



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

An Honest Look at Psalm 23

May 11-13, 2019

Psalm 23

¹The 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.

For the Kids: What is your favorite animal? Why might someone not pick a sheep as their favorite animal?

Sheep aren't good at a lot of things. They aren't fast or tough or fierce, or cool looking. Sheep can't do much, they mostly sleep and wander around. They don't hunt or fly or climb or jump. Sheep aren't very smart. They don't make great pets and a shepherd always has to look out for them or else they'll get hurt or die.

For the Kids: Can you think of 3 ways God is like a shepherd?

God gives us food like a shepherd.

God leads us in the right paths for our life like a shepherd leads sheep. God keeps us safe when we are afraid, just like a shepherd comforts sheep. God protects us from things that could hurt us. God follows us like a shepherd follows sheep, to make sure we don't wander away.

1. What were Mother's Day celebrations like in your family when you were young?

Some Mother's Day Trivia: Founded in 1908 by Congress.

The idea came from Anna Jarvis, who later regretted the commercialism that has come to mark modern Mother's Day celebrations. Things that go up on Mother's Day: Flowers sales, card sales, long distance telephone calls, churchgoing. Traditionally worshippers celebrate the day with carnations, colored if their mother is living and white if she has passed away.

2. In many ways a mother is like a shepherd (especially the shepherd in Psalm 23). How many similarities can you come up with?

Mothers provide for children. Mothers restore souls by announcing God's forgiveness and their own. Mothers guide children who aren't doing the right thing. Mothers point children to Jesus' righteousness. Mothers comfort children when they are afraid. Mothers prepare tables all the time! Mothers love follows children wherever they go, even after they grow up! Mothers make everything alright, just like shepherds and just like the Lord will when we live in his house forever.

3. Which word pictures from Psalm 23 do you treasure? Why?

Here are some ideas:

Shepherd- *this is a common theme of the Bible and biblical art.*

Green pastures- *This gives the idea that I have all I need.*

Quiet waters- *I've heard sheep won't drink from moving water.*

Paths of Righteousness- *God's got a plan for me, and it's right.*

Valley of shadows- *The honesty of dark times is refreshing!*

Rod & Staff- *God's is with us through his encouragement and guidance through his word and the people he puts in our lives.*

Table in the presence of enemies- *Whatever you fear, God doesn't.*

Cup overflows- *God's blessings fill us and flow out of us to others.*

Goodness and love follow me—*even if I try to get away.*

House of the Lord- *there's nothing like feeling at home. That will be our feeling forever.*

4. How could speaking this beautiful psalm make you feel dishonest?

The phrases, "I shall not be in want" "paths of righteousness" "I will fear no evil" (and maybe others) sound like what a perfect person would do. But sometimes I do want, sometimes I am not so righteous, sometimes I do fear.

5. King David wrote this song. Using your memory of David's earthly life, prove that even David could not honestly say these words on his own.

*David WANTED Bathsheba so much he killed to get her.
David walked in the WRONG paths when he took many wives.
David FEARED Saul his predecessor and Absalom his Son.
But the Lord certainly did take care of David for his whole life.*

6. Re-read the Psalm picturing Jesus as the speaker. What insights does this exercise bring you?

*Jesus had no place to lay his head, but he was still perfectly content.
Jesus always did what was right, his path was righteous always.
Jesus looked to his Father to restore his soul when he was stressed or tired. Jesus walked through the valley of death when he actually died—yet right before he did that he prayed to his Father, “I am in you and you are in me” (Jn 17). His Father comforted him. Jesus ate a meal in the presence of Judas, on the night he was betrayed, but even more than that, Jesus faced enemies his whole life with calmness because he knew God was with him. Jesus now dwells in the house of the Lord, just like it is pictured in Revelation 7. There are many more insights it could prompt!*

7. Jesus prays Psalm 23 vicariously, that means, in our stead. How does that change the meaning of “I shall not be in want”? “He leads me in paths of righteousness”? “I will fear no evil”?

It is always Christ’s perfect life in our place. We proclaim Christ in Psalm 23. Christ was perfectly content and that counts for me. Christ was perfectly righteous and that counts for me. Christ was fearless against death and that counts for me. My failings fall away and his faithfulness stands in it’s place.

8. **Agree or Disagree:** You can sing Psalm 23 and mean every single line with 100% honesty.

Agree: My record of failure is gone. In Christ I am everything I claim to be in Psalm 23.

Disagree: I cannot sing this on my own. I am not capable of all I claim to do in Psalm 23, not until I get to heaven.

Resolution: The Christian life as it is described in Psalm 23 is not about striving harder and harder toward perfection. It is about finding your strength, your identity, your voice more and more in Christ. In Christ I can sing every line that I never could on my own.

9. **Agree or Disagree:** The only way to celebrate Mother’s Day with honesty is in Christ.

Agree: If you aren’t found in Christ you are only pretending to be a good mom or a good child.

Disagree: Even if you’re not perfect you can still appreciate all that mothers do for children here on earth.

Resolution: Mothers certainly deserve our praise and thanks for everything they do for us. They are one way God provides for people, believers and unbelievers alike. But the best way to celebrate Mother’s Day is to treat moms the way the Good Shepherd has already treated them—forgiving, loving, treasuring. And the best way to be a mom is to treat children the way the Good Shepherd treats sheep—forgiving, loving, treasuring, and caring for.

10. We’ve reviewed what Psalm 23 teaches. What does Psalm 23 DO to you? (Alternatively, how does Psalm 23 affect you?)

There could be many answers! It might memorize us with it’s beauty, it might convict us with it’s lofty goals for talking to God, it might reassure us by giving us the truth that God is with us, it might cause us to celebrate by showing us how Christ did what we cannot, it might cause us to give thanks for all those who provide for us, moms included!