

The Shepherd And His Sheep



A DEVOTIONAL EXPOSITION
OF PSALM 23

**THE SHEPHERD
AND HIS SHEEP**

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Psalm 23
King James Version

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the
paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou
art with me; thy rod and thy staff they
comfort me.
- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the
presence of mine enemies: thou anointest
my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
- 6 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. (KJV)

INTRODUCTION

THE PSALM

The 23rd Psalm. We read it in our times of loss. We quote it for comfort in difficult times. We inscribe it on plaques to hang on the walls of our homes. As author Max Lucado states:

"Do more beloved words exist? Framed and hung in hospital rooms, scratched on prison walls, quoted by the young, and whispered by the dying. In these lines, sailors have found a harbor, the frightened have found a father, and strugglers have found a friend." Max Lucado

But could it be that the amazing spiritual legacy contained in this psalm is sometimes overlooked because of our familiarity with it? Do we really understand that in this Psalm alone, we have all we need to live successfully in this world and to be prepared for the one to come?

The purpose of this study is to take an in-depth look at one of the most beloved portions of scripture of all times--the 23rd Psalm--to mine spiritual riches from every phrase and word, seeking for understanding as one would search for hidden treasure:

*My son, if you receive my words,
And treasure my commands within you,
So that you incline your ear to wisdom,
And apply your heart to understanding;
Yes, if you cry out for discernment,
And lift up your voice for understanding,*

*If you seek her as silver,
And search for her as for hidden treasures;
Then you will understand the fear of the Lord,
And find the knowledge of God.
For the Lord gives wisdom;
From His mouth come knowledge and
understanding. (Proverbs 2:1-6, NKJV)*

Psalm 23 is part of a sequence of psalms that explores the symbolism of the Lord as the Shepherd of His people. Psalms chapters 22-24 are often referred to as the “shepherd psalms”.

-In Psalm 22, God is portrayed as the Good Shepherd. The chapter is a prophecy foretelling the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of mankind.

-In Psalm 23, the subject of this study, He is portrayed as the Great Shepherd who seeks lost sheep and brings them into His flock.

-In Psalm 24, the Lord is the Chief Shepherd who is portrayed as coming in power and glory as King of Kings.

Most Bible scholars conclude that Psalm 23 was written by David when he was a young man serving his father, Jesse, as a shepherd. In these six verses, David shares a spiritual analogy of the Lord as a Shepherd and His people as sheep, drawing from the extensive knowledge and experience which he gained as a shepherd. As a good shepherd, David knew his sheep by name, his sheep knew his voice, and they followed him. David knew that a good shepherd never leaves his sheep alone and that he searches for lost sheep to restore them to the flock. The shepherd provides for their

needs and protects them from predators (1 Samuel 17:34-35).

Jacob was actually the first person in the Bible to use the shepherd metaphor for God (Genesis 48:15). From that time on, the Holy Spirit repeatedly uses the image of a shepherd as exemplified by this prophetic word about the coming Messiah:

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. (Isaiah 40:11, KJV)

Jesus identified Himself as that Shepherd (John 10:11-16). He is also called the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20) and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). We need a shepherd because we easily become lost. Like sheep in the natural world, we have a herd instinct to follow the crowd. Isaiah says that we all, like sheep, have gone astray and turned to our own sinful ways (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus warned:

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14, NKJV)

Wide is the gate for the untamed herds of this world. Narrow is the pathway traveled by the Shepherd and His sheep. There is only one Shepherd and one door to His fold (John 10:1-2). This is why we must follow in the footsteps of the Shepherd and His flock (Song of Solomon 1:7).

You are about to begin an awesome spiritual journey doing just that! If you do not know the Lord as your Shepherd, you will be given the opportunity to become part of His fold. In fact--He is already seeking for you right now:

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.
(Matthew 18:12-14, NKJV)

If you do not know the Lord as your personal Savior, the Good Shepherd wants you to join His flock. If you already know the Lord as your Shepherd, then this study explains the rich spiritual legacy provided for you as recorded in Psalm 23. The goal of this study is not information, but revelation. Its purpose is to enable you to come to know the Good Shepherd and become intimately acquainted with Him.

It is time to begin our spiritual trek. The Shepherd has provided everything you need for the journey. You need no map or directions, for He will lead the way. So let's begin.

Psalm 23
The Passion Translation

1 The Lord is my best friend and my shepherd.

I always have more than enough.

2 He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love.

His tracks take me to an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss.

3 That's where he restores and revives my life.

He opens before me pathways to God's pleasure and leads me along in his footsteps of righteousness so that I can bring honor to his name.

4 Lord, even when your path takes me through the valley of deepest darkness, fear will never conquer me, for you already have!

You remain close to me and lead me through it all the way.

Your authority is my strength and my peace. The comfort of your love takes away my fear.

I'll never be lonely, for you are near.

5 You become my delicious feast
 even when my enemies dare to fight.
 You anoint me with the fragrance of your
 Holy Spirit;
 you give me all I can drink of you until my
 heart overflows.

6 So why would I fear the future?
 For your goodness and love pursue me all
 the days of my life.
 Then afterward, when my life is through,
 I'll return to your glorious presence to be
 forever with you! (TPT)

(Each chapter of this study is introduced with Psalm 23 in a different version of the Bible with the specific verse under consideration in bold-faced type.)

CHAPTER ONE

THE PERSON: HE IS MY SHEPHERD

The first phrase of this Psalm is "the Lord is my shepherd". Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David makes a declaration--a thesis statement as it were--and then spends the rest of the Psalm proving it. Let's examine this opening verse word-by-word.

The. He is not just any Shepherd. He is *the* Shepherd. All roads do not lead to God. Jesus said: "...*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep*" (John 10:7). There is one door to the sheep fold, and it is Jesus Christ. He is *THE* one way to God:

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Lord. This Hebrew term is translated 6,800 times in the Old Testament. It is the special, unique name for God. It is not a title--such as is given to the lords and ladies of England. It is God's name as revealed to Moses:

Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14, NKJV)

In essence, God was saying to Moses, "This is my name. I want you to know it so you can call me by it because I want

to have a personal relationship with you!" That name is "I Am". Fill in the blanks after "I Am" with whatever you need, because He is whatever you need Him to be in your life.

As your Shepherd, He is the Lord of your life. In Scripture, the word "Lord" is the Hebrew name "Jehovah". It is the personal name for God that distinguishes Him from false gods. Our Shepherd is not just any Lord, He is *The Lord*. The name "Lord" also implies His sovereignty. Before He can be your Shepherd, He must become your Lord. That is the prerequisite for claiming the amazing promises of Psalm 23.

Is. The word "is" in the active present tense confirms that He is today and shall be in the future your Shepherd. Just as He is David's Shepherd, He also *IS* your Shepherd. There is no "if" or "but", no "I hope He is." He simply is.

My. It is one thing to say "The Lord is *the* Shepherd" and another to say, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd." David used the personal pronoun "my." He did not say "the Lord is the Shepherd of the world in general." He declared: "The Lord is a Shepherd to me. He cares for me. He watches over me". It is personal.

Shepherd. Of all the many names of the Lord that David could have used in this Psalm, he was led of the Spirit to use the Hebrew name "Jehovah-Rohi" which means "The Lord My Shepherd". Why? Because the image of a shepherd tenderly leading, feeding, and caring for his sheep is a perfect picture of our Savior's relationship to His people. The word most commonly used for "shepherd" is *ra'ah*, which is also the Hebrew word for "best friend." The

translation of the word in this Psalm includes both meanings. The Lord Jesus Christ is your Shepherd and your best friend.

In John 10:11, Jesus reveals Himself as the Shepherd declaring *“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”* In John 10:14, Jesus declared: *“I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14, KJV).* From these passages we learn that Jesus is our Shepherd, He is a good shepherd, He knows us, we know Him, and He lays down His life for us.

The very fact that the Bible reveals the Lord as a Shepherd infers that He has sheep. Who are these sheep? According to the Bible, people are His sheep:

Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. (Psalm 100:3, NKJV)

The Bible says that when Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them *“because they were as sheep not having a shepherd” (Mark 6:34, KJV).* He saw people as sheep in need of a shepherd. The reason we need a Shepherd is because:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6, NKJV)

Because of sin, we have all gone our own rebellious ways. Only through the death of Jesus Christ can we return to the Shepherd of our souls. It is that simple, yet so marvelous and wonderful that it is hard to fathom.

The Bible reveals that there is one sheepfold and one shepherd. The "fold" is the Church which is composed of all born-again believers. The "shepherd" is Jesus Christ. There is only one way into the fold, and that is through Jesus who said: "...*I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved*" (John 10:9, NKJV).

The sheepfold is not exclusive. The door is open to all who come to Him:

And other sheep, I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (John 10:16, NKJV)

At the time of Christ's ministry, shepherds developed a close relationship with their sheep. The shepherd was there at the birth of a lamb and he guided them their entire lifetime. Shepherds loved their sheep, gave each one a name, and cared for each one tenderly. Many a shepherd interposed himself between wild beasts and his sheep in order to protect them, and at night he slept in the single doorway to his sheepfold to guard them from predators. An enemy would have to pass by the shepherd in order to attack the flock.

Using this analogy, Jesus is your spiritual shepherd:

-He is the ***Good Shepherd*** who knows you by name:

I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. (John 10:14,27, NKJV)

-He is the **Compassionate Shepherd** who is touched by your infirmities:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15, KJV)

-He is the **Comforting Shepherd** who comforts you in all of your tribulations:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, NKJV)

-He is the **Saving Shepherd** who gives His life for you:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. (John 10:11, NKJV)

-He is the **Living Shepherd** who was resurrected from death in order to save you from the power of sin and death:

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21, NKJV)

-He is the ***Seeking Shepherd*** who came to save the lost:

...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10, NKJV)

-He is the ***Concerned Shepherd*** who loves lost sheep:

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' (Luke 15:4-6, NKJV).

-He is the ***Chief Shepherd*** who will return to save you from the presence of sin:

...and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:4, NKJV)

THE SHEPHERD'S MARK

In the natural world, shepherds mark their sheep for identification by branding them with a unique logo indicating ownership. Spiritually, there is a distinct mark upon the man or woman of God that differentiates them from the world and identifies them as part of Christ's flock:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them

out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.
(John 10:27-29, NKJV)

When you chose to follow the Good Shepherd, you became one of His sheep. He knows you, He has placed His mark upon you, and no one can take you out of His hand. Just as Shepherds brand their sheep in the natural world to confirm ownership, you are “branded” as His lamb. He has also written your name on the palm of His hands:

Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.
(Isaiah 49:15-16, NKJV)

The sad fact is that some will choose not to follow. Jesus said: *“But you do not believe, because you are not of my sheep...”* (John 10:26, KJV). It is for these lost lambs that the Shepherd continuously searches.

THE SHEPHERD'S SEARCH

The Bible declares that our spiritual Shepherd came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). The word “seek” as used here means to “search with intensity”. So, what or who is lost for which the Shepherd is so earnestly seeking?

We know that Jesus came to save lost souls from sin, but He also came to save “that” which was lost, meaning all that was lost through sin. So what was lost?

-Man's relationship with God was affected. No longer could sinful mankind enter God's presence.

-Man's peaceful relationship with others was lost. Adam blamed Eve for his sin and their son, Cain, killed his brother Abel.

-Man's relationship with the environment was affected. Previously, work was a joy, but as a result of sin man had to labor under the curse of weeds, thorns, and pests.

-Man's emotional well-being was lost. Fear and shame entered into the psyche.

-Health was lost, as pain and disease entered the world.

-Eternal life was lost, as death became the penalty for sin.

The good news is that Jesus Christ, your Shepherd, came to restore all that was lost through sin. He is not on a salvage operation, but a mission of complete restoration. His purpose is not to make you a patched up version of your old self, but to make you a new creature in Christ.

-He restores your relationship with God:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly

unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.
(Hebrews 4:14-16, NKJV)

-He restores your relationship with others:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.
(Ephesians 2:13-19, NKJV)

-He reverses the curse, so that your labor can be a joy:

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.
(Galatians 3:13, NKJV)

-He calms every fear:

*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
(Luke 12:32, KJV)*

-He bears your shame so that you need not bear it:

*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
(Hebrews 12:2, KJV)*

-He restores your health:

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5, KJV)

-He restores everlasting life:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17, KJV)

Whatever your loss through sin, sickness, heartache, circumstances, or relationships, the Good Shepherd came to seek and save that loss.

IS HE YOUR SHEPHERD?

You have tried life on your own. How is that working for you? Do you lack true purpose and direction for your life? Do you feel bogged down in the mud and mire of this world? Are you turning to things like drugs and alcohol to ease your pain? Are you unable to find the green pastures and cool waters of life? Then you need the Shepherd!

Take time right now to read John chapter 3 which explains in detail what it means to be born-again. To become part of the fold of the Good Shepherd, take these steps:

Step One: Acknowledge you are a sinner. *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).*

Step Two: Recognize that the penalty of sin is death. God warned Adam and Eve that if they sinned, they would die. This meant both spiritual death, which is separation from God's presence, and physical death.

When Jesus died on the cross He died in your place. He died for your sins so you could have everlasting life: *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23, KJV).* If you accept His sacrifice for sin, you are no longer under the penalty of death.

You are no longer spiritually dead, separated from the presence of God:

*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation...For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.
(Portions of Ephesians 2:14 and 18, NKJV)*

You no longer face eternal death, as Jesus promised:

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16, KJV)*

Step Three: Repent of your sins, ask forgiveness, and confess that Jesus died for you:

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:8-9, KJV)*

*...The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
(Romans 10:8-10, NKJV)*

When you present your life to God in this manner, you are "born-again" spiritually: *"Therefore, if any man be in Christ He a new creature; old things have passed away; Behold, all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV).

In the natural world, healthy lambs can stand immediately after birth and within minutes they are able to join the herd. The same is true spiritually. If you just received Jesus as your Savior, then welcome to the Good Shepherd's flock!

Psalm 23
Wycliffe Translation

- 1 The Lord governeth me, and nothing shall fail to me;
The Lord governeth me, **and there is nothing that I shall lack;**

- 2 in the place of pasture there he hath set me. He nourished me on the water of refreshing; (he hath set me in a place of pasture. He nourished me by the waters of refreshing;)

- 3 he converted my soul. He led me forth on the paths of rightfulness; for his name. (he transformed my soul. He led me forth on the paths of righteousness/on the right paths; for the sake of his name.)

- 4 For though I shall go in the midst of shadow of death; I shall not dread evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff; those have comforted me. (For though I go in the midst of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.)

- 5 Thou hast made ready a board in my sight;
against them that trouble me. Thou hast
made fat mine head with oil; and my cup,
that filleth greatly, is full clear. (Thou hast
prepared a table before me; before those
who trouble me. Thou hast covered my head
with oil; and my cup, which *thou* greatly
filleth, is full, indeed it runneth over.)
- 6 And thy mercy shall follow me; in all the
days of my life. And that I dwell in the
house of the Lord; into the length of days.
(And thy love shall follow me; all the days
of my life. And I shall live in the House of
the Lord forever and ever.) (WYC)

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROVISION: HE PROVIDES MY NEEDS

Because the Lord is my shepherd...I shall not want.

This is not an isolated promise. There are many other scriptures that assure the Shepherd's commitment to provide for His sheep. Here are some examples:

-The Word declares that you will have all good things:

*For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.
(Psalm 84:11, NKJV)*

-The Word declares that you will have no want:

Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. (Psalm 34:9, NKJV)

-The Word declares that if you ask anything in Christ's name, He will do it:

*If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.
(John 4:14, NKJV)*

-The Word gives you a blank check: All your needs supplied according to Christ's riches in glory. You have an unlimited account:

*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:19, NKJV)*

...and there are many more similar promises. Someone calculated 8,000 promises in the Bible. Whatever you need, Jesus has said “Yes and Amen...so be it.” He has given you the guarantee of His promises by His Spirit:

*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.
(2 Corinthians 1:20-22, NKJV)*

Jesus establishes you, anoints you, seals you, and gives you His Holy Spirit as a guarantee--not only of your salvation, but of all of His promises.

