

Bible Study Series

PSALM 23

DEEP DIVE INTO THE VERSES

This series we're looking at a very popular scripture written by David – Psalm 23 which is often quoted either in its entirety or in parts. The psalm captures the beauty of our relationship with God and the fact that we have a part to play and so does God. Psalm 23 reveals God's heart for His children in how He wants to take care of and provide the very best for us, how we should relate to Him and how He expects us to relate with others through what He's given us.

We're taking a deep dive as we look at the psalm verse by verse to unlock some of the treasures in the word – there's so much more than this study has captured. We encourage you to go through the psalm deeply yourself, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you and reveal His truth to you through what He shows you.

I pray this study blesses you and positively impacts your walk with God and every aspect of your life.



Day 1

The Lord Our Shepherd

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want – Psalm 23:1

Today we're looking at the first half of that statement. Because of David's background as a shepherd tending his father's sheep, he understood what it meant to call God his shepherd. Shepherds were fully responsible for the sheep in their care. They took care of their feeding, shelter, tended to them if they were ill, often carrying on their shoulders sheep that were injured and couldn't walk. If any sheep went missing, the shepherd went looking for that sheep and made sure it was brought back to join the rest that hadn't gone astray. Shepherds fought off any animals that tried to attack the sheep.

This was very likely the picture David had in his mind when calling God his shepherd. The psalmist wasn't being presumptuous in this as there are many accounts of God describing himself as a shepherd:

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. (Ezekiel 34:11)

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. (Isaiah 40:11)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

These are just a few of numerous verses in the Bible where God is described and describes Himself as a shepherd. Our God doesn't want to be worshipped from a far distance, He's wants to bring us close to Him if we are willing to be led by Him.

David understood this and that's why he personalised the verse. God wasn't just Israel's shepherd, God was David's very own shepherd who knew him by name, cared about and for him personally and was concerned about every intimate detail of his life. David knew he could trust God and that God would always be with him.

Action Step: Personalise your relationship with God, make Him Your own shepherd daily – The Lord is (Insert your name here)'s shepherd. He takes care of me, He guides me, He helps me, He loves me, now and always.



Day 2

I Shall Not Want

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want – Psalm 23:1

Here, David makes a very firm statement concerning God's provision. The CEV Translation puts it this way – "I will never be in need". God is a loving father who is more than able to take care of all our needs. Our specific needs certainly differ from person to person, but as a child of God, your primary need is the presence of God in your life. Because the presence of God brings with it so many benefits – protection, preservation, strength, joy, peace, sound mind, good health and so much more.

We have another assurance given to us in Philippians 4:19: *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus"*. When the Bible says "All", it really does mean "All". However, there's a part we must play:

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

"Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing." (Psalm 34:9-10)

Oftentimes we lay claims to the benefits of having God as our shepherd without doing our own part. If God is truly our shepherd, then we as His sheep must walk in obedience to His instructions. Does God have the capacity to take care of us? Absolutely, after all the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness thereof (Psalm 24). He has no problem blessing us and taking care of all our needs.

Reflect: God is faithful and always does His part, are you faithful in doing yours? Do you lay claim to benefits without first seeking to know the giver of the blessings?

Day 3

Rest

“He makes me to lie down in green pastures...” Psalm 23:2a

Rest is important to God and He takes it very seriously. Sometimes we think we need to work 24/7/365 but that is damaging to our long-term physical, mental and spiritual well-being. It's from the place of rest that deep thought, fresh energy, new ideas and capacity emerge. We see in Genesis 2:2-3 that God rested from His work of creation and since we are made in His image, it's understandable that we need to rest as well.

But rest isn't just in the physical, there's a rest for our spirits that God makes available to us as well. Lying down in green pastures speaks of resting in a place of peace and comfort a place of calmness and sanity. Jesus is asking us to trust Him and seek Him so He can take on our challenges and burdens while we focus on following what He has asked us to do. He doesn't leave us in the dark and neither does He want us to be harassed by the circumstances of life.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29)

It is possible to be worn out in our spirit because of our labours and heavy burdens. So often we try and achieve many things in our own strength and these verses remind us that God has a different path for us. We aren't supposed to take on the world and its many issues on our own. We're supposed to take our issues to God FIRST (and not after trying everything else first) and receive direction from Him on how to proceed. After all, He has promised to guide us and direct us. – *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. (Psalm 32:8)*

And God always keeps His promises.

