

The King Needs A Shepherd

PSALM 23:1-3

*The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake. Psalm 23:1-3*

Close to 4000 years ago King Hammurabi of Babylon, put together a code of laws by which his people would be governed. In this code of law, he refers to himself as a shepherd who guided his people to safe pastures and who gave peace. This language was not uncommon, it was frequently used by kings in that day to paint a picture of what they wanted to represent to their people. However, as the primary authority, hardly any king would ever dream of being shepherded by someone else.

This is what makes David's psalm that much more striking. David, the King of Israel, considers himself to be like a sheep; he's dependent on his Shepherd. The heart of what we see from David is a deeply personal connection to the Lord. David refers to the Lord as "my shepherd." There's a personal connection there that we shouldn't miss or overlook. When we live day-to-day, do we have this personal view of the Lord as our Shepherd? I find myself occasionally seeing God as an accessory to my life instead of an ever-present Shepherd who stands beside me, guides me, and comes and finds me when I wander astray (**Luke 15:3-7**). We may have some sense that the Lord is a shepherd, but is He ours? Do we know Him as our own? In the Psalm we see a shepherd who provides for the needs of his sheep, but in our stubbornness sometimes we try to make it alone.

Making it alone isn't how we were designed. Being a sheep without a shepherd in a land full of wolves is a recipe for disaster. The king needed a shepherd and so do we! Are we actively entrusting the Good Shepherd with our needs? As we see in the Psalm, the Lord provided for David's needs and proved himself trustworthy over and over.

Can we be vulnerable enough with ourselves and with our Shepherd to admit our own dependence on him? Can we submit to the Good Shepherd's leading and guiding? As a follower of Jesus, the Shepherd desires to lead and guide us. We must let Him. If the king needed a shepherd, maybe we do too.

Lord, I realize my need for your leading and guidance in my life. Lead me and guide into paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. Be my Shepherd this day and every day. Amen.

By Seth Redden

Without a Good Shepherd

Domestic sheep will not thrive, in fact they will most likely die. As I studied, I wondered why Scripture refers to God's people as sheep more than 200 times! What could we possibly have in common with sheep? Sheep are generally timid, gentle and easily frightened animals who flock together for safety against predators. Because of their "flock mentality" without a good shepherd they've been known to follow each other over cliffs and into other dangerous situations. They are gregarious and social; sheep left alone will become nervous and agitated. They have an impressive memory, recognitions skills and stick up for one another. An older female (ewe) will butt the younger ones when she perceives they're grazing in her spot. Don't ever approach a male (ram) during mating season, or really any other time! Sheep rely on their acute hearing and sense of smell to warn them of enemies, but they have poor peripheral vision—or tunnel vision. Lambs follow the older members of the flock and most ewes will defend her lambs. See anything we have in common?

A flock of sheep scatters and runs when frightened and they will never drink from moving water ("he leads me beside still waters") because they can easily drown from the weight of their wet wool. A shepherd earns the trust of his sheep by feeding and protecting them; they will obediently follow him and answer to the name he gives them. David was a shepherd boy before he was a king as were many in that time. Boys were shepherds because it was hard work and required a lot of energy. The sheep were very valuable to owners for meat, milk and clothing, and the shepherd was equally important in his lowly station.

John 10:27—*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

What happens when sheep or people don't have a good shepherd? They don't thrive because they aren't led to the right food or green pastures. They aren't made to lie down and rest from their grazing and wandering, so they literally become exhausted and can't even digest what they've eaten. They may stray off the path looking for greener pastures and become prey for their enemies with no one to rescue them. Can you relate?

As the sheep of God's flock, we have this assurance in **Deuteronomy 31:8**

...

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Lord, thank you for guiding and protecting me. Help me to trust you more each day and grow in the knowledge of Your love for me through Scripture and relationships with other believers.

By Deb Hill

REST

PSALM 23:2a

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

Last Spring was an exceptionally difficult time. My mom had just passed away and in addition to missing her, I was overwhelmed by the process of cleaning her home and settling her estate. I longed for rest during the exhausting process and yet simply had too much to do; including a course I had enrolled in months earlier.

The following week I drove to my class in LA and discovered that later in the week we were going to be given a few hours of solitude. I was looking forward to this time to spend with the Lord, read, journal and pray. The staff suggested that we bring a beach chair and a towel in case we wanted to lie down and rest. I followed their directions but had no intention of taking a nap! I got myself settled, notebook and Bible in hand, and prepared for a sweet time with Jesus. This lasted briefly; as I was barely able to keep my eyes open. I succumbed to the idea of a short "cat nap" and laid out my towel on the thick, lush grass. I realized that the grass was not only extremely comfortable but also bug-free! Within seconds I was fast asleep. After an hour, I awoke hearing Jesus' words from [Matthew 11:28-30](#), "**Come to Me, all who are weary, and I will give you rest.**" The word "rest" repeated in my mind as I listened to the quiet trickle of a fountain in the background and I fell back asleep. Another hour passed and this time I awoke to the words in [Psalm 23](#), "**I will make you lie down in green pastures, I will lead you beside quiet waters... I will restore your soul.**" Oh, how precious! In my exhaustion and longing to spend time with Jesus, He was calling me to rest. Nothing more, nothing less.

