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PSALM 23:1-6

OUR GOOD SHEPHERD



THIS WEEK'S **focus**

Have you ever been in a situation that was scary and intimidating and found comfort in the presence of someone who is capable and cares deeply for you? This may have looked like the warm smile of a parent or family member in the crowd, a comforting pat on the back by a coach, or the tender encouragement of a pastor. If this is how we feel toward another human being, how much more comfort should we find in the presence of the Lord? Psalm 23 is arguably one of the most well-known psalms in the Bible. As we study this psalm, we'll be reminded that the Lord is our Good Shepherd who cares for us.



CENTRAL **truth**

The Lord is our Good Shepherd who cares for us.



EXPLORE

scripture

PSALM 23:1-6

PSALM 23:1-3

A Psalm of David. **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.

PSALM 23:4

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.

PSALM 23:5-6

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 mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

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PSALM 23:1-6
CONVERSATION

questions

▶ READ PSALM 23:1-3.

.01 What does David mean when he calls the Lord his Shepherd?

.02 How does this psalm help us understand the Lord's provision better?

▶ READ PSALM 23:4.

.03 What does the "darkest valley" symbolize? Why doesn't David fear it?

Q **GIVE AN ANSWER**

It can be difficult to read the line "I have what I need," when we feel the opposite way. Your Bible may offer a different translation like "I shall not want" (ESV, KJV), or "I lack nothing" (NIV). There are plenty of things we want and feel like we lack—the right relationship, a scholarship, belonging to the right friend group, different life circumstances, and more. David isn't saying that we will always get what we want; he's saying that the Lord determines what we need and ensures that whatever it may be, we will not lack it. David knows that his deepest, truest needs are met in the Lord Himself, not through some other means. This is not a call to live complacently but to trust the Lord as the great Provider.

.04 How can we remind ourselves of the Lord's presence with us during difficult times?

.05 What do the images of the rod and staff tell us about the way God shepherds us?

▶ READ PSALM 23:5-6.

.06 David also depicts the Lord as a generous Host. What does this tell us about the Lord's character?

.07 What are some ways you've experienced the Lord's goodness and faithful love in your own life? Take time to celebrate this!

.08 Why does David desire to dwell in the house of the Lord?



HISTORY

One of the central images in this psalm is that of a shepherd/sheep relationship. You might be wondering how David knows so much about shepherding. Shepherding was common in the ancient Near East, and in fact, David himself was a shepherd. When God's servant Samuel arrived to David's father's house to anoint the new king, guess where David was? You guessed it—tending to the sheep (see 1 Sam. 16:11-12). David had plenty of experience caring for sheep, even protecting them from predators like lions and bears when necessary (see 1 Sam. 17:34-37). Though David knew what it was like to be a shepherd, in Psalm 23 he is aware of his role as a sheep in submission to the true Shepherd.

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PSALM 23:1-6

NOW

what?



CENTRAL truth

The Lord is our good Shepherd who cares for us.

.09 Because the Lord is our Shepherd, we have all we need. Why is it difficult to remember this? How can we remind ourselves of this?

.10 How can we encourage and support one another when we experience life's darkest valleys?

.11 How should knowing that you are a friend of God shape the way you pray?

.12 Who is one person in your life who doesn't know the Good Shepherd? What would it look like to tell this person about Him?

DAILY devotions

MEMORIZE PSALM 23:1

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about humans?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

day 1

PSALM 23:1-3

DWELL

The Lord is the Creator and Ruler of all things; yet, David says the Lord is also his Shepherd. David knows that his faithful and sovereign Lord will care for him, and he simply and beautifully describes the nourishment, rest, and perfect guidance that the Lord provides. The Lord is our Shepherd as well. Our deepest, truest needs are met in the Lord Himself, not through some other means. Therefore, let's trust in Him.



Do you find it difficult to believe that you have all that you need in the Lord? Why or why not?



How does this passage invite you to see the Lord's care and provision?

MEMORIZE

Using colored pencils or pens, creatively write out Psalm 23:1 on a piece of paper. Read the verse out loud five times. Finally, try to say it out loud five times without looking, trying to picture it in your mind instead.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, You have met my deepest and truest need in Christ. Help me to trust You for provision and care.

day 2

PSALM 23:4

DWELL

The image of green pastures and still waters has disappeared. Instead, we find the “darkest valley.” This psalm does not shy away from the reality of life’s valleys. Yet, David says he does not fear because the Lord is with him. The Lord not only leads us beside quiet waters but is with us as we walk through the darkest valleys. God protects and guides us amid what we’re going through, and we’re invited to find comfort in this truth. Whatever valley you may be facing, the Lord is with you.



How does the Lord’s presence with you during difficult times shape the way you approach prayer?



Who is someone you can encourage with the reminder of the Lord’s presence this week?

MEMORIZE

Type out Psalm 23:1 in the Notes app on your phone or another device. Take a screenshot of it and set it as your lock screen or wallpaper.

PRAY

Lord, thank You for Your presence amid the difficult things I go through. Please remind me of the comfort and peace found in Your presence.

day 3

PSALM 23:5-6

DWELL

When was the last time you grabbed a meal with a good friend? There was probably laughing, listening, storytelling, and more as you both shared a meal. In this psalm, the Lord is depicted not only as a Shepherd but also as a gracious Host who welcomes David to a prepared table. David’s words speak to the intimate relationship he had with the Lord as well as the Lord’s faithfulness even as there are people who want to do David harm. David is able to look back on his life and see that God’s promise-keeping love was with him every step of the way. We can say the same. In the joys and pains of life, the Lord is with us and will never abandon us.



What is the significance of the Lord being shown as a generous Host?



How have you seen the Lord’s provision and care in good and difficult times?

MEMORIZE

Set reminders on your phone to read Psalm 23:1 three times each day (such as in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening).

PRAY

Heavenly Father, You are good and always stay true to Your Word. Thank You for Your abundant generosity toward me. Please help me to be generous toward others.

day 4

JEREMIAH

23:1-4

DWELL

Jeremiah preached against Israel's leaders for poorly shepherding the Lord's flock. But their evil acts did not go unseen or unpunished by the Lord. Though the people's forced deportation out of the land was certain, the Lord graciously promised to regather them and raise up good shepherds. God is the gracious King and Provider for His people, and He will always be so. So let's trust and depend on Him.



Why do you think God gave Jeremiah this message to proclaim?



How does this passage reveal God's grace and justice?

MEMORIZE

Say the book, chapter, and verse number for Psalm 23:1 out loud several times. Then read aloud just the first few words of the verse. Do this a few times a day and see if you can memorize more each time.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for being gracious and just as You care for Your people. Help me to rely and depend on You for all of my needs and cares.

day 5

JOHN

10:11

DWELL

Jesus is the greatest proof of God's promise-keeping love. He is the Good Shepherd who graciously laid His life down for the sheep. And guess what? By believing in Jesus, we become part of His flock. In His care, our deepest needs are met, and we are secure—absolutely no one can snatch us from His hand. How will you respond to what He has accomplished?



How do we see God's love for us in Christ?



Why do you think it's important to share the good news about what Jesus has done? How can you grow more comfortable sharing it with people around you?

MEMORIZE

Write down the first letter of each word of Psalm 23:1 on a note card. At least five times today, see if you can say the verse just by looking at the letters.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, thank You for being the Good Shepherd who laid Your life down for the sheep and rose again. Give me courage to share the news about what You've done with those around me.