

Psalm 23: The Lord is My Shepherd
“A Bible Study for Life in Quarantine”
By: Pastor Matt Brown

Instructions - What a better opportunity to dive into God’s Word than when you are stuck at home? You can work through this study as an individual or as a family. You could use it for 6 straight days in a week, or spread it out over 2 weeks. I pray that the truths found in Psalm 23 would comfort you during this time.

Preliminary Thoughts - As people living after Christ’s death, we can’t help but interpret Old Testament passages in light of Christ and His redemptive work. The psalmist speaks of his shepherd, and we as New Testament believers, can’t help but think of our Good Shepherd, Jesus. So as you work through this passage, dwell upon Christ, who went so far as to lay his life down for us.

Day 1 - Psalm 23:1, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

Memorize - Psalm 23:1

Understand

1. Who wrote this Psalm? (Look at the beginning of the Psalm) (See 1 Samuel 16:11-13 & 1 Samuel 17:34-35)
2. How does knowing who the author is help us in reading this Psalm?
3. What are the characteristics of a good shepherd?
4. What does this verse show about our relationship to God and His relationship to us?
5. What’s the result of this relationship? (See the second part of the verse)

Apply

1. Is the Lord your shepherd?
2. Could you say, like David, “I shall not want”?
3. In what other things are you seeking to find satisfaction?
4. Have you been looking to your Shepherd or somewhere else?

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Matt - In times like these, we need the truths of Psalm 23. What a better thing to know (and believe) right now than, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want”? Because of our relationship Christ, we have everything that we need. We can be satisfied in Him! The key is to always remember who your God is - He’s your shepherd! That means he’s going to care, love, and give you enough for each day. So when fear starts to well up, remember: ‘I have a good, perfect Shepherd, and in Him, I lack *nothing*.’

Pray

Day 2 - Psalm 23:2, “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.”

Memorize - Psalm 23:2

Understand

1. In order to fully understand this Psalm, you must put yourself in the place of a sheep.
2. Why would green pastures be important for a sheep?
3. What do still waters communicate?
4. How does our Shepherd take us to these places? (Look at the verbs in the verse)

Apply

1. As we apply this verse, we must remember that this verse is speaking of more than mere physical realities. (i.e. spiritual nourishment and rest)
2. Are you taking advantage of the green pastures that God has given you?
3. How can we experience still waters when the world is in such unrest right now?
4. Are you letting God lead and guide you? Or are you trying to be the leader?

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Matt - In a time when grocery stores are running out of food and a time of chaos, we need this verse more than ever. This verse gives us two great blessings that Christ, our Shepherd, gives us. First, he makes us lie down in place of nourishment (green pastures). And secondly, he leads us to places of rest (still waters). He guides and leads us to the places that we need to go. Get this: the Lord knows *exactly* what you need. In fact, he knows your needs more than you do. Follow His leading! Though grocery store shelves are empty, he never guides you to an empty shelf. Though the country is in chaos, in Him there is no chaos. Lean into Christ and you will find the spiritual nourishment and rest that your soul craves.

Pray

Day 3 - Psalm 23:3, “He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

Memorize - Psalm 23:3

Understand

1. “Restores” has the idea of refresh or revive. It’s to bring something back to a healthy state.
2. What would be the opposite of paths of righteousness?
3. What’s the result of going down “right paths”?
4. Why does he lead us in paths of righteousness *for his name’s sake*? (Think about the reputation of a shepherd if he led sheep down the wrong path)

Apply

1. When you feel exhausted, worn down, and discouraged, what (or who) do you turn to?
2. What paths have you been walking?
3. What does your current path show about who you are following?

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Matt - A pandemic can really mess with the state of your spiritual health. We can easily get overwhelmed by all the news, closures, and isolation. What does our soul need? God’s refreshing power. He revives and encourages us when we get down. He has the power to restore a soul that has been deflated. Another problem of a pandemic is how it can lead us down some wrong paths. It can lead us to anger, ungratefulness, and despair, but those are definitely not “paths of righteousness”. Instead, follow the paths of your Shepherd leader, for he’s been pointing in the right direction all along.

Pray

Day 4 - 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.”

Memorize - Psalm 23:4

Understand

1. What does the “valley of the shadow of death” remind us about life?
2. What valleys did David go through in his life?
3. Why don’t we have to fear “even in the valley of the shadow of death”?
4. Why would a Shepherd’s rod and staff be a comfort to a sheep?

Apply

1. What fears have you faced lately?
2. How have you been handling those fears?
3. In accordance with this verse, how will you quench those fears?
4. Why is God’s presence so comforting?

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Matt - This verse shows us that there will be dark times in life. The life of a Christian isn’t free from trials or hardship. Right now, many would say that we are going through a dark time, but the great thing is that we don’t have to fear. Why? Because in the darkest times, God is near. He is with us! We can walk in those valleys knowing that he is guiding and protecting us with his rod and staff. What comfort! Dark valleys come and go, but our Shepherd is always there.

Pray

Day 5 - Psalm 23:5, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

Memorize - Psalm 23:5

Understand

1. Did you notice a change in the imagery about the Lord?
2. What does a table set in the presence of enemies picture? (Two things)
3. In Bible times, a host would anoint an honored guest with oil.
4. What does an overflowing cup picture?

Apply

1. Have you ever thought about God being a hospitable host?
2. Why do we often turn away from our Lord, when he is so gracious?
3. Think of all the *abundance* that God has given you and thank him for it.

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Matt - Our Lord is not only a good Shepherd, but also a generous Host. In this verse, we see that he is an able protector and an abundant provider. He welcomes us in, he generously provides a meal, and this meal is in abundance. Though our enemies surround us, we can eat calmly and have our fill. No enemy (or fear) can prevent us from enjoying God’s gracious hospitality. While you may currently feel like you don’t have enough finances, food, courage, (or toilet paper!), Jesus gives a cup that overflows. He gives blessings in abundance. His secure and abundant table is set, will you come and eat?

Pray

Day 6 - Psalm 23:6, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Memorize - Psalm 23:6

Understand

1. Note David’s confidence in the future. (Also, observe the emphasis on “all the days of my life” and “forever”)
2. Why does David believe that goodness and mercy will follow him for the rest of his life? (Think back to all that we learned)
3. Interestingly, the word “follow” here actually has the meaning of “pursue”.
4. Why does David want to dwell in the house of the Lord? (Think about what the “house of the Lord” pictures)

Apply

1. Do you believe that goodness and mercy will follow/pursue you for the rest of your life?
2. What response do you have towards all of who God is and what He has done for you?
3. Do you seek after ongoing times of fellowship with the Lord?

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Matt - In a time like this, it’s easy to look at the world and the future with the lens of doom and gloom. But David shows us that even in a world of uncertainty, danger, and darkness, goodness and mercy can follow us. They pursue and chase us down because we belong to the Lord. This isn’t a one-time thing, but a lifelong reality for those who trust in Jesus. We can have confidence that God’s goodness, faithfulness, and mercy are not going anywhere - they aren’t going to change. So what else can we do, but respond to this kind of love, care, and protection? David responded with a desire to seek after God and experience ongoing opportunities of fellowship with Him. Is that your desire?

Pray

Concluding Thoughts - It was Jesus, who perfectly fulfilled this passage, as he laid down his life for his sheep. He is rightfully called the Good Shepherd. Read John 10:1-18 and notice the similarities between Psalm 23 and John 10.