DIVINE PROVISION

First let's dispel some erroneous teaching about the phrase "I shall not want". Some people distort this promise to mean things that were never intended and, as a result, the sheep become disillusioned by expecting the Shepherd to do things that He never promised to do.

For example, “I shall not want” does not necessarily mean material prosperity. Some people in the Bible like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were wealthy. Others--like many of the prophets--were poor. Even Jesus had no place to lay His head. Some nations are rich, some are poor. Material prosperity of an individual or nation is a blessing when God bestows it, but it is not a sign of spirituality or lack thereof.

The Apostle Paul warned:

*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
(1 Timothy 6:9-10, NIV)*

All the things that you want that seem so important are usually temporal. Most of the things you crave are wants--sometimes even covetousness--and not legitimate needs. If you are consumed by materialism, it is time to change your focus to spiritual things. The Bible warns:

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.
(1 John 2:15-1, NKJV)*

Jesus promised that whatever you ask in His name you will receive. To ask in His name, however, means it must be in harmony with His will. One of the reasons for unanswered prayer is that we ask for the wrong reasons:

*You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.
(James 4:3, NKJV)*

The phrase "I shall not want" means that the Shepherd will provide the necessities of life like food, shelter, clothing, and sufficient funds for your needs. There will be divine provision--whether it is supernatural manna from the heavens, multiplied loaves and fish, or a stone in a streambed that is designed to take down a giant. He will provide what is needed, not every whim of a materialistic mindset.

Jesus said:

So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:28-33, NKJV)

God will supernaturally provide your needs by multiplying what you have. He did it...

- ...By ravens during a famine (1 Kings 17).
- ...By the multiplication of oil and flour (1 Kings 17:16).
- ...By providing money for taxes in the mouth of a fish (Matthew 17:27).

Some people erroneously teach that "I shall not want" means you will never be sick. While healing is part of the atonement of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:5), believers are not promised immunity from sickness and death. Even the great prophet Elisha, who was used by God in tremendous miracles, became sick and died (1 Kings 13:14).

The statement "I am the Lord that heals" is as true today as it ever was, but it does not mean He heals on demand, that He heals every person all the time, or that a believer will be immune from death. He is your healer, and it is your spiritual right to pray and believe for healing. For some, that healing will come in this life. For others, it will occur as they step into eternity. And for some--like quadriplegic Joni Eareckson Tada and for Nick Vujicic, who was born without limbs--their physical disabilities are serving tremendous spiritual purposes.

"I shall not want" also does not mean that you will never experience trouble. Sometimes tragic circumstances of life bring sorrow, loss, and conflict. We live in a fallen world inhabited by sinful men. The reality is that bad stuff happens--terrorism, murder, great loss, and death.

No one is immune from the difficulties of life. The Prophet Elijah experienced fear and depression after his great victory over the prophets of Baal. When the evil queen threatened his life, Elijah fled into the wilderness:

...And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down

again. And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.
(1 Kings 19:3-8, NKJV)

God supplied the strength Elijah needed for his difficult journey. He provided him with food and water. Then when Elijah retreated to the mountain, the Lord spoke to him and gave him a new commission. God met his need physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The Apostle Paul openly shared regarding the difficulties he faced in ministry:

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.
(2 Corinthians 1:8-10, NKJV)

Paul wanted believers to know that in the most difficult circumstances of life, God delivers His children. The Good Shepherd is always there with supernatural provision for you and you will emerge from this troublesome time with a greater trust in His divine provision.

David--who wrote Psalm 23--also experienced many conflicts. He faced big giants and great battles. Saul pursued him for thirteen years trying to take his life.

David was deeply discouraged at times, but His Good Shepherd never failed to provide for him. A single stone from the brook. A cave in which to rest. Bread from an altar. Warriors and friends who put their lives on the line for him.

Elijah, David, and Paul--great men of God--all experienced difficult times. There will be hard times that will challenge your faith as well. God never promised that your life would always be easy, but He did promise that He would be with you when you face difficult times and that you will not want:

*He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases
strength.
Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.
(Isaiah 40: 29-31, NKJV)*

If you need strength to fly today, you have it! If you need to run, you will not be weary. If you need strength just to walk through a difficult day, you will receive it. Divine provision from the Good Shepherd. You shall not want!

THE CHALLENGE OF CONTENTMENT

Sheep often wander away and become lost because they seek what appears to be greener grass. They graze farther and farther away from the shepherd because of what they

perceive to be better pastures. Suddenly they look around, and they discover they have strayed from the flock.

Dissatisfaction is a feeling of discontent and displeasure with circumstances or personal relationships. It is unhappiness, a feeling of lack, and a belief that your needs are not being adequately met. Discontent will drive you away from the pastures of the Good Shepherd and His flock.

The Bible reveals that the enemy comes to kill, steal and destroy:

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, NKJV)

If you are dissatisfied, guess who stole your contentment?

The Good Shepherd came to destroy the work of the enemy and to give you all that is needed for abundant life. He wants you to be content and happy in His care. He wants you to settle down in His pasture and enjoy His provisions instead of constantly seeking something that you perceive to be “better”. When you are dissatisfied, grumbling, and complaining, you are actually blaming God for your circumstances and implying that He is not adequately providing for you.

The Israelites are a classic example of the dangers of discontent. They were constantly complaining about God’s provision. In the wilderness, God provided clothes and shoes that did not wear out. He provided water from a rock. Still they complained. They complained because the manna God provided was not as good as the leeks and

garlic they had in Egypt. Really? Leeks and garlic are better than freedom?

God called their complaining sin and judged it as such. Dissatisfaction leads to grumbling, complaining, unhappiness, and an unthankful and critical spirit. In short, dissatisfaction is sin and--as with other sins--you must confess it as such and ask God for forgiveness.

Contentment is learned by experience. The Apostle Paul declared:

...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:11-13, NIV)

That is quite a statement considering Paul's experiences:

*From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.
(2 Corinthians 11:24-28, NKJV)*

Contentment isn't governed by external circumstances, but you learn it by the circumstances you experience. A change in your circumstance may bring temporary contentment, but true satisfaction is based on your relationship with the Good Shepherd. Contentment is an inward attitude which is a process and a product of spiritual growth. Oddly, the very circumstances that can cause anxiety, frustration, and unhappiness are often God's methods for developing contentment in your life.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul gave these guidelines to Timothy which are intended for us as well:

*Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.
(1 Timothy 6:6-12, NKJV)*

SPIRITUAL PROVISION

After making the statement "I shall not want", David describes the provisions of the Shepherd in the verses that follow.

-I shall not want for nourishment--physical or spiritual--because "He makes me to lie down in green pastures." (Verse 1)

-I shall not want for refreshment because "He leads me beside the still waters." (Verse 2)

-I shall not want for spiritual restoration because "He restores my soul." (Verse 3)

-I shall not want for righteousness, for He leads me in the right way. (Verse 3)

-I shall not fear the valley of death. I am not alone. He is my Comforter. (Verse 4)

-I shall not want for protection and correction in the valleys of life. (Verse 4)

-I shall not be afraid of my enemies. (Verse 5)

-I will be anointed by God. (Verse 5)

-I will have blessings that literally overflow, follow me, and overtake me. (Verse 5)

-I will experience goodness and mercy as my legacy. (Verse 6)

-I am assured of my eternal destiny. (Verse 6)

Review this list again. Did you notice that it includes total provision for all you need in life and ministry?

There are seven times in Scripture where the name "Jehovah" is linked with another word. Each time it is used it confirms why "I shall not want." Study each reference where the name is used and note how that name is linked to Psalm 23:

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| -Psalm 23:1 | Jehovah Rohi | The Lord is my shepherd. |
| -Genesis 22:13,14 | Jehovah Jireh | The Lord will provide. |
| -Judges 6:24 | Jehovah Shalom | The Lord our peace. |
| -Exodus 15:26 | Jehovah Rapha | The Lord that heals. |
| -Jeremiah 23:6 | Jehovah Tsidkenu | The Lord our righteousness. |
| -Ezekiel 48:35 | Jehovah Shammah | The Lord ever present. |
| -Exodus 17:8-15 | Jehovah Nissi | The Lord our banner. |

Having the assurance that every need will be met by your benevolent Shepherd, it is time to move on with His flock to the green pastures. They won't be hard to find. He has already prepared them and He will show you the way.

Psalm 23
Modern English Version

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 **He makes me lie down in green pastures;**
He leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He restores my soul;
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for His name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil for you are with me;
Your rod and Your staff,
they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup runs over.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever. (MEV)

CHAPTER THREE

THE PEACE: HE MAKES ME LIE DOWN

Because the Lord is my shepherd...He makes me lie down in green pastures.

It is interesting that Psalm 23 begins by describing the rest available in the pastures of our Shepherd. The first aspect of the Lord being our shepherd is not some ministry or activity, but it is rest. We can rest spiritually because our sins are forgiven and we are able to release our burdens and cares upon the Lord. Jesus said: *“Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28).

The visual image of these pastures is of tender green grass and vegetation. The word for “pasture” comes from a root word which means “at home, pleasant, beautiful”, giving the idea of a pleasant place. That is where the Shepherd makes you lie down spiritually: In lush, green pastures. There, you find peace.

The Good Shepherd wants you to experience peace *with* God through forgiveness of sin:

Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
(Romans 5:1, KJV)

After you have made peace with God, you will have the peace *of* God in your life:

And the peace of God which passes all

understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7, KJV)

Peace is a gift from the Shepherd to His sheep. Jesus said:

*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.
(John 14:27, NKJV)*

Jesus Christ secured the peace found in spiritual pastures through His death on the cross of Calvary: He *is* your peace:

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near...(Ephesians 2:14-17, NKJV)

Don't miss the importance of the word "makes" in this passage. If you do not come willingly to dwell in His pastures, the Shepherd loves you so much that He will orchestrate circumstances that will *make* you come! He will get you to where you need to be in order to find essential spiritual food and rest. He wants you to experience His peace, which is defined as "a condition of quiet, calm, tranquility, and harmony--the absence of strife, anxiety, and concern."

FREE TO LIE DOWN

When sheep are well cared for, they settle down and are content. Sheep in the natural world, as well as in the spiritual world, will lie down only if they are free from hunger, fear, friction, and pests.

Free from hunger. A good shepherd leads his sheep from barren lands to the richest pasturelands because once they are no longer hungry, they will lie down and rest. One of the Greek words for “love” used in the Bible is *agape*, which is a merging of two words and two concepts. *Ago* means “to lead like a shepherd,” and *pao* is a verb that means “to rest.” The demonstration of true love is the Shepherd leading you to a place of rest and spiritual provision.

Very often, believers settle for the junk food of the world instead of the rich spiritual provision of their Shepherd. We try to fill the emptiness of our lives with entertainment, hobbies, work, travel, etc., instead of feeding on the riches of prayer, worship, and God's Word.

Sheep are not like goats. Goats eat weeds and all kinds of junk--spiritually representative of the trash of the world. Sheep prefer tender, green grass. What are you eating spiritually? Are you a sheep or a goat? What you feed on spiritually answers this question.

Our Shepherd declares that He is the bread of life:

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life,

and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven--not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:53-58, NKJV)

The last verse of Psalm 23 speaks of living forever and the verse we are studying--verse 2--explains how this is possible. By believing in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and accepting Him as Savior and Shepherd of your life, you partake of the bread of life and you will live forever!

God provided rest for the nation of Israel, but they failed to experience it because of unbelief and, as a result, they wandered for years in a barren wilderness. Your Shepherd has provided spiritual rest so that you do not have to wander the pathways of sin and live on the meager fare of the deserts of this world. The question is: Have you entered into that rest?

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them (Israel): but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest...There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour

*therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.
(Hebrews 4:1-3, 9-11, KJV)*

Free from fear. In the natural world, fear of any enemy--whether man or beast--will scatter sheep. The Word declares "*God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*" (1 Timothy 1:7, KJV). You can dwell in green pastures spiritually without fear of the enemy because "... *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*" (1 John 4:4, NKJV).

No matter the difficulty of your circumstances, you can rest in the shepherd's care free from fear. God has declared: "*And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods*" (Ezekiel 34:25, KJV). Whether you are in a spiritual wilderness surrounded by evil beasts, or you are in the deep woods of the dark circumstances of life--God is there to protect you and give you rest.

The Good Shepherd declared: "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27, NKJV). Do not fear. You can lie down in safety and rest in the green pastures of His loving care.

Free from friction with other sheep. In biblical times, a shepherd would put oil on the heads of the sheep so that they could not bash their heads together to fight. Sheep who are fighting each other cannot rest, feed, or reproduce properly. The same is true in the spiritual world. When the Lord's sheep are busy fighting each other they cannot rest,

feed, or reproduce spiritually. We need the Holy Spirit, symbolized by oil in God's Word, to be continuously applied to our lives to free us from friction with other sheep.

Free from pests. In the natural world, there are different types of pests that infest the wool of sheep and cause sickness and discomfort. There are flies that attack sheep and leave eggs that hatch, then the baby flies crawl into the sheep's head and eventually cause blindness and death. The shepherd would apply oil to the flock to free them of these annoying, deadly pests.

What is pestering you today? Finances? Physical infirmity? Circumstances? Negative emotions? Apply the oil of the Holy Spirit to those "pests" so you can find rest in the green pastures of your Shepherd.

Because the Lord is your Shepherd, He makes you lie down in green pastures. He frees you from spiritual hunger, fear, friction, and pests so that you can feed on His riches and rest in Him.

Your Shepherd promised: *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled "* (Matthew 5:6).

Spiritual hunger is satisfied in the Lord's green pastures.

Now it is time to learn how to quench your spiritual thirst--how to follow your Shepherd as He leads you to still waters. That is the next destination on our journey.

Psalm 23
New English Translation

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd,
 I lack nothing.
- 2 He takes me to lush pastures,
 he leads me to refreshing water.
- 3 He restores my strength.
 He leads me down the right paths
 for the sake of his reputation.
- 4 Even when I must walk through the darkest
 valley,
 I fear no danger,
 for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff reassure me.
- 5 You prepare a feast before me
 in plain sight of my enemies.
 You refresh my head with oil;
 my cup is completely full.
- 6 Surely your goodness and faithfulness will
 pursue me all my days,
 and I will live in the Lord's house for the
 rest of my life. (NET)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PATHWAY: HE LEADS ME

Because the Lord is my shepherd...He leads me besides still waters:

Your Shepherd has promised: *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"* (Matthew 5:6, KJV). In the natural world, grass and water are two basic necessities for sheep. The previous chapter focused on the green pastures provided by the Shepherd. This chapter concerns the waters of spiritual life.

Water is extremely important for sheep, as dehydration can quickly set in and lead to confusion and death. The same is true spiritually. Spiritual water is vital to prevent doctrinal confusion, essential for spiritual life, and required to prevent spiritual death.

What are these waters and where are they found? Just follow your Shepherd. He is leading you there.

HE LEADS YOU

Drawing on the biblical analogy of believers as sheep--it is characteristic of sheep not to know where they are going. They will easily stray into the wrong paths and even follow other sheep right over a cliff to their death! Sheep must be led.

The fact that Psalm 23:2 says the Shepherd leads you confirms four things:

- First: That there is a Shepherd.
Second: That He communicates with you.
Third: That you can recognize His voice when He speaks.
Fourth: That He has something to say.

In the natural world, you do not recognize the voice of a stranger and they must identify themselves if they call you on the telephone. You easily recognize voices of those you know and those with whom you have developed an intimate relationship. The same is true in the spiritual world. If you are to come to know the Shepherd's voice, you must become acquainted with Him. You must spend time with Him through worship, prayer, and His Word--the Holy Bible. You must join His flock in being "fed and watered" in a church fellowship and reproducing new lambs. Through this, you will learn to know His voice.

