

The Shepherd Psalm

Psalm 23

SHEPHERD: A person who takes care of sheep. Figuratively, the Old Testament pictures God as Israel's Shepherd-Leader (Ps 80:1; Ezek 34:14). The New Testament reveals Jesus as the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep. When He said, "I am the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11), Jesus linked His own divine nature with one of the most ordinary occupations in Israel. (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)



23:1 The Lord Is My Shepherd

1. King David, the author of this scripture was a shepherd and he was the son of a shepherd. He was later to be known as the "Shepherd King of Israel" and he stated explicitly, "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD."
2. The Shepherd knows each of his sheep by name. Believers are his sheep and they know and respond only to his voice.
3. In like manner, Jesus knows our personality, needs, feelings and desires. He knows our faults, our sins and our struggles staying clean and sober and yet: "He still loves us". He is the Good Shepherd who will carry us (*his lambs*) in His arms and "gently lead" us down the road of recovery from the bondages of sin and death. .
4. We like sheep have gone astray, but if we put our faith in our Shepherd we can trust in Him to care for us and help us overcome those things in life including addiction that would destroy us.
5. Because of His great love and compassion, He will forgive our sins and He will show us how to live according to His truths. The forgiveness from Him is immediate forgiveness based on the finished work of Jesus Christ. "Forgiveness awaits you right now if you will only receive it!"
6. As our Shepherd He will lead us to places of safety. He will help us avoid the people, places and situations where we may be tempted to stumble. He will lead us by the still waters as we continue our journey through life and onward into recovery.

23:1 I Shall Not Want

1. To "not be in want" means (a) that I will not lack anything necessary for God's will to be accomplished in my life. (b) I will find contentment in my Shepherds provision and care of my life.
2. Even in times of trials and hardships we must trust in His love and His commitment to us. He is the Shepherd, we are His sheep, He will provide and He will help us to persevere in our Recovery Program.
3. In the past we looked for our wants or needs to be fulfilled by active addiction, greed or materialism. The more we had and the more we gained never satisfied the longings of our heart or filled that empty void.
4. We shall not want when we seek to have our needs met through a close and intimate relationship with God and His Word..
5. "The Lord is my Shepherd—I shall not want" He is the Shepherd to whom no trouble is too great as He cares for His flock. He is the Shepherd who is on the job twenty-four hours a day, 7-days a week to see that His sheep are properly provided for in every detail. He is alert to the welfare of His flock and He gives all He has to it. He literally lays Himself out for those who are His.

23:2 He Maketh Me To Lie Down in Green Pastures



Sheep...The strange thing about sheep is that they are different. Because of their make-up it is almost impossible for them to lie down unless (4) requirements are met.

1. They will refuse to lie down unless they are free of all fear.
2. They will refuse to lie down if there is friction or tension amidst the flock.
3. They will refuse to lie down if tormented by flies, parasites or other pests.
4. They will refuse to lie down if they feel the need to feed. They must be free from hunger.
 - A. Our Shepherd is the only one capable of helping us, protecting us and giving us all we need and require to feel the comfort of lying down in green pastures.
 - B. With the presence and nearness of our Shepherd we can “lie down” in peace, free from all fear in times of distress, disappointment or fear of our enemies.
 - C. Our enemies may be people, alcohol, some other addictive substance, pornography or anything that is capable of destroying us, stealing our peace, our serenity or even our life.
 - D. The wisest thing, we addicts, alcoholics or those having an addictive personality should do is to lie down close to our Shepherd in the comfort of His green pastures free from all fear.

23:2 He Leadeth Me Beside The Still Waters

Although sheep can thrive in dry, semi-arid country they still require water to live and to flourish and the key to where their water can be found lies with the direction and care of the shepherd.

1. When the shepherd's sheep are thirsty they become restless and they set out on their own in search of water to quench their thirst. If not led to clean, good and pure waters they will often end up drinking from polluted waters.
2. King David knew that God (*The Good Shepherd*) would lead him beside the still waters.
3. God alone knows where the still, quiet, deep, clean, and pure waters are to be found and that alone will satisfy His sheep and keep them fit and strong in their journey.
4. If we admit our need for those still waters. If we admit our need for Him and seek to follow His will for our lives, we will discover how very important we are to Him.

23:3 He Leadeth Me in the Paths of Righteousness for His Name Sake

Sheep are notorious creatures of habit. If left to themselves they will follow the same trails over and over again until they have become ruts. They will graze the same hills and meadows until they have turned to desert wastelands.

1. The shepherd boy David knew that if his flock was to flourish they had to be constantly under his guarded control and guidance.
2. *Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;*
3. Scripture points out that we as sheep have gone astray and we follow our own fancies and turn to our own ways even when it is to our own disadvantage. *Even when it could destroy us!*
4. Turning to “*My Own Way*” simply means doing what “*WE*” want. We cling to the same destructive habits that we have seen in the past ruin our lives and even our loved ones.
5. Basically....To be lead in the paths of righteousness for His name sake is simple and straightforward.
 - a. “*Obedience to the Lord.*” It means I do what He asks me to do.
 - b. I go where He calls me to go.
 - c. I say what He instructs me to say.
 - d. I act and re-act in the manner He maintains is in my best interest as well as for His reputation (If I am one of His Sheep)

23:4 Yea, Though I Walk Through The Valley Of the Shadow Of Death I Will Fear no Evil

Every mountain range has its valleys and deep ravines and gulches scar its sides where the rains have washed the sides away. As with ordinary sheep the best route to the top of the mountain is always along these valleys and any shepherd familiar with the high country knows this. He leads his flock gently, but persistently up the paths that wind through these dark and treacherous valleys.

1. “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.*” It does not say I die there, or stop there—but rather “*I walk through.*” Let this verse be a consolation for those who are still passing through the dark valley’s of active addiction and its dangerous and destructive lifestyle.
2. Our addiction may have destroyed or nearly destroyed our relationships and we may be in the valley of feeling useless, isolated and alone.
3. We may be in the valley of experiencing feelings of abandonment or the valley of low self-esteem, self-worth, guilt or shame.
4. We may still be in the valley of physical pain from the effects of drugs, alcohol, or the symptoms of withdrawal.
5. Our Great Shepherd knows how we feel, and He is with us every step of the way as we walk through and out of this valley of the shadow of death into an eternity of delight with God.
6. For those of us in recovery there is still a life to live in the here and now and there are still valleys we may have to walk through during our remaining days. These valleys need not be “*Dead End Streets.*” But, rather: Simply a valley that He hand-in-hand is guiding you through as your “*Good Shepherd.*”