

Psalm 23
The Shepherd Psalm

Notice what the Lord as Shepherd wants to do for His sheep.

He makes me, He leads me.

He restores my soul; He guides me.

He is with me.

This says something about the Shepherd: He is up to the task. The Shepherd is able and willing to be a guide, a protector, a helper and to be present with the sheep. The Shepherd can be trusted to lead.

That also says something about the sheep: They are defenseless, dependent and virtually helpless on their own. They need the flock and they especially need the Shepherd.

You are not likely to ever see a shepherd with only one sheep and yet this psalm is very personal. Good Bible study begins with observation. Pay attention to what is in plain sight.

He makes me lie down.

Sheep need to be free of fear, tension, aggravation and hunger in order to lie down.

To make a sheep lie down is to provide for their essential needs so that they CAN lie down.

He leads me beside quiet waters.

To be brief, sheep will not drink fresh water if it is rapidly moving because they are afraid.

A good shepherd will create some type of stoppage in moving water so that it pools up and becomes user friendly.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

The Shepherd has a relationship with the sheep and the sheep trust the Shepherd to guide them to good places. The Shepherd knows the way.

I will fear no evil for you are with me.

The only reason to not be afraid is the presence of the Shepherd. If the path were so bad and so dangerous that the sheep was in extreme danger, you would think the Shepherd would redirect the sheep somehow. The comfort that David speaks of is the presence of the Shepherd in the valley.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

The Shepherd does not wipe out the enemies or remove the bad stuff. Instead, God chooses to prepare a table – a place of blessing – in the presence of your enemies. Jesus, the Shepherd, is with you in every valley you have ever faced or will face.

I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:1-11)