Is the Lord your Shepherd? Are you His sheep? If you answered "yes", then the Shepherd stands ready to lead you to spiritual waters. As His sheep, you will know His voice. All you must do is follow.

I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine...And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
(John 10:14,16,27, NKJV)

The Bible reveals that there are many voices in the world clamoring for attention (1 Corinthians 14:10). There are the voices of man, Satan, self, and God. In everyday situations of life, believers are constantly making choices which determine whether or not they will follow the

Shepherd. It is essential to know His voice and follow Him daily in the minor decisions of life because these affect your ability to make proper decisions regarding major issues that affect your life and destiny.

The ability to receive divine guidance comes through walking in intimate fellowship with the Shepherd. You learn to follow by studying His Word where answers are provided for the issues of life. You learn to follow by praying each day for His will to be done. As part of your prayer time, sit silently in His presence and listen for guidance from your Shepherd.

There are two Greek words used for "word" in relation to receiving a word from God: *Logos and rhema*. The "logos" is the written Word of God and it always agrees with the "rhema" or spoken, life-giving Word. A "rhema" Word from God usually applies to a specific situation, meets a personal need, or provides individual guidance. Because you recognize this Word as applying to a specific situation in your life, it becomes a life-giving Word to you.

A "rhema" Word may be communicated through a sermon or a verse from the Bible which suddenly strikes you with great meaning. It may also come through spiritual gifts like prophecy or words of knowledge, or it may be spoken into your spirit by the Lord. The written Word of God is complete. Nothing is to be added to it or taken from it (Revelation 22:18-19), so when God speaks through the "rhema" Word, it will always be in harmony with His written Word.

You will be able to hear the Shepherd's voice as long as you remain firmly rooted in the truths of His Word:
"...Every one that is of the truth hears my voice" (John

18:37, NKJV). The Holy Spirit who dwells within will guide you into spiritual truth:

*When He, the Spirit of truth is come (the Holy Spirit), He will guide you into all truth...and He will show you things to come and He shall receive of mine (God's will) and show it to you.
(John 16:13-14, KJV with comments)*

What is truth? Jesus declared of the Father: “*Your Word is truth*” (John 17:17, NKJV)

In the natural world, a child must attain a certain level of maturity before he recognizes the voices of his parents. The same is true in the spiritual world. When you are first born-again you may not be able to recognize the Shepherd's voice clearly when He speaks to you. The Bible contrasts a new believer and a mature one by explaining that...

*...every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: For he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.
(Hebrews 5:13-14, NKJV)*

The "milk" and "meat" mentioned in these verses refer to the written Word of God, the Holy Bible. When you are first born-again you should study the simple truths (the milk) of the written Word of God. As you mature, you will be able to master the deeper truths (the meat) of the Word of God. As you continue to study God's Word, your spiritual senses will mature and you will be able to properly discern between good and evil. This means you will be able to distinguish the right pathway from the wrong one. You will know the Shepherd's voice and follow His lead.

BESIDE STILL WATERS

Sheep fear rushing water because they are not good swimmers. Their heavy wool coats and small, spindly legs make them top heavy. When their wool is saturated with water, they can flip over and drown easily. They shy away from running water, so the shepherd searches out still waters for them to drink. A fresh pool. A calmly flowing river.

It is interesting to note that the shepherd leads to "still waters." Still waters are defined as silent, yet fresh and pure. Still waters speak of spiritual stability which is not moved by the shifting winds of experience or popular theology. It is fresh water, not stagnant like the Dead Sea, because the spiritual water runs to you and through you to a thirsty world.

The Hebrew word translated in this verse as "still" literally means "resting place, a place of repose to rest from tiredness".

The Shepherd does not lead you to a dangerous raging torrent. In fact: "*When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him*" (Isaiah 59:19, NKJV). You won't be swept away by the raging waters of this world or the deep waters of the circumstances of life.

The Shepherd also does not lead you to stagnant, polluted pools of ritual, tradition, and religion. He leads you to pure still waters where you can be refreshed.

Are you tired of battling the white-water rapids of difficulties in this world--the frenzy and craziness that is all

around you? Are you sick of drinking from the polluted ponds of man-made religion and tradition. Is your life like an empty water jug spiritually? The Prophet Jeremiah spoke of "cisterns that hold no water". That emptiness you feel cannot be filled except by the water of life (Jeremiah 2:13). Jesus said: "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink...*" (John 7:37, KJV). Your emptiness, your dryness, and your spiritual frustration can only be filled by drinking deeply of the water of life.

So where do you find this water? You find it in the same place that the woman at the well found it centuries ago. Her story is recorded in John chapter 4. As Jesus rested by a well waiting for His disciples, a woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me to drink". The woman said to Him, "How is it that you, being a Jew, asks me for a drink, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." There was intense racial and religious prejudice between the two groups at that time.

Jesus answered and said to her: "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that said to you, 'Give me to drink' you would have asked of Him and He would have given you living water."

The woman thought a minute and then said, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From where then do you have that living water?" Then Jesus said to her:

...Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:13-14, NKJV)

If you drink of the waters of the world--its attractions, ambitions, materialism, etc.--you will thirst again. If you drink of the waters provided by the Great Shepherd, which flow from the Shepherd Himself, you will never again thirst.

So how do you drink of these waters? You become a true worshipper of God. In the remainder of John chapter 4, Jesus explains to the woman what it means to be a true worshipper. It is not a matter of where and when you worship, but of who and how. Jesus revealed that those who worship the Lord must do so in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Genuine worship is based upon fact--the truth of God's Word. It is also based upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit and submission to God in your spirit. These are the worshippers God seeks.

You are drinking of Living Waters...

- Each time you study God's Word.
- Each time you pray and listen for His voice.
- Every time you worship God.
- Each time you join the flock in corporate worship.

The still waters to which the Good Shepherd leads you are found in Jesus Christ (John 4:14). The Prophet Isaiah issued a clear invitation to the spiritually thirsty saying: *"Hey there! All who are thirsty, come to the water!"* (Isaiah 55:1, MSG). In these waters your spiritual thirst is quenched. You are spiritually satisfied. Drink deeply!

What great promises we have received in the first few verses of this Psalm. But wait--we aren't done yet. There are still more blessings for the sheep of His pasture. Time to journey on with our Shepherd and guide. He is on the move again!

Psalm 23
The Amplified Version

- 1 The Lord is my Shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me], I shall not lack.
- 2 He makes me lie down in [fresh, tender] green pastures; He leads me beside the still and restful waters. [Revelation 7:17.]
- 3 **He refreshes and restores my life (myself);** He leads me in the paths of righteousness [uprightness and right standing with Him--not for my earning it, but] for His name's sake.
- 4 Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear or dread no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my [brimming] cup runs over.
- 6 Surely or only goodness, mercy, and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life, and through the length of my days the house of the Lord [and His presence] shall be my dwelling place. (AMP)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROPITIATION: HE RESTORES MY SOUL

Because the Lord is my shepherd...He restores my soul.

Sheep need restoration when they become cast down because a downed sheep is easy prey for predators. They cannot help themselves and need to be restored by the Shepherd. So, what does “restoration” mean spiritually in terms of the shepherd and the sheep? There are important spiritual parallels between believers and sheep as to how one becomes cast down.

Sheep become cast down when they are at ease. Sheep often look for an easier way other than the path in which the Shepherd is leading. When they get into a nice green pasture of their choice and are happy and contented, they roll over on their back, kick their legs in pleasure--and all of a sudden discover that they cannot get up again and have become easy prey for the enemy.

In the spiritual world, believers sometimes settle down in ease. They get involved with the pleasures and riches of the world. They become comfortable, complacent, and unconcerned about God, His Kingdom, and lost sheep that need rescuing. When you take your own route because it appears easier than the way the Shepherd has designated, you will eventually become bogged down in the quick sands of life.

Sheep become cast down when they have too much wool. When the woolly fur of a sheep has grown too long, brambles and thorns start clinging to it and the animal is weighed down with these things, becoming an easy target

for predators. To help this "cast down" sheep, the shepherd cuts off the trash entangled in the wool. While he is doing it, the sheep howls, struggles, and kicks. The animal does not like the process, but it is necessary for their restoration.

Believers sometimes become weighed down with "cares of this world" and the "sins that so easily beset" them (Luke 21:34; Hebrews 12:1). When you become weighed down with negative things that cling to you such as the cares of the world, anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness, then you will become cast down. To avoid this, you should cast all your cares, problems, and negative emotions on the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). Casting everything on Him is far better than becoming cast down. The things that weigh you down spiritually must be eliminated. Your spiritual Shepherd takes the cutting edge of the Word of God and applies it to your life:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12, NKJV)

You may be tempted to kick, struggle, and howl but the process is necessary. Don't struggle. Don't fight it. The Shepherd must cut away the things that weigh you down and make you an easy target for the enemy.

Sheep become cast down when they fall. The lamb doesn't see the peril, and down they go. Spiritually, no one is beyond being cast down. Great Christian leaders have fallen in times past, and they will continue to do so in the future. The Bible warns: *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12, NKJV).*

The good news is that if you belong to the Good Shepherd's flock, He will seek you, find you, and restore you when you fall:

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:4-7, NKJV)

Note that the lamb which was lost had been part of the fold. When he strayed, the Good Shepherd didn't just write him off as a loss, but He left the flock to search for the one who had strayed into sin. The one who had fallen. The lamb that was cast down. When the Shepherd found His lost lamb, He returned it to the fold rejoicing that it was restored.

As a little lamb in your Shepherd's care, you can be assured that... *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholds him with his hand"* (Psalm 37:23-24, NKJV).

Sheep become cast down when they are too fat. Just because you are doing well materially does not mean you are a healthy believer. The fattest sheep are not always the healthiest or the most productive. The same is sometimes true of the largest churches or the richest believers.

Review the messages to the churches in Revelation chapters 3-4. Some of these churches were large and prosperous, but they had lost the fervency and intensity of their love for God. They had allowed false doctrines and compromise in order to grow their congregations. They had a “good name” but were dead spiritually. They boasted of their riches, but they were spiritually malnourished, so the Lord called them to repentance and restoration.

HE RESTORES YOUR SOUL

The phrase "restores" literally means to "bring back". The Good Shepherd restores or brings back one who is cast down. He restores you from death to life, from the wide road that leads to destruction to the narrow way that will enable you to dwell in His house forever.

The word “soul” literally means “a breathing creature”, and can be understood as “life”. The restoration of your soul comes through salvation and subsequently resting in His divine provisions as the Shepherd and Saviour of your soul. By grace and mercy, the Shepherd restores you to His original plan for your life. He restores your dreams, your visions, your family, your finances--all that has been lost, He will restore.

So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God And there is no other. My

people shall never be put to shame.
(Joel 2:25-27, NKJV)

This concept of restoring the soul of one who is cast down is portrayed in Psalm 18 where the psalmist declared:

He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He pulled me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my distress, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out to a wide-open place; He rescued me because He delighted in me. (Psalm 18:16-19, NIV)

When you are mired in sin, the Shepherd restores your soul with forgiveness. When you are sorrowing, He restores your soul with comfort. When you are sick, He restores your health.

The Good Shepherd is the only one who can restore your soul because He was the propitiation for your sins, meaning that He made atonement for your sins through His death on the cross. He died in order that your soul could be restored to fellowship with God. He restores you from the penalties of sin in the past, from the power of sin in the present, and He will deliver you from the presence of sin as you enter eternity.

The Biblical concept of restoration is to return someone or something to the original state. When Peter was restored after denying the Lord three times, He was immediately told to feed the sheep of the Lord's pasture. He was not only restored as a disciple, but he was ordained to be a leader in the early church.

You may think you have lost it all because of a fall, but the Shepherd stands ready to restore it all: Your soul. Your vision. Your ministry. Your relationships. He wants to restore you to the original plan for your life. The Lord promised His people:

“...Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day...I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountain...there they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture...I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God. “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick...”
(Portions of Ezekiel 34:11-16, NKJV)

Note the “I will” statements of restoration in this passage:

- I will search for my sheep.
- I will deliver them from where they are scattered.
- I will feed them in good, rich pastures.
- I will make them lie down.
- I will seek what was lost.
- I will bring back what was driven away.
- I will bind up the broken.
- I will strengthen the sick.

After you are restored, you are ready to travel to the next spiritual destination on your journey, the pathway of righteousness. Time to move on again. Stay close to the Shepherd.

Psalm 23
New Century Version

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd;
I have everything I need.
- 2 He lets me rest in green pastures.
He leads me to calm water.
- 3 He gives me new strength.
**He leads me on paths that are right
for the good of his name.**
- 4 Even if I walk through a very dark valley,
I will not be afraid, because you are with
me.
Your rod and your shepherd's staff comfort
me.
- 5 You prepare a meal for me
in front of my enemies.
You pour oil of blessing on my head;
you fill my cup to overflowing.
- 6 Surely your goodness and love will be with
me all my life, and I will live in the house of
the Lord forever. (NCV)

CHAPTER SIX

THE PURITY: HE LEADS IN PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Because the Lord is my shepherd...He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

HE LEADS ME

One major characteristic of sheep is that they have a tendency to wander away. Isaiah applies this spiritually in his prophetic word: *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6, NIV).

Sheep left to themselves will graze the same pasture until it is ruined and they often set out to find new pastures of their own liking. This is also true spiritually. Believers often remain in the ruts of the same pastures of life when they should move on. Conversely, they sometimes move on to pastures of their own choosing without the guidance of their Shepherd.

Because of our sinful nature, we desire to be in control of our own lives. We want to go our own way and do our own thing, but if we have made Jesus our Shepherd, then we must follow Him. We often think we know a better way. A shortcut. An easier path that leads to greener pastures. But the Bible declares: *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"* (Proverbs 14:12, NKJV).

How often we stand at the crossroads of life wondering which is the right path to take. Without the guidance of our Shepherd we all, like sheep, will choose the wrong path and lose our way spiritually. But if we will allow Him to lead, the Lord our Shepherd will guide us to the right paths of life. He will draw us gently, step-by-step, into the future so that we do not remain in the ruts of yesterday, ritual, or religion. As Abraham's servant proclaimed, "*I, being in the way, the Lord led me*" (Genesis 24:27, KJV). When you walk in the ways of God, it is easier to be led by the Shepherd.

Why do you need a guide along the pathways of life? The Prophet Jeremiah sums it up:

Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. (Jeremiah 10:23, NKJV)

The psalmist cautions: "*Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle...*" (Psalm 32:9, KJV). Instead, you must:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:5-7, KJV)

If you have been doing your own thing, heading the wrong way, and have strayed from the Shepherd's way, confess your sin and ask for forgiveness because:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He

*is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to
cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:8-9, KJV)*

Next, ask the Shepherd to show you the way back to the right path. Change your direction. Do an about-face. This may require letting go of habits, friends, or even your current profession if it is not God-honoring work. Follow the Shepherd step-by-step into the paths of righteousness.

There are no short cuts to these paths. Sometimes there are delays and what seems to be circuitous routes, but keep on following because there is never a dead end. Most importantly, there is a divine destination where you will stand righteous before God because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

IN PATHS

The word for "path" here means "circular or orbit." It is a common on the hillsides of Israel to see sheep and their shepherd circling up higher and higher, pursuing a circuitous route that leads to new altitudes.

This is what David is referring to in this passage. When we follow our Shepherd, each step takes us higher even though at times it may seem we are going in circles. The Lord leads us in a path that causes us to "orbit" Him, meaning that the path always revolves around Him and leads back to Him! Just as the planets and stars in the heavens are subject to the gravitational pull of the sun, those who live in the Shepherd's orbit are kept in right alignment to Him.

OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The basic definition of righteousness as used in this passage is "right standing with God". Living righteously means, "observing divine laws, keeping the commands of God; a way of thinking, feeling, and acting that conforms to the will of God." This is not something you can do through self-effort. Pursuing righteousness does not mean becoming self-righteous or trying to be good enough because...

We are all infected and impure with sin. When we put on our prized robes of righteousness, we find they are but filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6, TLB)

No one is righteous in themselves and because of this no one can be justified through obedience to the laws of God:

Now do you see it? No one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what the law commands. For the more we know of God's laws, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying them; his laws serve only to make us see that we are sinners. But now God has shown us a different way to heaven--not by "being good enough" and trying to keep his laws, but by a new way (though not new, really, for the Scriptures told about it long ago). Now God says he will accept and acquit us--declare us "not guilty" -- if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal; yet now God declares us "not guilty" of offending him if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in his kindness freely takes away our sins. (Romans 3:20-24, TLB)

Paul states that we know that “...a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Galatians 2:16, NKJV). Righteousness is a supernatural gift of God’s grace:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
(Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV)*

Your path of righteousness in life will differ from that of other believers. When Peter questioned Christ about the plans He had for the Apostle John, Jesus replied: “*If I will that he remains till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me*” (John 21:20, NKJV). Don’t look around to see what other sheep are doing. Follow the Shepherd’s plan for your own life.

Hebrews chapter 11 records the stories of great men and women of faith. Some of them were supernaturally delivered from perilous circumstances because their mission on earth was not yet complete. For others, their pathway led to physical death because their earthly mission was completed. All of them followed their Shepherd in the individual paths where He directed them. All of them were righteous. All were faithful. All reached their divine destination.

FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE

In Old Testament times people would not even speak the names of false gods lest they blaspheme God's name by allowing both names to come out of the same mouth (Exodus 23:13 and Joshua 23:7). Jewish tradition says that when a Scribe copying the Scriptures came to a name of God, he would lay aside his quill and get a new one with which to write it. Then he would break that writing instrument so that no other name would ever flow from it.

The first priority in the prayer pattern Jesus gave His disciples was to declare God's name as holy: "*Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name*" (Matthew 6:9, KJV). One of the ten commandments forbids taking the name of God in vain:

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Exodus 20:7, KJV)

In Old Testament times, blaspheming the name of God was punishable by death--that was how serious the offence was considered to be (Leviticus 24:26).

Taking the name of God in vain is commonly thought of as using it profanely as a swear word, frivolously, or in jest--and it does mean all this. But there are other ways to take His name in vain:

- Swearing falsely using God's name profanes it:
Leviticus 19:12.
- Unholy worship profanes God's name:
Leviticus 20:3; 21:6.

-Glorifying false gods pollutes God's name:

Isaiah 48:11.

-Disrespecting the poor and favoring the rich is taking His name in vain: James 2:1-7.

-Abominable, sinful living profanes His name: Ezekiel 43:8.

Most importantly, if you call yourself a Christian but you do not live like a true believer then you are taking His name in vain. You are misrepresenting Him to the world when, as a professing believer, you do not follow the Good Shepherd in the paths of righteous living.

There is tremendous power in the name of our Lord. Jesus said:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20, NKJV)

And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (Mark 16:17-18, KJV)

By His name we go forth to minister to the world baptizing, teaching, casting out demons, and speaking with new tongues. As we go, we are protected through the name of

our Shepherd and we are led in the paths of righteousness to divine destinations for His name's sake.

Sometimes the path of the Good Shepherd leads through lush meadows to cool waters--symbolic of positive circumstances and the manifested blessings of God. At other times, however, the path leads through dark valleys--symbolic of negative circumstances and difficult experiences of life.

So what is to be your response when the path of the Shepherd leads you through difficult terrain? The answer to that question is found in the next passage of this wonderful Psalm.

Psalm 23
The Messenger Translation

- 1 God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing.
- 2 You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from.
- 3 True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction.
- 4 **Even when the way goes through Death Valley,**
I'm not afraid when you walk at my side.
Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure.
- 5 You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies.
You revive my drooping head; my cup brims with blessing.
- 6 Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life.
I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life. (MSG)

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PRESENCE: HE IS WITH ME IN THE VALLEY

Because the Lord is my shepherd...though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for He is with me.

We all love mountain-top experiences when, as the disciples who witnessed the transfiguration of Christ, we have amazing spiritual encounters. We long to remain there, but we cannot do so. Like the disciples, we must return to minister in the valleys of this world, the places where shadows lurk and darkness seeks to conceal evil. But according to this Psalm, the shadowed valley is a part of the journey of life, it is not your final destination.

THOUGH I WALK THROUGH

Before we even begin to learn of the challenges that lie ahead on our journey, we are assured that we will be able to walk *through* whatever we encounter. We will not remain there, bogged down in the difficult circumstances of life. We will not die there spiritually. We will not come to a dead end. We will walk through it with assurance that the Shepherd we are following did not make a wrong turn.

Note that “walk” is the word used to describe the journey--not running in panic. The word “walk” means to stroll at a comfortable pace, putting one foot in front of the other. As the priests of Israel who put their feet into the raging waters of Jordan, the way will open before you through the valley step-by-step (Joshua 3:13-17). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, you will “*walk and not faint*” (Isaiah 40:31).

The word “through” means continuing on towards the completion of a process or a period of time. Whether your valley is a difficult circumstance of life, physical problems, relational issues, or death itself, you will come through it and arrive safely at your destination.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

There is a ravine called the Valley of the Shadow of Death in Palestine. It is located beyond the hills of Bethlehem towards the Dead Sea. A spring that flows from the foot of the Mt. of Olives has forged a valley that has cut deep into the earth down through the centuries. The valley--called “Wadi Kelt”--extends all the way to the Dead Sea, is 1500 feet deep in some places, and is quite desolate.

In Bible times, shepherds would pasture their flocks at Jericho in winter. When the spring rains came in the Judean Desert, the hills would break forth with flowers and green grass. The shepherds would then move their flocks from the lowlands into the mountains to the spring pastures. Their route took them through this valley which they named the "Shadow of Death" because the possibility of death was always present. Bears, lions, lepers, hyenas, and robbers lurked in the shadows of this valley, poised to attack.

David was well acquainted with this route. In this verse, the word he uses for “valley” means a “ravine that is characterized by loneliness and danger.” The word for “shadow” is the strongest word in Hebrew for darkness meaning a “deep darkness”. The word for “death” has two meanings: Natural death which is the separation of the soul from the body, and spiritual death which is the separation of sinful mankind from a righteous God.

The phrase “the shadow of death” is interesting, in that light is necessary in order to cast a shadow. The light in the valley that casts the shadow is Jesus, the Light of the World (John 8:12). There is a shadow in your valley because the Light of the World is there with you. In reality, a shadow has no substance. A shadow cannot harm you.

Because of the Shepherd, spiritual death resulting from sin is eliminated and you can have a restored relationship with God:

*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Romans 6:23, KJV)*

Because of the Good Shepherd, physical death for a believer also has no substance because it is swallowed up in victory:

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57, KJV)

If you want proof of the Christian faith, observe the way true believers die. They have no fear. Why? Because their Shepherd is with them in the valley of the shadow of physical death. A prime example is the death of Stephen who was killed by an angry mob because of his testimony of the Gospel:

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:55-60, KJV)

The question is not whether you will have valleys in life or whether you will face death, for you surely will. Rather, the question is how will you react when you go through these valleys?

Is your valley of difficult circumstance causing you to worry about the future? Claim God's promise:

I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. (Psalm 32:8, KJV)

Are you in the valley of confusion? Here is your promise:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5, NIV)

Are you going through a valley of the loss of a loved one, divorce, or abandonment and you fear being alone? Here is God's Word to you:

Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or terrified Because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you...(Deuteronomy 31:6, NIV)

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (John 14:18, NIV)

...for he has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5, NKJV)

Are you responding to your valley with anxiety? Claim these promises:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God: trust also in Me...Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:1,17, NIV)

Are you feeling depressed and brokenhearted as you trudge through the ravines of life? Know that...

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.(Psalm 34:18, NIV)

Are you concerned for your safety? Be assured that...

The Lord will keep you from all harm; He will watch over your life; The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. (Psalm 121:7-8, NIV)

Are you facing an enemy in your valley? Claim this scripture: *"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31, KJV).*

Are you experiencing sleepless nights because of the circumstances in your valley? Claim this promise: *"When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet" (Proverbs 3:24, NKJV).*

Does your valley cause you to fear? If so, then the next passage of this Psalm is for you.

I WILL FEAR NO EVIL

There are many things that foster fear in this world: War, terrorism, murder, assault, starvation, invasion, abuse, sickness, calamity, etc. The phrase "the valley of the shadow of death" encapsulates all the things in this world that generate fear, yet the psalmist proclaims "I will not fear."

Whatever the reason for your fear, Christ's question to you is the same as to His disciples that stormy night on Galilee Lake: *"Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:40, KJV).* If you are bound by fear, ponder this question: Why are you so fearful?

Fear is a powerful, controlling, paralyzing emotion. It is not a question of "if" you will experience it, but rather "when" and "how" you will respond. The dictionary defines fear as being afraid, fearful, or scared of something or someone. Fear fosters many irrational phobias and its most severe manifestations causes people to withdraw from society and become agoraphobics--confined as prisoners in their own homes where they think they are safe.

Fear was first manifested after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden. When God came seeking them in the cool of the day, Adam replied: "...I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid..." (*Genesis 3:10, KJV*). The first negative emotion resulting from sin was fear which was followed by shame, isolation, blaming others, etc.

As the first negative emotion experienced by man after the fall into sin, fear is the root of all other negative emotions. This is why God addresses fear repeatedly in His Word. Fear is mentioned over 500 times in the Bible, and many of these references include the command to "fear not".

Medical science has proven that fear results in stress, high blood pressure, strokes, and heart attacks. The Bible speaks of men's hearts failing because of fear (*Luke 21:26*) and of people living in bondage all of their lives because of the fear of death (*Hebrews 2:15*).

Fear is a tormenting emotion (*1 John 4:18*). Its torment includes the fear of suffering, loss of health, loss of a loved one, loss of wealth, abandonment, fear of the future, and of death.

God designed the universe to run on a 24-hour period of time. That is why the prayer Jesus taught His disciples was to be prayed daily appealing for needs like "our daily bread" to be provided. Fear enters in when we violate this principle and begin to worry about the future:

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly

Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.
(Matthew 6:25-34, NIV)

Fear focuses on the future, whether it is tomorrow, later this week, or five years from now. Jesus said to live in the present.

The Bible commands believers not to fear, so fear is a sin because it is forbidden and it often leads to additional sin. For example, Abraham was so afraid of Abimelech that he lied to save his life, saying Sarah was his sister (Genesis 20:1-13). Isaac feared for his life and committed the same sin (Genesis 26:7). Ten of the twelve spies who were sent to investigate the promised land were terrified of the giants and their fear resulted in Israel's disobedience and the death of a whole generation (Numbers 13). Saul tried to murder David because he feared him (1 Samuel 18:12,15,29) and he lost his kingdom because of a sin he committed in fear

(1 Samuel 13:11-12). Acting in fear cost Saul the kingdom. What will fear cost you?

The normal "fight or flight" is not the type of fear spoken of in Psalm 23:4. "Fight or flight" is a normal response that protects you in the face of perceived danger. For example, if you are threatened by a poisonous snake, your "fight or flight" response will kick in so you can either escape or eliminate the threat. This is a rational response to danger. The fear mentioned in this verse is different as it is a tormenting, paralyzing, antagonizing emotion.

Four specific dangers that a believer need not fear are detailed in Psalm 91:5-6:

-Terrors. The word "terror" refers to acts of violence and destruction, something terrible that causes you to be afraid. "Terrorism" and "terrorists", two common words in our troubled society, are derivatives of the word. Psalm 91:5 says that you need not fear the terror by night, confirming that attacks of terrorism--both in the natural and spiritual worlds--are cloaked in spiritual darkness.

-Arrows. An arrow is a long shaft with a sharp point on it which is normally shot from a bow. If you are struck by an arrow, it can be quite painful or even lethal. The Amplified Version of the Bible renders arrow as *"the evil plots and slander of the wicked."* Most of us won't be dodging actual arrows today unless we are out on an archery shooting range, but spiritually, "arrows" can refer to harmful words: *"Their tongue is an arrow shot out; It speaks deceit; One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, But in his heart he lies in wait"* (Jeremiah 9:8, NKJV).

Negative, hateful words wound and destroy but the Prophet Isaiah declared:

*"No weapon formed against you shall prosper,
And every tongue which rises against you in
judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of
the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is
from Me," Says the Lord. (Isaiah 54:17, NKJV)*

This passage does not say that no weapons will be formed against you. It says that these weapons will not prosper. The word "prosper" means "to attain final and complete success."

-Pestilence. Pestilence refers to deadly infections or plagues. Diseases function in darkness, so to speak, because they are concealed and often are not apparent until it is too late. You can't see them and you don't know they are there, but God does. No pestilence can affect you when you remain safe in the shadow of the Shepherd.

-Destruction. The word "destruction" means to "abolish, destroy, and pull down." God does not want you to fear the destruction that wastes--or destroys--at noon. In the natural world, noon is a time to eat and--in many nations--take a rest before resuming the work day. Spiritually, noon is not a time when you are expecting destruction to strike, but if it does come Psalm 91:6 says, "Don't fear it! "

These four categories--terror, arrows, pestilence, and destruction--cover every potential attack in the natural or spiritual worlds. In the face of it all, God says, "Do not fear." You don't have to be afraid, because you are walking in His shadow. You are not alone. He is right there in the midst of the terror, arrows, pestilence, and destruction. He is there with you in your valley.

The Bible states that...*"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"* (2 Timothy 1:7, KJV). If fear does not come from God, then it comes from your enemy, Satan. This verse tells us that God's power, His love, and a sound mind will eliminate fear, so let's explore these spiritual weapons.

-Power. We are assured that we have power over all the power of the enemy, so that means there is nothing to fear. Jesus said, *"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you"* (Luke 10:19, KJV). If we have power over all the power of the enemy and nothing can hurt us, then we need not fear.

When the giant Goliath challenged the people of Israel, their experienced warriors were afraid and retreated from the battle (1 Samuel 17:24). How did the young shepherd boy, David, face the enemy without fear? David saw God as bigger than the giant and greater than his fear:

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."
(1 Samuel 17:45-47, NKJV)

Instead of retreating, David faced the fear-generator in the name of the Lord, rushed forward, and conquered the giant.

Don't play the "what if?" game. "What if this happens or what if that happens?" The power to face difficult situations is given when it is needed, not when you are fretting over the future:

*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find **grace to help in time of need.** (Hebrews 4:15-16, KJV)*

You have unlimited power through Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks of the power of the Gospel, the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of love, the power of His resurrection, the power of the Word of God, and the power in God's names.

You have the ability to choose to: "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7, KJV). When you submit to God and resist the devil, he will flee and take the spirit of fear along with him!

Love. The love of God casts out fear:

And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves

torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 John 4:16-18, NKJV)

When you really love someone, you trust them and that eliminates fear. You can relax with them. You are at peace. You know they care for you and will do you no harm. When you come to understand God's tremendous love for you, fear will be eliminated.

Let those who fear the Lord say: "His love endures forever." In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free. The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? (Psalm 118:4-6, NIV)

You can rest securely in God's love because:

...in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39, NKJV)

The opposite of fear is peace, which is a result of love. Jesus said:

Peace I leave with you; My [own] peace I now give and bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled.] (John 14:27. AMP)

Peace is a gift Jesus has given you but, like any promise of God, you must claim it. The peace He gives passes human understanding:

And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7, AMP)

The peace of God is beyond measure, unsurpassed, and unequalled by any other peace. It is a peace that is in a category all by itself and it dispels all fear.