Action Step: Ask God to take control of your daily schedule and help you create opportunities to let you rest in Him.



Day 4

The Best Pathway

He leads me beside the still waters. Psalm 23:2b

This verse evokes a picture of God leading us on a peaceful walk, surrounded by calmness and serenity. However, life very often doesn't feel like this does it? Rather the opposite with some days leaving us feeling like a hamster on a wheel – exhausted from running at a high speed, expending a lot of energy but really going nowhere fast. So, what's wrong, why is day-to-day life very different from the idyll picture David paints?

The first thing we should note is that it's God leading him beside the still waters, not David leading himself. When we allow God to take charge of our lives, it doesn't necessarily mean everything will automatically become perfect. But it does mean that He provides us with an insulation so that we have an inner peace regardless of what's going on around us.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

God knows the end from the beginning, so He knows which way to lead us through. Psalm 32:8 promises us. *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you."* What a wonderful assurance we have that we don't have to figure life out on our own! God is making Himself available to us to lead us IF we put our trust in Him.

That's why Proverb 3:5-6 gives us this guidance: *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."*

It's possible to get off the seemingly never-ending wheel of activity and toil and lead a life of inner peace. Trust in God today to do what only He can do.

Reflect: How often do you put an issue in God's hands and trust Him to take care of it? He can do a much better job of resolving the issue than you ever could.



Day 5

The Restoration

He restores my soul... (Psalm 23:3a)

'Restore': To return something or someone to an earlier good condition or position

Here David shows us that his journey with God isn't just in the physical, but spiritual as well. God is very interested in our physical being, but we shouldn't forget that His main priority is our Spirit because that's the part of us that will spend eternity with Him. As we journey through life, it's more than likely that we have gone through some experiences or done some things that have negatively affected the state of our souls and our walk with God. David is reminding us that God is a restorer. It doesn't matter how badly you believe you've fallen away from God, He is more than ready to restore your relationship with Him.

Paul echoes this in Romans 8:38-39:

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17)

God doesn't want anyone to perish, but to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9), so He is more than ready to restore anyone who comes to Him in honest repentance (meaning you have determined in your heart not to go back to it). Turn to Him today and receive your restoration.

Action Step: Is there anything holding you back from walking with God? Lay it at His feet today and come to God in true repentance. He is faithful to forgive and willing to restore. It's not too late, come to Him today.



Day 6

The Leading

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (Psalm 23:3b)

Once you submit your life to God, He has a stake in how your life turns out. When you receive Jesus as your Lord and Saviour and commit to walking with Him, God takes charge of your affairs because you call on Him. When He made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 22, He swore by Himself because there was no one higher to swear by. He said in Jeremiah 1:12 that He watches over His word to see it fulfilled. It's therefore clear to us that God places a high premium on what he promises us.

All God's children are important to Him. He said that He's numbered the hairs on our head (Luke 12:7), we are inscribed on the palms of His hand (Isaiah 49:16) and He will never leave nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6). Because He has made these (and so many more) promises to us, we can rest assured that He will lead us in the paths that will keep us in a close walk with Him.

*For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.
(Philippians 2:13)*

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." (Isaiah 30:21)

We have an incredibly powerful asset in the Holy Spirit who teaches us, instructs us, walks with us and works in us to keep us in the paths God has designed for our lives. We must connect with Him daily to seek His guidance and strategy for the day, so we do not go off the path God intends to lead us on.

Reflect: God is ready to lead us, but we must also be ready to follow His leading.



Day 7

The Protection

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me... (Psalm 23:4a)

At some point (or several points) in time in our life we walk through what David described as the 'valley of the shadow of death'. It's not death itself, but the darkness and seeming hopelessness of the period likens itself to a dead situation. Two critical things we must note about this season.

First is that we walk through it and will come out at the other end if we don't give up. The Bible says in Ephesians 6:13, *"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."* Paul reminds us that we are more than conquerors through Jesus (Romans 8:37). No matter how dark it looks, hold on to God and His word.

