

*Questions and Insights
for Deeper Understanding
and Discussion*

*God Is Your Confidence,
Hope, and Joy*

Psalm 23

1. What truth is taught and what promise is made in Psalm 23:4 regarding all the seasons, years, even the minutes, of your life?
2. How are you comforted or encouraged that the Lord promises to be “with” you through all the seasons of life (Psalm 23:4)?
3. On the presence of God, what did David, the inspired writer of Psalm 23, also say in Psalm 16:8? What does Isaiah 43:2 say on the same subject? And Isaiah 41:10?

God is with you! At every point, every season, every moment, He is with you.

David, the Psalmist

When I'm deciding whether or not to purchase a book, I always read the backcover copy or the book's dust jacket. I want to know what qualifies the author to write on the subject matter. Knowing something about the author also helps me better understand that person's approach and work.

So let's find out about David, the person God used to bring us Psalm 23 with its many marvelous promises. Check out the scriptures listed to see what God tells us about David.

1. Where was David when Samuel came to anoint him to be king (1 Samuel 16:11)?

- Where was he when Saul needed a musician (16:19)?

- And where was he when his father needed him to take supplies to his brothers (17:20)?

2. David was probably a teenager when he faced Goliath. How did his experience as a shepherd help him fight the giant (17:34-36)?

- What shepherd implements did David use against Goliath (17:40)?

3. When God called David to lead His people, what did He say to him (2 Samuel 5:2)? And in 2 Samuel 7:8?

4. Describe David's leadership role according to Psalm 78:70-72.

We learned about David's seasons of youth, maturity, and leadership. But we also discovered that David's faith in a great God carried him through...

- ...a season of rejection
- ...a season of fear
- ...a season of discouragement
- ...a season of disappointment
- ...a season of heartbreak

1. How does David's great faith in God encourage and strengthen you in your seasons? Jot down specifics.
 - ✎ How do David's *great failures* encourage and instruct you in your seasons? Again, jot down specifics.

2. How do you think David's early career as a shepherd shaped and prepared him to lead God's people?

✎ Can you think of ways that God has used your past to shape your present? (And have you thanked Him?)

3. How did the prophet Samuel describe David (1 Samuel 13:14; see also Acts 13:22)?

✎ What do you think it means to be “a woman after God’s own heart”? Write it down and make this a matter of prayer.

David was a man of great faith, but he was also a man of great failure. And beloved, this is true of everyone!

4. How are you handling your failures? Do you need to admit any past or current sins?

5. What did David say happens when you and I (and David!) admit our sins (Psalm 51:3,7-14)? Why not make a list of your sins and talk to God about them right now?

6. Or maybe you’ve suffered. How does God help His children when they suffer?

Read the sobering scene described in 2 Samuel 12:13-20 and David’s efforts to go on.

7. What steps can you take today to rise up and go on after any disobedience or hard times?

➤ How does Philippians 3:13-14 help you?

➤ And how about 2 Corinthians 4:8-9?

➤ And Philippians 4:13?

God Cares for You

The Bible contains many references to God as our Shepherd. In fact, the phrase “the Lord is my shepherd” is a name of God—*Jehovah-Robi*. Let’s look at more descriptive scriptures.

Jehovah-Robi Feeds, Leads, and Warns

1. In Psalm 74:1 how does the psalmist view God’s people?

2. In Psalm 77:20 How does the psalmist view God’s guidance?
 - Who were two of God’s shepherds?

3. In Psalm 78:52-53 how does the psalmist view God’s people?
 - And God’s guidance?

4. In Psalm 79:13 how does the psalmist view God’s people?

5. In Psalm 80:1 how does the psalmist address God?

6. Look at Isaiah 40:11. What role and actions does Isaiah ascribe to God?

7. In John 10:11-16 and 26-28 who is speaking?

➤ How does He refer to Himself (verses 11 and 14)?

8. In Hebrews 13:20 how is Jesus referred to?

➤ And in 1 Peter 2:25?

➤ In 1 Peter 5:4?

➤ In Revelation 7:17?

9. What new assurances do you enjoy when you realize Jesus is your Shepherd?

10. According to John 10, verses 4, 5, 14, 27, and 28, what are the characteristics of Jesus' sheep?

Your Moment with the Shepherd

Now that you know more about the role of a good shepherd and his care for his sheep think about how the Good Shepherd feeds you.

1. How's your appetite for God's food—for His Word?
 - ✦ Describe your times in God's Word—in God's green pastures—this past week.
 - ✦ Do you need to make any adjustments in your "feeding" habits? If yes, what are they?

2. How can you alter your daily schedule to allow more time to feed on God's Word?

3. How is your willingness to follow *Jehovah-Robi*? Do you need to change anything? If yes, what will you do?

4. Is there anything God is asking of you today that you are failing to heed and follow? Are there any adjustments you need to make in your "following" habits?

Jehovah-Rohi warns us because He wants the best for us.

5. Are any warning lights flashing in your life? Are you playing life too close to the edge? Are you dabbling in areas of sin? Do you need to change anything?

6. Are you partaking of things God explicitly warns you against? Are you involved in any activities that aren't honoring or pleasing God? If so, what are you going to do?

7. Are there any adjustments you need to make in your "listening" habits? Does anything need to be eliminated from your life? Please explain.

8. Think on the beautiful description of God in Isaiah 40:11. What are the fears you face today? How do these words about God's care "comfort you" (as Isaiah 40:1 says)?

9. Look again at your answers from John 10. As you consider the behaviors that characterize the sheep that follow Jesus, which ones are you doing well? Are there any that need work?
 - Read the descriptions of the restless and discontent sheep, the worldly sheep, and the devoted sheep. Which of these sheep most closely resemble you? Do

you have any corrections to make in your “following” habits? What are they?

