

# MY SHEPHERD

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THE COMFORT OF PSALM 23

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STUDY GUIDE

## **NO OTHER SHEPHERD**

**Focus Text: Psalm 23:1**

“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

### **COMMENTARY**

In his commentary, Charles Spurgeon writes of this psalm, “This is the pearl of psalms whose soft and pure radiance delights every eye.”<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that this psalm is one of the most often quoted and referenced psalms. David’s words about God being his shepherd are extremely comforting because of the refuge that is found as one of his sheep.

David makes a bold claim in the first verse of this psalm, “Yahweh is my shepherd.” The creator of all things is carefully guiding David through his life. The great “I Am” has the time to care for his individual sheep. While he knows the whole flock, he deeply cares for each one individually. The result of God being our shepherd is that David “shall not want” (ESV); in other words, he shall “lack nothing” (NIV). When God is our shepherd, everything we could ever need or want is found in him. Full satisfaction is found when we rest in the truth that God leads, protects, and knows his people just as a shepherd knows his sheep.

### **TRACKING THEOLOGICAL THEMES**

- Isaiah 40:11
- John 10:11
- 1 Peter 2:25

### **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

- How does the fact that God leads us like a shepherd impact your day-to-day life?
- What is the relationship between a shepherd and a sheep? What about this relationship applies to your relationship with Christ?
- Do you feel like you lack nothing because God is your shepherd? Why or why not?
- Read Psalm 22. How does this psalm impact your understanding of Psalm 23?

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<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, Chp. 23,  
<https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=spur&b=19&c=23>.



## WEEK TWO

### A SHEPHERD WHO MAKES ME SAFE

**Focus Text: Psalm 23:2-3**

“He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

#### COMMENTARY

Commentator Derek Kidner writes about this psalm, “God would not have taken on a flock, a family, if he had not intended that he and they should be bound up with one another.”<sup>2</sup>

God’s plan as a shepherd is to invite his sheep into his family to experience life with him. It is in these verses that we see what makes Yahweh such a good shepherd to his sheep. He leads them through a healthy land that contains all they could need for life. The green pastures and still waters offer a resting place for weary and troubled souls. All throughout Scripture, we see that God invites his people into land that will offer rest similar to the land that was the foundation for the Garden of Eden.

Verse 3 offers good news to the broken-down soul as David reminds himself that God “restores my soul” (ESV) or “he refreshes my soul” (NIV). Both translations are good news for those who follow the Good Shepherd. When our souls are restored and refreshed, we find ourselves walking in the righteous path that the Shepherd guides us on. Our restoration and righteous living have a purpose beyond us found at the end of verse 3—all of this takes place for the sake of his name. All glory, honor, and praise are directed to the name of our Good Shepherd.

#### TRACKING THEOLOGICAL THEMES

- Psalm 5:8
- Ezekiel 34:14
- Revelation 7:17

#### APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- Do you experience the type of rest described in these verses? Why or why not?
- Describe a time in your life when you felt like you were walking with the Good Shepherd in green pastures. What contributed to this time of peace in your life?
- How would your soul benefit from the restoration and refreshing described in verse 3?

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<sup>2</sup> Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries vol 15: Psalms 1-72 an Introduction and Commentary*, (London: IVP, 1973), Book 1, chap. 23.



## WEEK THREE

# A SHEPHERD THROUGH THE VALLEY

Focus Text: Psalm 23:4

“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.”

## COMMENTARY

In his commentary of Psalm 23:4, William S. Plummer writes, “Our Shepherd walked through this valley in the days of his flesh. He entered the grave itself. He knows how necessary to our support is the divine presence, in our trials and in our dying agonies.”<sup>3</sup>

Plummer’s words echo the hope we see in this verse for we have all endured various trials. There are certainly seasons when the apt description of our life is that we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death. The comfort we have is that Christ has walked through this valley before us. He has walked through the rejection of men on his way to die for them.

When we feel as though we are close to death, we can remember that Christ is with us. He shepherds us through the green pastures and through the darkest valleys all the same. In these times, we see God’s comfort on maximum display. It is in our lowest valleys that we are desperate enough to see that our only hope is that God is with us. And when he is with us, there is no evil to fear.

## TRACKING THEOLOGICAL THEMES

- Job 10:21-22
- Isaiah 43:2
- 2 Corinthians 1:9-10

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- When was the last time you felt like you were in the valley of the shadow of death?
- According to this verse, how do you experience God’s comfort?
- How does the fact that Christ has gone through the valley of death impact the way you experience trials and suffering?
- Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11. What was the purpose of Paul’s close encounter with death?

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<sup>3</sup>William S. Plumer, *Psalms: A Critical and Expository Commentary With Doctrinal and Practical Remarks*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1867), 314.



## WEEK FOUR

### A SHEPHERD WHO BLESSES ME

Focus Text: Psalm 23:5-6

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

#### COMMENTARY

This psalm offers great hope to the believer. So much so that David, the author, says that he lacks nothing—there is nothing else that he needs or wants. However, in these last verses, we see the ultimate benefit of being incorporated into the Shepherd’s flock.

In his writings about these verses, John Calvin says, “[David] plainly affirms, that the end which he contemplated in all the benefits which God had conferred upon him was, that he might dwell in the house of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> Out of all the benefits of having God as our shepherd, the best one is that we are able to dwell with him. To dwell with the Lord is both a miracle and our only hope.

Not only do we get to dwell with the Lord but the blessings of following the Good Shepherd chase us down. The phrase “goodness and mercy shall follow me” is a great reason to rejoice. The verb that is used to signify “follow” is an active verb—meaning that goodness and mercy are chasing us down and pursuing us. The favor of God consumes his people as the greatest blessing.

#### TRACKING THEOLOGICAL THEMES

- Psalm 21:4
- Luke 7:46
- Revelation 21:3

#### APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- What do you think it means that God will prepare a table in the presence of your enemies?
- How do you dwell with the Lord while on earth?
- How would you summarize Psalm 23 in one or two sentences?
- How does Psalm 23 encourage you?

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<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume IV*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999) 399.