You maintain your peace by casting all your care upon God: "*Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7, NKJV). "Casting" means to hurl or throw violently with force. It indicates a continuous action. "Cares" means anxiety, trouble, affliction, and difficulties--everything that generate fear. You must continuously cast your fear-generating cares upon Jesus and...

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7, NKJV)

How is your love perfected? When you keep His Word: "*But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him*" (1 John 2:5, NKJV). By keeping God's

word, you not only know you are in Him, but that His love is perfected in you--which means fear must flee!

A sound mind. Irrational fear is just that: Not rational. It is the result of irrational thinking, so you cannot deal with fear by just trying to be rational. You must develop a sound mind that cannot be tormented by fear. You do this by living in the Spirit rather than by the flesh:

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Romans 8:5-6, KJV)

The carnality of the world results in fear. Being spiritually minded--focusing on God and eternal things--results in peace. As you present yourself as a living sacrifice to God, your mind will be transformed:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2, NKJV)

You will either conform or be transformed. The less you conform to the world, the more your mind will be transformed and negative emotions such as fear will be eliminated. First Corinthians 2:16 assures that you can have the mind of Christ and Philippians 2:5 admonishes: "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" You have the ability to "let" the same mind that Jesus had be in you.

You can alleviate many fears by eliminating things that feed fear into your mind. These include scare tactics of others and fears generated by media--news reports, horror movies, and violent video games.

Perhaps your parents instilled fear in you by their conduct, like Abraham who lied about his wife and Isaac who followed his example. Even comments made by your parents like "Be careful. It's a dangerous world out there!" can be fear-generating. If you have fears instilled by your parents, address these in the Name of Jesus and reject the generational spirit of fear that has passed on to you. Command it to go in the name of Jesus!

Fear is also generated by materialism, worry, and anxiety that you will lose your money or possessions. Jesus said:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21, NKJV)

Stop thinking about your bank accounts and your material possessions. Keep your mind focused on things of eternal value and fear will leave!

Phobias are irrational fears that affect your behavior. Because they are irrational, they cannot be dealt with through rational, natural means. That is why you must turn to the Lord to conquer these fears. David said, "*I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears*" (Psalm 34:4, KJV).

Fear is a spirit generated by Satan and it begins in your mind. That is why you must learn to win the battle for your mind:

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ...
(2 Corinthians 10:4-5, KJV)*

In order to conquer fear, you must acknowledge it, refuse to retreat from it, and face it head-on in both the natural and spiritual realms.

If you are fearful, make this powerful declaration penned by the psalmist under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me...In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. (Psalm 56:3,4,11, KJV)

At some point in our Christian walk, each of us will encounter a valley of life. We will either pass through it in faith or in fear. When you are exhibiting fear, you are not exhibiting faith. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God and applying it in your life. Get into the Word of God to strengthen your faith. Make a list of all the "fear nots" in the Bible and apply them to your circumstances. There are hundreds of these verses because God knew we would continually wrestle with this spirit. No matter what your valley is today, the Word of the Lord to you is:

Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10, NKJV)

FOR YOU ARE WITH ME

The Shepherd Himself--the Lord Jesus Christ--comes to escort you through the valley of the shadow of death.

He is there in the darkest times of life, even if you do not realize it. The disciples walking along the Emmaus Road after Christ's death were in the valley of despair. Their Lord was gone. Their dreams and hopes were shattered. They could not remember His promises. Yet the Good Shepherd walked beside them to encourage them with His Word.

Israel wandered for years in the wilderness, yet “...*He led his people out like sheep, took his flock safely through the wilderness. He took good care of them; they had nothing to fear*” (Psalm 78:52-53, MSG).

No matter how deep and dark the valley you are presently experiencing, the scriptures encourage you to:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice...The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7, NIV)

You can have joy and peace in the valleys of life if you refuse anxiety and choose to pray and give thanks instead.

God promised His people: “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go” (Genesis 28:15). Jesus said: “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you” (John 14:18). Paul confirmed that “...He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

The Psalmist declared regarding our always-present God:

I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too--your reassuring presence, coming and going. This is too much, too wonderful--I can't take it all in! Is there any place I can go to avoid your Spirit? to be out of your sight? If I climb to the sky, you're there! If I go underground, you're there! If I flew on morning's wings to the far western horizon, You'd find me in a minute--you're already there waiting! Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me in the dark! At night I'm immersed in the light! It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you; night and day, darkness and light, they're all the same to you. (Psalm 139:5-12, MSG)

Wherever you are in life and no matter how deep your valley, your Shepherd walks beside you today. It is there, in the valley, that you will experience His comfort. More about that in the next chapter.

The Psalm 23
New International Readers Version

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need.
- 2 He lets me lie down in fields of green grass.
He leads me beside quiet waters.
- 3 He gives me new strength.
He guides me in the right paths for the honor of his name.
- 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid.
You are with me.
Your shepherd's rod and staff comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a feast for me right in front of my enemies.
You pour oil on my head.
My cup runs over.
- 6 I am sure that your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.
And I will live in the house of the Lord forever. (NIRV)

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PROTECTION: HIS ROD AND STAFF COMFORT ME

Because the Lord is my shepherd...His rod and His staff comfort me.

The last chapter concerned the valleys of life and the fact that you need not fear because the Shepherd is with you:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
(Psalm 23:4, KJV)

This chapter focuses on the rod and the staff that provide comfort in the valley. The first thing to note is that they are *His* rod and staff. Second is that you need not fear in the valleys of life because the rod and the staff of the Shepherd are there for your protection, correction, and comfort. It is in the valley where they are manifested and function in your behalf.

THE ROD

The rod was used by the shepherd to protect the sheep from anything that might try to attack them. The rod was also used for discipline, to bring a wandering sheep back to the flock. So what are the spiritual analogies that may be drawn from our Shepherd's rod?

The rod provides protection from the enemy. The rod was first mentioned in Exodus chapters 3-10, when Moses

was commanded by God to use his shepherd's rod prophetically in the process of freeing Israel from Egyptian slavery. In this account, the rod represents the power of God against the enemy. When Moses appeared before Pharaoh, he spoke God's Word, stretched out the rod, and the Word of God was miraculously fulfilled. In the climaxing scene of this story of deliverance recorded in Exodus chapter 17, the enemy is in hot pursuit of God's people. Moses stretches out the rod over the waters of the Red Sea, Israel is delivered, and the enemy is destroyed.

In a vision recorded by the Prophet Jeremiah, a rod represented God's fulfilled Word (Jeremiah 1:11-12). The rod of God's Word protects you by its many promises as it demonstrates God's power against the enemies of your soul.

The Bible confirms that your spiritual enemy, Satan, roams around like a roaring lion looking for victims to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He is hot on your heels every day. He wants to take you captive and enslave you in the bondage of sins like immorality, addictions, bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness. This is why you need the rod of your Shepherd, His Word, and supernatural power at work in your life.

Note that Satan is "seeking those he may devour". He has to look for them, because true sheep will not fall victim to him. They have placed themselves under the protection of the Good Shepherd and, as part of His fold, they are safe from the enemy's deception. The rod of God, representing His power, is greater than the power of the enemy (1 John 4:4).

The rod represents the work of Christ. The rod also represents the work of Jesus Christ in your life. At Mara, when Israel needed water to drink but the stream was bitter, God told Moses to cast a branch into the waters and they would be made sweet. The rod represented the Lord Jesus Christ and His substitutionary work at the cross. The Prophet Isaiah declared:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. (Isaiah 11:1-4, KJV)

The “branch” from the root of the house of Jesse is the Lord Jesus Christ who descended from David, the son of Jesse. Through the prophetic inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the prophet speaks further of the work and ministry of this “rod of God”:

*For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
And as a root out of dry ground.
He has no form or comeliness;
And when we see Him,
There is no beauty that we should desire Him.
He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;*

*He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.
(Isaiah 53:2-7, NKJV)*

Through the work of the cross of Jesus Christ, the "bitter waters" caused by sin and the difficult circumstances of life can be made sweet. Our response to the bitter waters of life which we encounter must be to cast the spiritual branch of the Lord Jesus into the waters. When we cast in the "Rod of the Branch of Jesse", the bitter waters of sin and difficult circumstances will be made sweet, even as when Moses cast the branch into the waters of Mara.

The rod is for discipline. Just as a shepherd uses his rod to discipline errant sheep, God uses the "rod" of His Word to discipline His sheep. Discipline is instruction designed to correct, teach, and lead you to a greater objective than your immediate gratification. Often, discipline involves difficult circumstances that are designed to bring you back into the fold if you have strayed. Discipline also results in

a better understanding of God's Word and His ways. The Psalmist said:

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word...Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes...It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. (Psalm 119:67,68,71, KJV)

God told David that his son, Solomon, would be chastened by the rod of men if he departed from the ways of the Lord. This meant that he would experience circumstances that were designed to bring him back to the Lord (1 Samuel 7:14).

The end goal of discipline is restoration, not condemnation:

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:17, KJV)

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul explains that the believer is free from condemnation because of the work of the cross in their lives:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according

to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

(Romans 8:1-5, NKJV)

After denying the Lord three times, Peter was restored and commanded to feed the Shepherd's flock. He was commissioned to continue the work of God and become a leader of the New Testament church. No matter how far you have fallen, if you submit to the discipline of God you can be restored and used to fulfill His purposes. When the prodigal son returned to the Father's house he wasn't punished. He wasn't given old used garments or forced to settle for a lesser position as a servant. He received the Father's best because he was a son who had been restored. The rod of God's discipline restores.

Proverbs 29:15 explains that the rod and reproof bring wisdom. The Bible also confirms that no suffering or discipline is without spiritual purpose. It perfects, establishes, strengthens, and settles you:

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. (1 Peter 5:10, NKJV)

Always remember that behind every natural circumstance of life there is spiritual purpose. The very circumstances about which you are complaining have divine purpose. Instead of asking "why" concerning your problems, perhaps ask "what"? What is God trying to accomplish in your life through these difficult times?

The final mention of the rod of God is found in Revelation 19:15 where it speaks of the rod of the wrath of God in final judgment upon sinful mankind. Do you want to be disciplined now or judged later by God? It is your choice.

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:31-32, KJV)

THE STAFF

The staff is sometimes called the shepherd's crook because it was a long stick with a hook on the end. The crook was just the right size to fit around the neck of a large sheep or the body of a little lamb. The shepherd used the staff to draw sheep to him, guide the sheep in the right path, or restore a fallen sheep. With this implement, the shepherd would correct the sheep, draw them close when they wandered, and lift them out of any crevices into which they might have fallen.

Spiritually, the staff represents God's love, mercy, and guidance. The staff of our Shepherd draws his flock together and reaches out to guide errant sheep and direct them back to the fold. His staff also guides His sheep as they travel down new paths or dangerous roads.

The Bible reveals that the enemy also has a staff--one that oppresses and enslaves. The Prophet Isaiah spoke of how God broke the staff of the oppressor off of Israel and will break the staff of the wicked (Isaiah 9:4; 14:5).

Do you want to be guided by the Shepherd's staff or the staff of the enemy? You will come under the control of one or the other. It is your choice. It is an important decision,

because the staff you choose to place yourself under will affect your eternal destination. If you are under the enemy's staff of oppression, now is the time to have it broken off of your life in the name of Jesus!

This and the previous chapter concerned the valleys of life and the rod and staff of the Shepherd which are manifested there. But spiritually speaking, to where do these difficult paths through the valley lead? What is the destination of suffering and discipline? What is their purpose?

The next verses in Psalm 23 reveals the destination at the end of the valley.

Time to move on again.

Psalm 23
New International Version

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
- 3 He restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.**
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
- 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever. (NIV)

CHAPTER NINE

THE PREPARATION: HE PREPARES A TABLE FOR ME

Because the Lord is my shepherd...He prepares a table for me in the presence of my enemy.

Normally, a soldier who was in enemy territory would gulp down a hasty meal as best he could--if he ate at all. That quick meal might be eaten in a fox hole or a fort where he cowered in fear of being captured or killed.

In Psalm 23 however, God sets up a table right in the middle of the enemy's territory. You need not hunker down and hide. You need not fear. The Shepherd stands guard while you enjoy all of the good things He has prepared for you. The enemy is right at the door, and what does God do? He throws a dinner party and tells you to sit down and eat!

YOU PREPARE...FOR ME

In the natural world, shepherds check the pastures--also known as tablelands--to remove poisonous weeds. They check for predators. They clear out the water holes.

Spiritually, your Shepherd prepares a table for you. He wards off predators. He removes poisonous weeds out of your life and the contaminated waters of bitterness, unforgiveness, etc. He does not call on someone else to do it in His behalf. He personally prepares the table for you. The Lord Himself is your host. He sets a spiritual table with a menu of every promise in His Word and invites you

to come and partake. So take some of everything! Take it all!

A TABLE

Christ prepared meals several times during His earthly ministry. Each “table” He spread is symbolic of the spiritual tables He sets for His sheep:

-The table in the presence of the enemy symbolizes His power to protect and deliver.

-The hillside meal in Capernaum where He fed thousands symbolizes His practical provision for the needs of His flock.

-The Last Supper, with its bread and wine, symbolizes provision for salvation and healing.

-The fish on the shore prepared for His disciples symbolizes provision for ministry. At that meal He commanded Peter to “feed His sheep”.

-The marriage supper, a meal yet to come, symbolizes His provision for eternal life.

Deliverance, protection, provisions for practical needs and your ministry, and eternal life. They are all on the menu!

IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMY

Jesus describes Himself as the door to the sheepfold, guarding against the enemy who is described as a thief and a robber:

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:7-10, KJV)

You can relax and enjoy the Lord's provisions, even in the presence of your enemy. The reason? Jesus is guarding the door. The enemy cannot get past Him! The Good Shepherd stands guard over your life. He declared:

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. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. (John 10:11-15, NKJV)

Your enemy, Satan, is described in this passage as a wolf. He is pictured elsewhere in scripture as a deceptive serpent (Genesis 3); a bird trying to spoil the harvest (Matthew 13); a lion trying attack you (1 Peter 5); and a dragon seeking to destroy (Revelation 12). The Good Shepherd stands guard against all of the deceptions of the enemy.

This does not mean that you will not experience adversity. The Bible states that you will have tribulation in the world,

but that through Christ you can overcome it (1 John 4:4). You live in a sin-filled world where you will experience tragedies and difficulties. Just because you are a believer does not make you immune to trouble, but as a believer, nothing gets to you without going past the Shepherd. And when--not if--you do experience problems, you are not alone. He is there right by your side. He does not abandon you in times of crisis.

Compare Psalm 23:5 with the attitude of the rebellious in Psalm 78:19 who questioned, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" Unbelief asks, "Can God? Faith answers with the assurance that "God can!"

In addition to Satan, your spiritual enemies include the evil world system and your own flesh. The Bible cautions about the world:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (1 John 2:15-16, KJV)

The word "world" has different meanings in Scripture. It can mean the earth or universe in its physical order. It is used to refer to Gentiles which are all nations other than Israel. But the word "world" as used in this passage refers to the present condition of human affairs in opposition to God. It is the system that runs the inhabited earth and it is diametrically opposed to God.

As your enemy, the world is the whole organized system of social, economic, materialistic, and religious philosophies which have their expression through organizations,

personalities, and governments. It is not a specific government, organization, or person, but the worldly system upon which these are based. Satan is called the prince of the world (John 12:31) and the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The word "flesh" as used in Scripture can refer to the actual body of man and beast, but the Bible also uses the word "flesh" to describe the basic sin nature of man. That is the meaning in 1 John 2:15-16. The flesh is the center of willful defiance and rebellion against God. The Apostle Paul acknowledged:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will (to do good) is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (Romans 7:18-19, KJV)

The flesh is a compulsive inner force which expresses itself in rebellion through sin. The words "carnal" and "old man" are also used to describe the flesh. All men have this basic, sinful, and fleshly nature because:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. (Romans 5:12, KJV)

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23, KJV)

The Bible speaks of the lust of the flesh. Lust is "strong desire, soulish emotions, and the natural tendency of man towards evil." Lusting after evil things which will please your fleshly nature is called the "lust of the flesh." It is how Satan attacks from within. It is like an ongoing civil

war within a nation, with your spirit and flesh warring against each other.

