING ON

You have been feasting in a protected pasture, but now it is time to move on.

### WHY MUST WE MOVE ON

1. Growth produces new needs.
2. Food is gone.
3. Weather changes.
4. Challenge of growth.
5. God's will.

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As you move from one pasture to another, you feel something nipping at your heels. Because we are sinful and guilt ridden, we think it is a “death shadow” chasing us again. But it is God’s two sheep dogs, i.e., goodness and mercy.



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### **C. TWO SHEEP DOGS, i.e., GOODNESS AND MERCY.**

1. Why does God send sheep dogs after us?
  - a. Not to scare us.
  - b. Not to hurt us.
  - c. To keep us in the fold.
  - d. To guide us to the next pasture.
  - e. To scare off predators.
  - f. Because He loves us.



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2. When you begin to stray, what God doesn't do or say?
- a. He does not yell at you.
  - b. He does not throw a rock at you.
  - c. He does not send a pit bull after you.
  - d. He does not say, "serves you right if you get lost."
  - e. He does not leave you.



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3. The sheep dog named goodness. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). What good things has God done for you?



4. The sheep dog named mercy. Where do the sheep dogs get their names? From God. When Moses asked to know God, this was the answer, "The Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness" (Ex. 34:6).

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## THE TWO SIDES OF MERCY

1. Forgiveness, The Lord will restore you.
2. Grace, The Lord gives you the opposite of what you deserve.



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5. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief . . . for this cause I obtained mercy” (1 Tim. 1:15-16).
6. When the two sheep dogs lay at your feet and wag their tails, what are they saying? Pay attention to us.



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7. Can you shake the sheep dogs? No! They will follow: all the days of your life.
8. When you tried to ride a bicycle that was too big for you, and you fell, what did your mother do? Did she yell and punish you? With mercy, she patched you up and in goodness, she gave you a hot biscuit and milk.



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### **WHERE DO THE SHEEP DOGS PURSUE YOU?**

1. Only to church?
2. Only when you do right?
3. No, they follow you everywhere all the time.



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#### D. DWELLING IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER

1. Where do shepherds usually sleep?
  - a. On the ground.
  - b. Under the open sky.
  - c. In all kinds of weather.
  - d. Away from their loved ones.



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2. Where did David want to dwell?
  - a. In God's house.
  - b. Enjoying God's presence.
  - c. Protected from the elements.
  - d. In peace and security.



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# PART FIVE

MY NAME IS HOLY SPIRIT

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## POWERPOINT SLIDES:

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