The next day, while driving home and reflecting on this sweet and unexpected gift of rest, I heard Jesus' words from [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#), "**My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.**" Multiple times God's truth had deeply impacted my soul and each message was an invitation to rest, accept His grace and just be in His presence. No striving, no doing, just rest.

Are you feeling worn out? Does a need to “do” frequently outweigh your ability to rest? Do you have eyes to see and accept God’s gifts? What is God’s invitation to you today? Meditate on one of these passages, asking Jesus to speak to your soul.

By Lynette Fuson

RESTORED

PSALM 23:1-3

*The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
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When a classic car, or a fixer upper home, is restored it becomes more useful and more valuable than before. God does the same thing with people. Psalm 23:3a **He restores my soul.**

Psalm 23 is a beautiful picture of what eternal life with God **will be** as well as a depiction of what our spiritual and thought life with the Lord **can be right now**. A restored soul is fixed from the brokenness of sin. The clutter and corruption of shame has been torn out and thrown away. The rust of meaninglessness has been ground off and the new metal of life's purpose as a disciple has been brightly polished and shines for all to see. The rot and weakness of self-obsession hidden under the floorboards of lip-service, or lack of service, is replaced with complete devotion to and strength through the solid foundation of Jesus' perfect life, death on the cross, and resurrection.

He restores my soul. He restores the core of me. The real me, the what I believe about life, circumstances, myself, God, and the people around me, me. I'm a new person, and the patterns I fall into through neglect, pride, anger, or the bitterness of life are neutralized, even replaced. God restores my soul.

Do you feel the need for restoration? Followers of the Good Shepherd know that their souls have been redeemed for eternity, and they have immediate access to soul restoration in their hearts and minds right now. In *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer teaches soul restoration as moving from knowing about God to knowing God through the instantly available activity of meditation on His Word and prayer ...

*The rule for doing this is simple but demanding. It is that we turn each truth that we learn **about** God into matter for meditation **before** God, leading to prayer and praise **to** God. Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, thinking over, dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works, ways, purposes and promises of God... it is a matter of talking to oneself, about God and oneself; it is, indeed, often a matter of arguing with oneself, reasoning oneself out of moods of doubt and unbelief into a clear apprehension of God's power and grace.*

Consider Psalm 23' it is a wonderful meditation exercise. Focus on the fullness of the Good Shepherd. At any time, we can remind ourselves of the great perspective of God. Wait in it, lie down and rest in who God is and the complete expression of His love through Jesus. Rest your mind on our Lord and Savior, and the quenching comfort of knowing and participating in His love. Drink deeply of His truth and the value He puts into our restored existence.

By John Riley

Letting God Lead

PSALM 23:3

*He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.*

What decisions are you facing in your life? Are you considering a move, maybe in schooling, or in your career, or maybe where you live? Or are you being forced to make a difficult choice because of a health matter or losing a job? Sometimes the normal ebb and flow of life forces us to make a choice. Think of the graduate who can't escape the perpetual question of "what's next?" Or the parents of a preschooler constantly being reminded they must choose an elementary school for their child.

We wrestle with these decisions. We research and agonize and talk to people. But sometimes we just plow straight ahead. We're like a dog with a favorite chew toy, clamping down on our view of what we think life should be and we won't let go, no matter what.

Review the beginning of Psalm 23. There's no racing or clinging or wringing of hands. First, we decide to follow God as our personal shepherd. We allow Him to bring us to cool, refreshing waters. And while we pause and enjoy, He restores our soul. He breathes new life into us. He fills us with His inexplicable, overwhelming peace. But first we must make the most important choice: to allow Him to lead us as our shepherd.

Look back at Psalm 23:3. What happens after He restores our soul? He leads us in paths of righteousness. Or, as the Message says, "**True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction.**" The sheep aren't racing around fretting about the next path, they're trusting that the Good Shepherd will lead them through good times as well as the character-shaping valleys of life.

Want to know which path to choose? First follow Christ as your Good Shepherd then spend time with Him, letting His still waters and peace bring healing and restoration to your heart and soul. Then, when your mind has stopped racing and found stillness in Christ, you can rest in Him and allow Him to lead. When we take these steps of faith rooted in God's strength and wisdom—not our own—then we bring honor and glory to Him.

Lord, thank you for being the One who restores my soul. Help me wait on Your perfect timing as You lead me along the paths to bring glory to Your name.

By Cyndie Claypool de Neve