When you are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit living in your spirit opposes the lusts of the flesh. Your flesh wars against your regenerated spirit and the Spirit of God within you and the flesh entices you to sinful lusts. This is why you often cannot live the way you desire to live. Paul described this battle between the spirit and the flesh in Romans chapter 7:

I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man (the spirit); But I see another law in my members (the flesh), warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.
(Romans 7:21-23, NKJV)

Lust, or sinful desire, first enters through the natural senses. The eye sees something evil or the ear hears something wicked. A touch, a taste, or even a smell can even foster lust. This is how Satan uses the environment of the world to tempt the flesh. These natural senses trigger evil thoughts and desires in the mind. This is lust and only through the power of the Holy Spirit can you overcome these sinful desires. Paul admonishes:

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.
(Galatians 5:16-17, NKJV)

The world, the flesh, and the devil---pretty powerful enemies. But no need to fear! Jesus said, “*I give you authority...over all the power of the enemy!*” (Luke 10:19, NKJV). Between you and these frightful enemies stands the Good Shepherd who is throwing a spiritual feast. You are invited. The table is loaded with everything you need to be victorious. Enjoy!

Psalm 23
New American Standard Updated Version

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd,
 I shall not want.

- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
 He leads me beside quiet waters.

- 3 He restores my soul;
 He guides me in the paths of righteousness
 For His name's sake.

- 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the
 shadow of death,
 I fear no evil, for You are with me;
 Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

- 5 You prepare a table before me in the
 presence of my enemies;
 You have anointed my head with oil;
 My cup overflows.

- 6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will
 follow me all the days of my life,
 And I will dwell in the house of the Lord
 forever. (NASU)

CHAPTER TEN

THE POWER: HE ANOINTS ME

Because the Lord is my shepherd...He anoints my head with oil.

The Shepherd invites you to His table and then He anoints your head with oil and fills your cup to overflowing. This chapter concerns the anointing. The next chapter explores the overflowing cup.

In Old Testament times, shepherds anointed their sheep to eliminate pests that affected their noses and eyes and could cause blindness or even death. They also anointed them to eliminate scab, an acute form of dermatitis which was spread by infected sheep rubbing their heads together. The anointing also made their heads so slick that they could not fight by head butting and it was used to sooth and heal injuries sustained by the sheep.

Spiritually, oil is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. To "anoint" spiritually means to dedicate or consecrate someone or something by applying oil. The oil of the Holy Spirit anointing is symbolic of light, healing, and setting someone or something apart for service to God.

It is the oil of the Holy Spirit that heals your broken spirit and the wounds and injuries inflicted upon you as you journey through the world. It is the oil of the Spirit that anoints you to face the "pests" of challenging circumstances and difficult people. The Holy Spirit prevents you from butting heads with other sheep in the fold and heals your mind from erroneous thinking. And it

is the Holy Spirit that frees you from sin that would blind you and result in spiritual death. What is your wound? What is pestering you today? Let the anointing flow to it!

Jesus declared that it was the Holy Spirit who anointed Him for service:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, (Luke 4:18, NKJV)

The disciples later recalled...

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him. (Acts 10:38, KJV)

THREE ANOINTINGS

In Bible days, a wealthy homeowner would often have an expensive vessel of perfumed oil by the door. When an important guest or a beloved friend came to visit, the host would dip his hands into that fragrant ointment and anoint the head of the guest. This act meant that they were special, beloved, and wanted. Here is the takeaway truth from this custom: You are anointed by the Shepherd because you are special, beloved, and wanted!

There are three different anointings mentioned in the Old Testament that are natural examples or "types" of spiritual anointings bestowed by your Shepherd to confirm that you are special, beloved, and wanted.

The leper's anointing: Relationship. Leprosy is a dreaded disease which slowly consumes the flesh of its victim. Toes, fingers, and other body parts eventually rot and fall off. In Old Testament times a person with leprosy was called a leper. The leper was banned from his home and community because the disease was extremely contagious. To prevent others from coming in contact with him, he was required to cry out "unclean" wherever he went. Leprosy would slowly eat away his physical body and he would die a painful death.

In the Bible, God uses natural examples to illustrate spiritual truths. Leprosy is an analogy of sin. Just as leprosy destroys the physical body, sin that is not dealt with through salvation will destroy you spiritually. There is no cure for it apart from God.

In the Old Testament law, God gave specific instructions for the cleansing of a person with leprosy, each of which has spiritual application:

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper, then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times

*on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field...He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp...Then the priest shall take one male lamb and offer it as a trespass offering...
(Leviticus 14, portions of verses 1-14, NKJV)*

Each of these actions are symbolic of the cleansing you must experience spiritually: A bird bearing away your guilt as Jesus did when He died for your sin; the acts of repentance and confession; the running water as a symbol of baptism; and the blood offering of a lamb symbolic of Christ's death for the sins of all mankind.

As a final part of this Old Testament ceremony, blood and oil were placed on the ear, thumb, and toe of the leper. The oil was put each place where the blood had been applied. This symbolizes how, through the leper's anointing, the Shepherd wants to cleanse you of sin and through the blood of Jesus and the anointing of the Holy Spirit to enable your ear to hear His voice, your hand to serve Him, and your feet to walk in His ways. The purpose of this leper's anointing of blood and oil is to cleanse you from sin and restore your relationship with Him.

The priest's anointing: Holiness. In Exodus 29 and 30 and in Leviticus 8 instructions are given regarding the anointing of priests to be set apart to God for His service. As spiritual leaders, they were required to live differently than others. God wants you to receive the priest's anointing and be set apart for His service. Like the Old Testament priests, this anointing means you will live differently than

others. Some things you used to do you can no longer do because of the anointing that rests upon you and because...

*...you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should shew forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
(1 Peter 2:9, NKJV)*

As a member of the “royal priesthood” of believers, you are called to live a separated life that reflects God to the world.

The leader's anointing: Position and power. The third type of Old Testament anointing was the leadership anointing for those who would serve as judges, kings, and prophets. The leader's anointing was one which established a leader's God-given position and gave him the power to fulfill that position. Examples are Samuel anointing Saul and David as kings.

The leader's anointing imparted the position and power of the office. With this special anointing, God's Spirit came upon a person so he could properly lead God's people. The New Testament promises this anointing of power to all believers:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8, NKJV)

The fulfillment of this promise is recorded in Acts chapter 2. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the New Testament anointing of power for leadership.

The New Testament leadership structure is described in Ephesians:

And He (Holy Spirit) gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors, and teachers. (Ephesians 4:11)

There is also an anointing reserved for each member of the flock, as the oil of the Holy Spirit equips each sheep with spiritual gifts for service. These gifts are listed in Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:1-16; and 1 Peter 4:7-11.

THE BASIS OF THE ANOINTING

The Shepherd does not anoint on the basis of intelligence, education, experience, or abilities. The anointing is not based on outward appearance, but it is based upon the attitude of the heart.

When Samuel went to the house of Jesse to anoint a new king, he was expecting to choose a man with a regal appearance:

So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him!" But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:6-7, NKJV)

After refusing all of Jesse's older sons, the youngest was called in from the pasture where he was keeping the sheep. Samuel was directed to anoint David because of the attitude

and condition of his heart. The Good Shepherd looks at what you are inside. He also anoints you because He wants to protect you from the enemy and He anoints you for service. Most of all, He anoints you because you belong to Him and He loves you.

You can receive the anointing of God right now. Lift your hands up to the Lord as a symbol of surrender and ask Him to let the oil of His Spirit flow through you to free you from sin, set you apart for His purposes, and empower you for service.

Psalm 23
New Living Translation

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd;
 I have everything I need.
- 2 He lets me rest in green meadows;
 he leads me beside peaceful streams.
- 3 He renews my strength.
 He guides me along right paths,
 bringing honor to his name.
- 4 Even when I walk
 through the dark valley of death,
 I will not be afraid,
 for you are close beside me.
 Your rod and your staff
 protect and comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a feast for me
 in the presence of my enemies.
 You welcome me as a guest,
 anointing my head with oil.
 My cup overflows with blessings.
- 6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will
 pursue me all the days of my life,
 and I will live in the house of the Lord
 forever. (NLT)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PLENTY: HE FILLS MY CUP

Because the Lord is my shepherd...my cup overflows.

This verse refers to a custom in Old Testament times involving a guest's cup. If you wanted the person dining with you to stay awhile, you would let him know this by filling his cup to overflowing. However, if you wanted a person to leave, you would fill his glass half full. When his cup sat empty, it was a signal that it was time for him to go.

Applied spiritually, the overflowing cup indicates that your Shepherd enjoys your company. He wants you to remain with Him, so He fills your cup until it overflows. The Lord invites you to His table in the presence of the enemy, and then fills your cup to overflowing (verse 5). You not only have enough, but more than enough--an overflowing cup! Your spiritual cup is not cracked or leaking. It is full to overflowing!

With what is your cup filled? Amazing spiritual riches which are found in Christ Jesus:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.
(Ephesians 1:3)*

The words "blessed us" means "lavished upon us". Your Shepherd has provided lavish blessings which fill the spiritual "cup" of your life to overflowing! The word "spiritual" clarifies the nature of the riches Paul is

describing. As opposed to material possessions, these riches are in "heavenly places" which refers to the domain of the supernatural--the spiritual realm. "All" means just that: ALL! Paul goes on to list some of these blessings:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:3-14, NKJV)

The blessings listed in this passage include being:

- Blessed with every spiritual blessing.
- Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.
- Predestined to be adopted by Jesus.
- Accepted by God through Jesus.
- Redeemed through the blood of Jesus.
- Forgiven of sin.
- Rich in grace.
- Endued with knowledge of God's plans and purposes.
- Recipients of a spiritual inheritance.
- Sealed by the Holy Spirit.
- Guaranteed an eternal inheritance.

How do you qualify for these blessings? By being a sheep in the fold of the Good Shepherd, Christ Jesus. The word "has" in Ephesians 1:3 means that if you are a believer, these benefits are yours. You just need to claim these blessings as your rightful inheritance. The words "in Christ" are the master key to the blessings described. These overflowing blessings come from the Lord who is your Shepherd.

LOADED WITH BENEFITS

Elsewhere in the Psalms, David expanded on the blessings of the overflowing cup. He declared:

*Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with
benefits, the God of our salvation!
(Psalm 68:19, NKJV)*

The God of your salvation loads you with benefits each day. In Psalm 103, David lists some of these benefits:

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. (Psalm 103:2-18, KJV)

David warned "do not forget the benefits of the Lord". The benefits listed in this passage include:

- Forgiveness.
- Redemption.
- Healing.
- Satisfaction.

- Good things.
- Lovingkindness.
- Tender mercies.
- Grace.
- Father/child relationship.
- Compassion on our humanity.
- Removed transgressions.
- Everlasting mercy and righteousness.

Someone cataloged over 3,000 promises in the Bible. Do you know what these are? If not, you should make it your purpose to find out, because these are part of the lavish blessings with which God desires to fill your cup.

Do you know the many spiritual benefits Paul catalogues in the book of Ephesians? How about the list of blessings in Deuteronomy chapter 28?

If you do not know the promises of God, how can you claim them? It is like having an inheritance of which you have no knowledge. That inheritance would meet every need for your lifetime and all eternity but, because you don't know about it, you can't exert your rightful claim to it. The key to receiving these benefits is in Psalm103:18. They are promised "*to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*"

In Psalm116:12, David questions "*What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?*" In succeeding verses David states that he will take the cup of salvation provided by the Lord; call on the name of the Lord; pay his vows to the Lord; serve the Lord; offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and call upon God's name (verses 12-19).

Do not be a sheep that forgets the benefits provided by your Shepherd. As He fills your cup each day, lift your praise to Him for His overflowing blessings.

GOOD GIFTS FROM GOD

Maybe right now the circumstances of your life are not good. Perhaps you are experiencing great loss, negative circumstances, or physical infirmities and the concept of the "overflowing cup" of the blessings of God seem foreign to you. Jesus said:

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...I am the good shepherd. (John 10:10-11a, KJV)

It is the thief--the enemy of your soul--that steals, kills, and destroys. If something has been lost, stolen, or destroyed in your life, it is the work of the enemy because your Shepherd is good and gives only good gifts. James declared:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (James 1:17, NKJV)

Every good thing in your life--every blessing that fills your cup to overflowing--comes from God. He has not changed. He will not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Just as He filled David's cup to overflowing, He will do the same for you. Right now. Today. In the midst of and in spite of your circumstances.

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus is depicted as standing at the door knocking. He promises that if you open the door, He will come in and dine with you. The choice to open the door of your life to Him is yours.

Each day, you have the opportunity to open the door of your life and spend time "dining" with Jesus. There, in His presence, He will fill your cup to overflowing with spiritual blessings. You will receive everything needed for this day and for a lifetime!

Listen closely and you will hear Him knocking at the door of your heart right now. He is wanting to dine with you spiritually. Open the door of your life and let Him come in.

...And don't forget to bring your empty cup.

Psalm 23
The Darby Translation

- 1 Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
he leadeth me beside still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths
of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou
art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they
comfort me.
- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the
presence of mine enemies; thou hast
anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth
over.
- 6 **Surely, goodness and loving-kindness
shall follow me all the days of my life; and
I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for the
length of the days. (Darby)**

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PROMISE FOR LIFE: HIS GOODNESS AND MERCY FOLLOW ME

Because the Lord is my shepherd...surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

SURELY

The word "surely" means there are "no if, ands, and buts" about it. No exclusions. It speaks of the certainty of what is promised in the remainder of the passage.

The psalmist declared: *"Forever, oh Lord, thy word is settled in heaven"* (Psalm 119:89, KJV). The prophet confirmed:

*God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
(Numbers 23:19, NKJV)*

When God says "surely", He meant exactly that!

GOODNESS

One type of goodness can be taught--the goodness of proper manners, observing rules of society, and regulations for certain situations. But an inward spiritual change is required in order to understand, receive, and practice the other type of goodness which is the goodness of God. This only comes through being born-again by accepting Jesus

Christ as your personal Savior (John 3). This experience makes you a new creature, capable of being filled with the goodness of God:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV)

Goodness is one of the attributes of God as well as a description of His essence. By nature, God is inherently good. David proclaimed that God is...*"My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and He in whom I trust..." (Psalm 144:2, KJV).*

When Moses wanted to see God's glory, the Lord revealed His goodness to him:

And he said, "Please, show me Your glory." Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you..." (Exodus 33:18-19a, NKJV)

The goodness of God is eternal. The psalmist declared: *"...the goodness of God endures continually" (Psalm 52:1, NKJV).*

The earth itself reflects the goodness of God: *"...the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Psalm 33:5, KJV).*

God crowns the year with His goodness--meaning all the blessings of each year are from Him: *"You crown the year with your goodness..." (Psalm 65:11, NKJV).*

The goodness of God is what leads sinners to repentance:

*Or do you despise the riches of His goodness,
forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that
the goodness of God leads you to repentance?
(Romans 2:4, NKJV)*

You are led to repentance by God's goodness, and then His goodness continues to follow you all the days of your life. The blessings bestowed upon you year-after-year confirm it as the Psalmist declares:

*Oh, how great is Your goodness,
Which You have laid up for those who fear You,
Which You have prepared for those who trust in
You In the presence of the sons of men!
(Psalm 31:19, NKJV)*

It is God's goodness that satisfies the longings and spiritual hunger of your soul:

*For He satisfies the longing soul,
And fills the hungry soul with goodness.
(Psalm 107:9, NKJV)*

MERCY

The word "mercy", as used in this passage, refers to the kindness of God as expressed in His dealings with mankind. God's mercy is an attribute that extends from His goodness and is closely related to His love and grace.