Second is that with darkness comes fear and fear is one of the enemy's tools to keep us bound. That's why David states clearly that he will fear no evil, not because the situation isn't daunting, but because God is with him. David knew clearly that God cannot be defeated and God alone has the power to deliver him from every situation.

If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31b)

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)

Because everyone born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. (1 John 5:4)

The valley is just for a season, it will pass. Don't give up, don't give in. Seek God and seek what His word says about what you're going through. Then hold on to the word and thank God in advance for bringing you through the season.

Declaration: But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. (Psalm 3:6). God has promised that when I pass through the waters, He will be with me; and when I pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over me. When I walk through the fire, I will not be burned; the flames will not set me ablaze. (personalizing Isaiah 43:2)



Day 8

The Comfort

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4b)

In David's time shepherds used two tools to manage their sheep – a rod was typically used to strike animals trying to attack the sheep and a staff – which had a curved end – was typically used to restrain sheep from going in the wrong direction or rescue them from where they may have strayed. These two were used by shepherds to guide, protect and rescue their sheep.

Jesus identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) and we are His sheep. He has promised to protect us and watch over us and so in a sense he also uses the rod and staff in relating with us. Sometimes the rod is used to keep the enemy at bay, sometimes it is used to correct us, because who God loves, He disciplines (Hebrews 12:6). The process of discipline may not be pleasant, but we take comfort in the knowledge that God is taking us through the process because of His love for us.

When we are in danger of falling into sin or remaining there, the Holy Spirit acts as a restraint by convicting us of our wrongdoing. Note that the Holy Spirit doesn't condemn us (leaving us with a sense of worthlessness) but convicts us – showing us where we've gone wrong and offering us a way out. So we are comforted in the knowledge that when we truly repent from what we've done wrong, we can return to the 'fold' and Jesus will welcome us back.

"What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? (Luke 15:4)

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:20)

Reflect: What great love Jesus has for you. He laid His life down for you and is willing to seek you until you return to Him.



Day 9

The Banquet

'You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.' (Psalm 23:5)

There will be enemies. It's a fact of life we must all come to terms with, more so as Jesus already warned us in advance in John 15:18, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first." But this verse reminds us that enemies aren't something to be feared. In fact, they provide an audience for God to showcase what He's doing in your life.

The word used for 'prepare' means arranging, ordering. This is something God takes His time to do, He's not in a rush in spite of the presence of enemies. He arranges our lives in such a manner that our lives speak of His goodness and mercy and we walk among our enemies in perfect peace, daily feasting on the blessings He has made available to us. God has a strategy to bless each and every one of us and we shouldn't be in a hurry, but we should wait on Him to complete His preparations because we know that we will have a lavish feast which we will enjoy in peace at the end of it all. Remember Proverbs 10:22: *"The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it."*

He anoints our heads with oil – Because we are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9) we are anointed/equipped by God for the task ahead. He doesn't expect us to function on our own and requires us to come to Him, seeking his guidance on how to function in our assignment on a daily basis.

Our cups run over – God isn't stingy. Far from it, He is a most generous God and He blesses us so we can be a blessing to others.

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! Selah (Psalm 68:19)

Reflect: The blessing He has prepared for you isn't just for your satisfaction but will provide an overflow and bless the lives of others.



Day 10

The Dwelling

'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.' (Psalms 23:6)

David had his heart set on a relationship with God in his lifetime and also in eternity. He knew God would be with him all the days of his life and so he could say with confidence that goodness and mercy would follow him. He knew God's hand was upon him as he shared in Psalm 139:5 – "You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me."

Such confidence only comes from a place of diligent worship and communion. David recognised God's might, power, authority, mercy and love. It wasn't something he read about, these were things he experienced first-hand. He was confident about how the rest of his days would turn out and we can also share in that confidence, provided our hearts and lives are right with God.

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? (John 14:2)

David knew where he would spend eternity – in the Lord's house. This confidence isn't limited to David alone but open to all who proclaim Jesus as saviour and diligently walk in His ways. We don't have to be confused about our eternal state and we shouldn't leave it to chance.

Prayer: Ask Jesus to show you what your relationship with Him is like from His perspective not yours. Ask Him to show you what areas need correcting then ask Him for the Holy Spirit's help to make the corrections and commit to yielding to the Holy Spirit's help.

Thanks for completing the study. We'll love to hear from you, so please connect with us on:

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