God's mercy means that when you deserve punishment, He does not punish you but blesses you instead by extending redemption and forgiveness for your sin.

God is the father of mercies, as mercy originated with Him (2 Corinthians 1:3). He is rich in mercy (Ephesians 2:4). and mercy is associated with His justice (Psalm 101:1); His covenant (1 Kings 8:23; Nehemiah 1:5); and His truth (Psalm 108:4). In essence, mercy is God's character (Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 62:12). God reveals His mercy through forgiveness of sins (Exodus 34:6-7. 1 Timothy 1:13,16) and in salvation through Jesus Christ (Luke 1:50,54,58; Ephesians 2:4). God's mercy is abundant (Psalm 86:5,15); everlasting (1 Chronicles 16:34); and is renewed daily (Lamentations 3:3).

The main point of the Lord's teaching on the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:21-35 is that because we are recipients of such great mercy, we should show similar mercy to others. In this account, the servant who was forgiven a great debt by his master refused to forgive others who owed him lesser debts. The master of this servant rebuked him saying "*...You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?*" (Matthew 18:32-33, NKJV).

The point of this story is that as believers, we should extend to others mercy similar to that which the Shepherd has extended to us. It is...

-The kind of mercy that enabled Joseph to forgive his brothers despite the fact they had sold him into slavery (Genesis 50:19-21).

-The mercy that David showed to Shimei who had cursed him on one of the darkest days of his life (2 Samuel 16:5-14; 19:21-23).

-The mercy extended by Job who prayed for his accusatory and uncompassionate friends (Job 42).

**SHALL FOLLOW ME
ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE**

In the good times and in the bad times, prior to your birth and during all the seasons of your life, the Shepherd's goodness and mercy follows you. The psalmist declares:

*For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully
and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts
of the earth.
Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.
How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
If I should count them, they would be more in
number than the sand;
When I awake, I am still with You.
(Psalm 139:13-18, NKJV)*

God's goodness and mercy began following you while you were in your mother's womb, at the point of conception of life. It will continue to follow you all the days of your life right into eternity. As a sheep of the Lord's pasture, you do not have to ask for goodness and mercy to follow you. His

goodness and mercy are continuously extended to you and, because He is your shepherd, they will surely follow you all the days of your life.

As a sheep belonging to the Good Shepherd, you should also leave behind a legacy of goodness and mercy. What follows you in life? Do you leave behind peace or turmoil? Forgiveness or bitterness? Contentment or conflict? Joy or frustration? Love or hate?

Take a moment and look behind you. For sure, His goodness and mercy are following you. Just check to be sure that you are leaving behind a similar legacy. Are goodness and mercy following in your footsteps?

Psalm 23
Young's Literal Translation

- 1 Jehovah [is] my shepherd, I do not lack,
- 2 In pastures of tender grass He causeth me to lie down, By quiet waters He doth lead me.
- 3 My soul He refresheth, He leadeth me in paths of righteousness, For His name's sake,
- 4 Also--when I walk in a valley of death-shade, I fear no evil, for Thou [art] with me, Thy rod and Thy staff--they comfort me.
- 5 Thou arranges before me a table, Over-against my adversaries, Thou hast anointed with oil my head, My cup is full!
- 6 Only--goodness and kindness pursue me, All the days of my life, **And my dwelling [is] in the house of Jehovah, For a length of days! (YLT)**

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE PROMISE FOR ETERNITY: HE WILL TAKE ME TO BE WITH HIM FOREVER

Because the Lord is my shepherd...I will dwell in His house forever. Time to meditate on this wonderful closing promise of Psalm 23.

I WILL DWELL

In the natural world, sheep are continually moving. They never settle down and stay in one place very long. The Lord's spiritual sheep, however, are invited to settle down permanently in His house. You will not be a temporary guest in His house. As a true believer, you are guaranteed that you will dwell there forever.

The psalmist makes a powerful concluding declaration: "I will." Not "I might", or "I plan to", or "It is possible that I will". He makes a positive affirmation of faith that can be echoed by all believers. The word "will" indicates both the present and future. I will dwell in His house now and in the future--forever. The word "dwell" means to "inhabit permanently as one's abode, to abide with, and to become one with."

IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

The word "house" refers to a fixed and permanent dwelling place as distinguished from the tents which were commonly

used for homes in Bible times. The phrase “the house of the Lord” as used in the Bible simply means the place where God’s presence dwells. Three different meanings are derived from the word “house” as used in this passage.

The **first** meaning identifies the biblical Tabernacle and Temple as permanent places of worship. All believers should belong to a “house of the Lord”. That “house” may range from a huge mega-church to a small group of believers meeting in a home or even out under a tree somewhere. Wherever sheep gather together with their Shepherd, they are dwelling in His house in His presence:

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:19-20, KJV)

The **second** meaning of the house of the Lord refers to the fact that as a true believer, Christ’s presence abides in you:

*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?
(1 Corinthians 6:19, NKJV)*

The Lord dwells with you now in the earthly temple of your body. Someday soon, He will take you to dwell forever in His presence.

The **third** meaning of the house of the Lord refers to Heaven, the eternal dwelling place of all true believers. Jesus said:

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 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. And where I go you know, and the way you know. (John 14:1-4, NKJV)

Jesus speaks with the same certainty as the psalmist by declaring, “I will” prepare a place for you and “I will” return to take you to my house. Not “I might return” or “I will come back based on your conduct”. Rather, “I will come again for you”. For sure and for certain!

What will the eternal house of the Lord be like? What will you be like? Here are some biblical facts to prepare you for your eternal home.

-God created Heaven.

His creative acts are recorded in Genesis 1:1-8. See also Psalm 90:1-4; Psalm 100:5; Matthew 5:16; Revelation 1:8.

-The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit lived in Heaven from the beginning.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. (1 John 5:7, KJV)

For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place...” (Isaiah 57:17, KJV)

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. (1 John 5:7-8, KJV)

-Jesus came to Earth from Heaven.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 6:35, KJV)

-Jesus returned to Heaven after His resurrection.

*Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God. (Luke 5:50-53, KJV)
(See also Psalm 68:18; Acts 1:9-11.)*

First Peter 3:22 indicates that Jesus is now seated at God's right hand where He is constantly making intercession for believers (Romans 8:34). He continually prays for you because He wants to be sure you come to dwell with Him forever in the Father's house.

-Heaven is where a believer goes when he leaves this world.

Unless Jesus returns to earth first, you will experience both physical death and subsequent resurrection to eternal life. When you die, your spirit will leave your body. Your body will go into the ground to return to the dust from which it came (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The phrase “fall asleep” as used in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 is a euphemism for death which describes the outward appearance of one's body when they die. The physical part will sleep until the resurrection, but the spiritual parts--the consciousness and true being--go immediately into the presence of the Lord:

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:8, KJV)

Jesus depicted both Lazarus and the rich man as conscious in eternity immediately after they died, one in paradise and one in torment (Luke 16:22-31). Many other passages make it clear that there is no intermediary state such as soul sleep or purgatory. Jesus told the thief on the cross, “*Today you will be with me in Paradise*” (Luke 23:43). Paul said that to be absent from the body means you are present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Paul explains in detail:

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened--not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (2 Corinthians 5:1-9, NKJV)

-Your body will be resurrected and reunited with living believers when Christ returns to earth.

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, NKJV)

-You will have a new body.

Your new body will be recognizable. After the resurrection, Christ's disciples recognized Him (Luke 14:15; 22:29-30; Matthew 8:11. John 21:4-15). At the transfiguration,

Moses and Elijah knew each other and were recognized by those observing the manifestation.

In Heaven:

- Your new body will be like Christ's resurrected body: 1 John 3:2.
- You will be able to eat and drink: Luke 24:41-43; John 21:12-13.
- The spirit will rule your life instead of the flesh: 1 Corinthians 15:44, 49.
- Your body will be unlimited by time, gravity, or space: Luke 24:31; John 20:19, 26.
- It will be an eternal body: 2 Corinthians 5:1.
- It will be a glorious body: Romans 8:18.
- It will be a spiritual body: 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.
- You will be known by others and have personal relationships: Mark 10:29-30.

-You will be aware of what is happening on earth.

The Bible indicates we are surrounded by a cloud of spiritual witnesses, which indicates that those gone to Heaven before us witness what occurs on earth (Hebrews 12:1). When Samuel appeared to Saul, he knew what had occurred since his death (1 Samuel 28:3-8 and 16-19). Residents of heaven rejoice over salvations here on earth (Luke 15:7). At the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about the redemptive plan that was to occur on earth.

-There will be a spiritual separation of sheep and goats.

The Bible refers to those who know the Shepherd as sheep and to those who are not part of His fold as goats:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...'
(Matthew 25:31-34, NKJV)

-You will live in a new heaven and earth.

Believers can look forward to a new heaven and earth:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4, KJV)

And as a sheep of His pasture, you shall dwell in Heaven, in His house...

FOREVER

“Forever” means permanently, without end, for length of days for time and eternity.

The Good Shepherd promises:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. (John 10:27-29, KJV)

When you accepted Christ as your Savior, He came to dwell with you permanently:

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (John 14:23, KJV)

The Shepherd is not a temporary tenant or an overnight guest. He dwells with you permanently.

Someday soon, He will move you from your house to His. He 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14:2-3, KJV)

There, in Heaven, you will be with the Good Shepherd.
Forever.

“The sheep are led by many a way, sometimes through sweet meadows, sometimes limping along sharp-flinted, dusty highways, sometimes high up over rough, rocky mountain-passes, sometimes down through deep gorges, with no sunshine in their gloom; but they are ever being led to one place, and when the hot day is over they are gathered into one fold, and the sinking sun sees them safe, where no wolf can come, nor any robber climb up any more, but all shall rest for ever under the Shepherd’s eye.” Alexander MacLaren

EPILOGUE

THE POSTSCRIPT

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails given by one Shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. (Ecclesiastes 12:11-12, NIV)

Psalm 23 contains divinely inspired words given by one Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. These sacred words are like goads, designed to stimulate you to action. They are like firmly embedded nails upon which you can securely hang your entire life and your eternal destiny. Do not add to them. Do not take from them. They are complete--all that you need to live successfully as a sheep of His pasture.

If you do not know the Lord as your shepherd, you may have had difficulty understanding what you have read in this book. As explained in Chapter One, the promises of Psalm 23 are for those who know the Shepherd and have made Him the Lord of their lives. This Psalm is a spiritual revelation that can only be understood by those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and joined the flock of His pasture. If you do not yet know Him, the Shepherd is searching for you. If you are tired of wandering lost and alone in this barren world, read Chapter One again and follow the instructions on how to make Him your Shepherd. Then reread this book.

If you know the Lord as your Shepherd, then you are part of that great spiritual flock that spans the globe and the realms of time and eternity. Every promise of this beloved Psalm 23 is yours!

As a member of the Shepherd's flock, you also have a responsibility to fulfill the mission of Jesus who declared: *"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd"* (John 10:16). There are many lost sheep around the world who are waiting to hear about the Shepherd. We must take the good news of the Gospel to them.

As you follow your shepherd along the pathways leading to your eternal destination, you will experience various seasons of life and each one of them is represented in this Psalm: The springtime of your youth when you are in the green pastures; the challenging climbs of summer in the mountains; the autumn of rich spiritual harvests; and the winter times of difficulty. You will find that in every season of life, your Good Shepherd is with you.

And you can be assured that "surely", as this Psalm confirms, when you come to the end of this trail of life, you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Be watching for me, for "surely" I will see you there!

Patricia Hulsey, Author

*The Lamb on the Throne will shepherd them, will lead them
to spring waters of Life.
And God will wipe every last tear from their eyes.
(Revelation 7:17, MSG)*

APPENDIX ONE

STUDY QUESTIONS

Introduction:

1. What is the purpose of this study?
2. Explain the relationship of Psalms 22, 23, and 24.
3. Who wrote Psalm 23?
4. What spiritual analogy is used in Psalm 23?
5. Who is identified as the spiritual Shepherd?
6. Who are the sheep in this spiritual analogy?
7. How is the pathway of the Shepherd and His sheep described?
8. For whom is the Good Shepherd continuously seeking?

Chapter One: The Person: He Is My Shepherd

1. What are the analogies used in this Psalm to depict the Lord and His followers?
2. Summarize the meaning of the words “the Lord” as used in Psalm 23:1.
3. What does the word “is” denote?
4. Why is the word “my” important in relation to the Good Shepherd?
5. What does the name Jehovah-Rohi mean?
6. Why is the use of Jehovah-Rohi significant?
7. Give a reference that confirms Jesus is your Shepherd.
8. What spiritual truth is revealed in Isaiah 53:6 regarding sheep?
9. What is the spiritual sheepfold?
10. Who is the only door to the sheepfold?

11. Summarize what you learn about:
 - The Good Shepherd.
 - The Compassionate Shepherd.
 - The Comforting Shepherd.
 - The Saving Shepherd.
 - The Living Shepherd.
 - The Seeking Shepherd.
 - The Concerned Shepherd.
 - The Chief Shepherd.
12. How did Shepherds mark their sheep so they could be identified? Explain the spiritual analogy.
13. List the things that were lost through sin and explain how Jesus, our Good Shepherd, has restored each loss.
14. List and summarize the steps to being born-again and becoming part of the Shepherd's flock.

**Chapter Two: The Provision:
 He Provides My Needs**

1. Give some biblical references that confirm the Good Shepherd's commitment to provide for His sheep.
2. Summarize the false teaching regarding the promise "I shall not want."
3. According to James 4:3, what is one reason for unanswered prayer in regards to provision?
4. What does the phrase "I shall not want" mean in terms of provision of basic needs?
5. Explain what the phrase "I shall not want" means in terms of healing.
6. Explain what the term "I shall not want" means in terms of conflicts.
7. Why do sheep wander away from the flock? Explain the spiritual analogy.

8. What biblical example is given of a group of people who were classic examples of discontent?
9. Summarize John 10:10 in regards to the losses experienced in life.
10. When you are dissatisfied and complaining, what are you actually doing in regards to God's provision for you?
11. Define contentment.
12. According to Philippians 4:11-13, what had Paul learned regarding contentment?
13. Summarize what Paul says regarding contentment in 1 Timothy 6:6-12.
14. Using the teaching under "Spiritual Contentment", list the total provisions of Psalm 23.
15. Using the teaching under "Spiritual Contentment", list the compound names of God and explain how each one relates to Psalm 23 and the phrase "I shall not want."

Chapter Three: The Peace:
He Makes Me Lie Down

1. According to Ephesians 2:14-17, who secured your peace? Summarize this passage.
2. What is implied by the word "makes" in the phrase "makes me lie down"?
3. What does the word for "pasture" mean?
4. Where does a good shepherd make his sheep lie down? Apply this spiritually.
5. What is peace *with* God?
6. What is the peace *of* God?
7. Sheep in the natural world will lie down only if they are free from four things. List these and apply each one spiritually.

Chapter Four: The Pathway:
He Leads Me

1. What are two basic necessities for sheep in the natural world?
2. What four facts are confirmed by the statement that the Shepherd leads you?
3. What various voices are in the world clamoring for your attention?
4. How can you come to know the Lord's voice?
5. Define the two words used for "word" in relation to receiving to a word from God.
6. Using Hebrews 5:13-14, explain the spiritual process that will help you know God's voice.
7. Why do sheep fear rushing water?
8. What does the word "still" mean in this passage?
9. Using the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4, explain the meaning of the spiritual water of which we must drink.
10. What does John 4 teach about true worship?
11. How can you continue to drink of Living Waters?
12. Who is the Living Water?
13. What invitation does the Prophet Isaiah give in chapter 55:1 to those who are spiritually thirsty?

Chapter Five: The Propitiation:
He Restores My Soul

1. What happens in the natural world when sheep become cast down?
2. List four reasons why sheep become cast down. Apply each of these spiritually.
3. What does the phrase "restores my soul" mean?
4. What does the word "soul" mean?
5. Who restores spiritual sheep who are cast down and how is it done according to Hebrews 4:12?

6. Summarize the promises of Joel 2:25-27.
7. Summarize the restoration described in Psalm 18:16-19.
8. What does the word “propitiation” mean?
9. What warning is given in 1 Corinthians 10:12?
10. How can one avoid falling spiritually?
11. What assurance is given in Psalm 37:23-24?
12. Summarize the “I will” promises made by the Shepherd in Ezekiel 34:11-16.

Chapter Six: The Purity:
 He Leads Me In Paths Of
 Righteousness

Using the bold-faced sub-headings in this chapter, answer the following questions.

He leads me.

1. What characteristic of sheep is revealed in Isaiah 53:6?
2. Why do we want to control our own lives?
3. What does the Bible say regarding the way that “seems right” to man?
4. According to Jeremiah 10:23, why do you need a guide in life?
5. What does the psalmist caution in Psalm 32:9?
6. What do you learn about the Lord’s direction in Proverbs 3:5-7?
7. What should you do if you have been heading the wrong way instead of following the Shepherd?

In paths.

8. What is the word for “path” used in this passage?
9. How does the word “path” as used here relate to Israeli shepherds and their sheep?
10. Summarize the spiritual application of the word “path” as used in this chapter.

Of righteousness.

11. What is the definition of righteousness as used in this passage?
12. What does living righteously entail?
13. What is stated regarding righteousness in Romans 3:20-24?
14. What does Paul state regarding justification in Galatians 2:16?
15. What does Ephesians 2:8-9 reveal regarding righteousness?
16. Read Hebrews 11. Why were some of these believers delivered and others were not?

For His name's sake.

17. How did Old Testament believers honor God's name when speaking or writing it?
18. What is the first priority in the prayer pattern given by Jesus in Matthew 6:9?
19. What does Exodus 20:7 command regarding God's name?
20. What was the penalty for blaspheming God's name in Old Testament times?
21. List various ways that the name of God can be taken in vain.
22. Explain the importance of the names of God and Jesus in relation to our divine mission as detailed in Matthew 28:18-29 and Mark 16:17-18.

**Chapter Seven: The Presence:
He Is With Me In The Valley**

Using the bold-faced sub-headings in this chapter, answer the following questions.

Though I walk through.

1. What assurance does the word "through" give in regards to the valleys of life?

2. As used in this passage, what does the word “through” mean?
3. Why is the word “walk” used to describe our spiritual journey through difficulties of life?

The Valley of the Shadow of Death.

4. Describe the actual Valley of the Shadow of Death in Israel.
5. What do you learn about the word “shadow” in this passage?
6. What has the Shepherd done in regards to the threat of spiritual death in the valleys of life?
7. What has the Shepherd done in regards to the threat of physical death in the valleys of life?
8. What ultimate event in the lives of believers confirms their faith?
9. Describe Stephen’s death.
10. What promise is given in this section for those who worry about the future in their valley experiences?
11. What promise is given in this section for those who are confused?
12. What promise is given for those who have experienced loss?
13. What promise is given those who are anxious?
14. What promise is given for those who are depressed and brokenhearted?
15. What promise is given to those fearing for their safety?
16. What promise is given to those facing an enemy in their valley?
17. If you are experiencing sleepless nights because of your valley, what is a good promise to claim?

I will fear no evil.

18. How did fear originate?
19. What is the difference between rational and irrational fear?

20. What four specific dangers are mentioned in Psalm 91:5-6 that you need not fear?
21. What assurance does Hebrews 4:15-16 provide in times of need?
22. According to 2 Timothy 1:7, how can fear be eliminated?

For you are with me.

23. Who accompanies you in the valleys of life?
24. What does Philippians 4:4-7 admonish?
25. Summarize the promises in Genesis 28:15, John 14:18, and Hebrews 13:5.
26. Summarize what David said regarding the omnipresence of God in Psalm 139:5-12.

Chapter Eight: The Protection:
His Rod And Staff Comfort Me

1. List three purposes of the Shepherd's rod and apply them spiritually.
2. What was the purpose of a shepherd's staff? Apply this spiritually.
3. What is taught in this chapter regarding the enemy's staff. See Isaiah 9:4 and 14:5.
4. How will your spiritual destination be affected by the staff under which you place yourself?

Chapter Nine: The Preparation:
He Prepares A Table For Me

1. How would a soldier normally eat when in enemy territory?
2. What does the Lord do in the presence of the enemy and what does He tell you to do?

Using the bold-faced sub-headings in this chapter, answer the following questions.

You prepare...for me.

3. How do shepherds in the natural world prepare the tablelands for the sheep?
Apply this spiritually.
4. What does the Lord prepare for you in the presence of the enemy?

A table.

5. List the instances during Christ's ministry when He prepared meals and apply these spiritually.
6. What is "on the menu" at the Good Shepherd's table?

In the presence of my enemy.

7. How does Jesus describe Himself in John 10:7-15?
8. Why can you relax despite the presence of the enemy?
9. Compare the attitude of the rebellious in Psalm 78:19 with that of the sheep in Psalm 23:5 in regards to the Shepherd's ability to "set a table".
10. How is the enemy described in 1 John 2:15-16?
11. What does the word "world" mean in 1 John 2:15-16?
12. What does the word "flesh" mean in 1 John 2:15-16?
13. Summarize Paul's dilemma as described in Romans 7:21-23.
14. How can one overcome the flesh according to Galatians 5:16-17?
15. According to Luke 10:19, why do you not need to fear the world, the flesh, and the devil?

Chapter Ten: The Power:
He Anoints Me

1. Why did Shepherds anoint the heads of their sheep with oil? Apply this spiritually.
2. What does oil symbolize in the Bible?
3. Summarize the statements regarding the anointing of Jesus in Luke 4:18 and Acts 10:38.
4. Describe the custom of homeowners in Bible days in relation to their anointing of guests. Apply this spiritually.
5. List and summarize three anointings God wants you to experience.
6. Using 2 Samuel 16:6-7 as an example, explain the basis of God's anointing.

Chapter Eleven: The Plenty:
He Fills My Cup

1. Explain the Old Testament custom of the overflowing cup and apply this custom spiritually.
2. What does Ephesians 1:3 state regarding spiritual blessings?
3. What do the words "blessed us" mean in Ephesians 1:3?
4. What does the word "has" indicate in regards to the blessings of God?
5. What is significant about the words "in Christ" in regards to the blessings of God?
6. List the spiritual blessings Paul describes in Ephesians 1:1-14.
7. How do you qualify to receive the blessings of God?
8. Using Psalm 103:2-18, summarize what is stated regarding the benefits of the Lord.

9. What does David question in Psalm 116:12 and what answer does he give in verses 12-19?
10. According to John 10:10, what does the enemy want to do in your life? What does Jesus come to do?
11. What does James 1:17 teach regarding blessings in life?
12. What promise is made in Revelation 3:20? How can you apply this spiritually in your life?

**Chapter Twelve: The Promise For Life:
His Goodness And Mercy
Follow Me**

Using the bold-faced sub-headings in this chapter, answer the following questions.

Surely:

1. Define the word “surely” as used in this passage.
2. What does Psalm 119:89 state regarding God’s Word?
3. What does Numbers 23:19 state regarding God’s truthfulness?

Goodness:

4. Define two types of goodness.
5. What is required to receive the goodness of God?
6. What did God reveal to Moses when He asked to see His glory?
7. Summarize what you learn about goodness in the following passages:

-Psalm 52:1

-Psalm 107:8,15,21,31

-Psalm 144:2

-Psalm 33:5

-Psalm 65:11

-Romans 2:4

-Psalm 31:19

-Psalm 107:9

And mercy:

8. Define the word “mercy” as used in this passage.
9. Summarize what you learn about mercy in the following references:
 - 2 Corinthians 1:3
 - Ephesians 2:4
 - Psalm 101:1
 - 1 Kings 8:23; Nehemiah 1:5
 - Psalm 108:4
 - Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 62:12
 - Exodus 34:7; 1 Timothy 1:13,16
 - Luke 1:50,54,58; Ephesians 2:4
 - Psalm 86:5,15
 - 1 Chronicles 16:34
 - Lamentations 3:3
10. Summarize the Lord’s teaching on the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:21-35. What is the main point?
11. Explain how mercy was extended in each of the following passages:
 - Genesis 50:19-21
 - 2 Samuel 16:5-14; 19:21-23
 - Job 42

Shall follow me all the days of my life.

12. According to Psalm 139:13-18, when did God start extending His goodness and mercy to you?
13. As a believer, what should follow you as you go through life and what spiritual legacy should you leave when you depart from this world?

Chapter Thirteen: The Promise For Eternity:
 He Will Take Me To Be With
 Him Forever

Using the bold-faced sub-headings in this chapter, answer the following questions.

I will dwell:

1. What final declaration does the psalmist make in verse 6?
2. What does the word “will” indicate?
3. Contrast the movement of sheep in the natural world with what spiritual sheep should do.

In the house of the Lord:

4. What are three meanings of the “house of the Lord”?
5. Who created Heaven?
6. Who resided in Heaven from the beginning?
7. Who came to earth from Heaven?
8. Where did Jesus return when He left the earth?
9. What is Jesus doing in Heaven now?
10. Explain what happens when a believer dies.
11. What does the Bible reveal in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 regarding the resurrection?
12. Describe what your resurrected body will be like.
13. Will you be aware of what is happening on earth when you are in Heaven? Provide scriptural support for your answer.
14. What new things are being created by God in your eternal home?

Forever:

15. What does the word “forever” mean as used in this passage?
16. What promise does the Good Shepherd make in John 10:27-29?
17. What promise did Jesus give in John 14:23?

Further Study Questions.

1. In John 10:10-14, hirelings are contrasted with the good shepherd. Summarize the contrasts between the hireling and the Good Shepherd.
2. “Under-shepherds” is a term for those God places as leaders over His sheep. What warnings are given to the under-shepherds in the following passages?
 - Jeremiah 23:1
 - Jeremiah 25:34
 - Zechariah 10:3
 - Zechariah 11:17
3. Read Ezekiel 34 and compare and contrast it to Psalm 23.
4. What do you learn about the conduct of evil spiritual shepherds in the following verses of Ezekiel 34:
 - Verse 2
 - Verse 3
 - Verse 4
 - Verse 5
 - Verse 6
 - Verse 8
 - Verse 21
5. What do you learn about the provisions of the Good Shepherd in Ezekiel 34?

APPENDIX TWO

INDEX OF SCRIPTURES

THE LORD AS OUR SHEPHERD

Genesis 49:24

But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

Numbers 27:17

Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them Out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

Psalm 80:1-2

To the chief Musician upon Sho-shan'-nim-E'-duth, A Psalm of A'-saph. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.

Ecclesiastes 12:11

The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

Isaiah 40:11

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Isaiah 63:11

Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?

Jeremiah 31:10

Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

Ezekiel 34:12

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

Ezekiel 34:23

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

Ezekiel 37:24

And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

Matthew 9:36

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Matthew 25:32

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

Matthew 26:31

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Mark 6:34

And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

Mark 14:27

And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

John 10:2

But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

John 10:12

But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

John 10:14

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

John 10:16

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Hebrews 13:20

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

1 Peter 2:25

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

1 Peter 5:4

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

GOD'S PEOPLE AS SHEEP

2 Samuel 24:17

And David spake unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

1 Kings 22:17

And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

1 Chronicles 21:17

And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

2 Chronicles 18:16

Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master; let them return therefore every man to his house in peace.

Psalm 44:22

Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

Psalm 74:1

O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

Psalm 78:52

But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

Psalm 79:13

So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

Psalm 95:7

For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand...

Psalm 100:3

Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Psalm 119:176

I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Jeremiah 50:6

My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place.

Ezekiel 34:6

My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Ezekiel 34:11

For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

Ezekiel 34:12

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

Matthew 9:36

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Matthew 10:6

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 10:16

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Matthew 12:11

And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

Matthew 12:12

How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

Matthew 15:24

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 18:12

How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

Matthew 18:13

And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

Matthew 25:32

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

Matthew 25:33

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Matthew 26:31

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Mark 6:34

And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

Mark 14:27

And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

Luke 15:4

What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

Luke 15:6

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

John 10:2

But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

John 10:3

To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

John 10:4

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

John 10:7

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

John 10:8

All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

John 10:12

But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

John 10:13

The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

John 10:14

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

John 10:15

As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 10:16

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

John 10:26

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

John 10:27

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

John 21:16

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

John 21:17

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Acts 8:32

The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth.

Romans 8:36

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Hebrews 13:20

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

1 Peter 2:25

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Revelation 18:13

And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

GOD'S PEOPLE AS A FLOCK

Psalm 77:20

Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Psalm 78:52

But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

Psalm 80:1

To the chief Musician upon Sho-shan'-nim-E'-duth, A Psalm of A'-saph. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.

Song of Solomon 1:7-8

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

Isaiah 40:11

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Isaiah 63:11

Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?

Jeremiah 13:17

But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive.

Jeremiah 13:20

Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north: where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?

Jeremiah 23:3

And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

Jeremiah 31:10

Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

Jeremiah 31:12

Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

Ezekiel 34:5

And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

Ezekiel 34:6

My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Ezekiel 34:8

As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock.

Ezekiel 34:12

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

Ezekiel 34:15

I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel 34:17

And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.

Ezekiel 34:31

And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel 36:37

Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.

Ezekiel 36:38

As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord.

Amos 7:15

And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

Micah 2:12

I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.

Micah 4:8

And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

Micah 7:14

Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

Zechariah 9:16

And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.

Zechariah 11:7

And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.

two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.

Zechariah 11:11

And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.

Matthew 26:31

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Luke 12:32

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Acts 20:28

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Peter 5:2

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.

1 Peter 5:3

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

THE LAMB OF GOD

The Old Testament sacrifice for sin--the offering of a lamb--was symbolic of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sins of all mankind. The following references refer to the sacrificial lamb as symbolic of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Genesis 22:7-9

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

Exodus 12:3-4

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Jeremiah 11:19

But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.

John 1:29

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 1:36

And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

Acts 8:32

The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth.

1 Peter 1:19

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Revelation 5:6

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Revelation 5:8

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Revelation 5:12

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Revelation 5:13

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Revelation 6:1

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

Revelation 6:16

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:9

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

Revelation 7:10

And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Revelation 7:14

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and

have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:17

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Revelation 12:11

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Revelation 13:8

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:11

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

Revelation 14:1

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

Revelation 14:4

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Revelation 14:10

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his

indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

Revelation 15:3

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Revelation 17:14

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Revelation 19:7

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

Revelation 19:9

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Revelation 21:14

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Revelation 21:22-23

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Revelation 22:1

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Revelation 22:3

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.

ADMONITIONS TO THE UNDER-SHEPHERDS

“Under-shepherds” is a term used to describe the men and women who are leaders over the flock of God as pastors, bishops, elders, etc. The following verses are admonitions to those who are charged with caring for the flock of God.

Jeremiah 23:1

Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord.

Jeremiah 25:34

Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.

Jeremiah 25:35

And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.

Jeremiah 25:36

A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the Lord hath spoiled their pasture.

Jeremiah 50:6

My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place.

Ezekiel 34:6

My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Ezekiel 34:8

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock.

Ezekiel 34:10

Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

Ezekiel 34:19

And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

Ezekiel 34:22

Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

Zechariah 10:2

For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

Zechariah 10:3

Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

Zechariah 11:4

Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter.

Zechariah 11:15

And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

Zechariah 11:16

For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.

Zechariah 11:17

Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

Acts 20:29

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

1 Peter 5:2-3

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.