- ✎ Write out a plan of action and a prayer of commitment to be a more devoted follower.

10. What was the sacrifice of the Good Shepherd on your behalf (John 10:11,15)?

- ✎ In view of Jesus’ willingness to make the sacrifice, what steps will you take to be a more committed and obedient follower?

How blessed we are to have a God who cares about us, His women, and to have the care of our God! The extent of God’s promise to care for His own is immeasurable, unsearchable, and fathomless. Read the list of some of God’s care of and for you. Look up these powerful promises in your Bible and memorize them. And don’t forget to thank *Jehovah-Rohi!*

- ✎ God will “keep” you as the apple of His eye (Psalm 17:8).
- ✎ He will “keep” you in all your ways (Psalm 91:11).
- ✎ He will “keep” you in perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3).
- ✎ He will “keep” that which you have committed to Him against that day (2 Timothy 1:12).
- ✎ He will “keep” you from the hour of temptation

and support you in the time of trial (1 Corinthians 10:13).

- He will “keep” you from falling (Jude 24).
- He will “keep” you as a shepherd cares for his flock of sheep (Jeremiah 31:10).¹

God Will Always Provide

One of my favorite Christian songs is “All That I Need Is All That You Are.” Not only is the song lovely and the lyrics inspiring, but the title seems to say it all when it comes to the person of God and His provision for our needs.

As we think about the essential needs in life, it’s comforting to have the promise of God’s provision so that we may confidently declare, “I shall not want,” and realize that all that we need is all that He is. God’s provision for us illustrates another character trait of the Lord as revealed in His name *Jehovah-Jireh*, “The Lord will provide.”

Meet Jehovah-Jireh

1. Quickly read through Genesis 22:1-14, which tells the story of *Jehovah-Jireh*.
 - Who are the principal people (verses 1 and 2)?
 - What was God’s command (verse 2)?
 - What was the problem (verse 7)?
 - What answer was given (verse 8)?

- What was God's solution (verse 13)?

 - What name was given to the place where this occurred (verse 14)?
2. Both Abraham and his wife, Sarah, had a long history of trusting God...and of learning to trust God. Hebrews 11 has been given such titles as "The Saints' Hall of Fame," "The Honor Roll of Old Testament Saints," and "Heroes of Faith."² Note the instances and the details of faith in God as revealed in...
- Abraham in Hebrews 11:8-10—

 - Sarah in Hebrews 11:11—

 - Abraham and Sarah's offspring in Hebrews 11:12-13—

 - Abraham in Hebrews 11:17-19—
3. Now that we've noted the faith of Sarah, read about her encounter with the Lord in Genesis 18:1-15. What announcement did the Lord make in verse 10?
- And what was Sarah's response (verses 10-15)?

- And why (verses 11-13)?

- What searing question did the Lord ask Sarah—and you!—in verse 14?

4. What is said of Abraham's faith in Romans 4:20-21?

God Provides

1. Did you catch what the apostle Paul said in Romans 4 about Abraham's faith in "the promises of God"? Look at these scriptures and note the promises made and the conditions for them.

- | | <i>Promise</i> | <i>Condition</i> |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| ➤ Psalm 34:9— | | |
| ➤ Psalm 34:10— | | |
| ➤ Psalm 84:11— | | |

2. Truly God promises to meet the needs of His people! Note several more instances of God's provision in these verses:

- Deuteronomy 2:7—How long had God met His people's needs?

- ✎ Deuteronomy 8:7—What did God promise His people in the Promised Land?

Your Moment with the Shepherd

1. Jot down what you consider to be the primary necessities in life.

Now write down the promise from Psalm 23:1.

- ✎ For an additional blessing look again at the remainder of Psalm 23. List the many “needs” God promises to meet.
2. *Jehovah-Jireh!* Think back on the command God gave to Abraham in Genesis 22:2. What do you think you would have done?
 3. Look back at Sarah’s encounter with the Lord in Genesis 18. As you think about your faith in God and your responses to your problems and to His promises, what answer are you exhibiting in response to God’s question, “Is anything too hard for the LORD?”
 - ✎ If you’re facing a seemingly impossible situation now, how does the thought of *Jehovah-Jireh*, “the LORD will provide,” encourage you?

God Gives You Rest

The Place of Rest

1. Quickly note how these references describe “green pastures.”
 - Deuteronomy 32:2—

 - 2 Samuel 23:4—

 - Proverbs 27:25—

 - How do these conditions contribute to the sheep’s rest?

2. What is pictured in the images of these scriptures that refer to physical “resting places” of sheep, camels, and people?
 - 2 Samuel 7:8 through Isaiah 65:10—

 - Ezekiel 25:5—

 - Isaiah 32:18—

The Plan for Rest

1. According to Exodus 20:10, what is God's purpose for the Sabbath?
2. Jesus knew of our need for rest and planned for it. How does Mark 6:30-32 reveal this?
3. What do these verses indicate about Jesus' physical needs?

➤ Mark 4:38—

➤ John 4:6—

The Procedure for Rest

1. According to Psalm 23:2, what is God's procedure for ensuring rest for His own?
2. The prophet Elijah was one of God's choice servants who was assigned by God to prophesy a long, extended drought to King Ahab (1 Kings 17:1). When Elijah next saw King Ahab, it resulted in a showdown between God and His representative, Elijah, and the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40). At this point, Queen Jezebel threatened Elijah's life, and he ran away. Now read 1 Kings 19.

- How distraught was Elijah (verses 1-5)?

- How did God minister to Elijah (verses 5-6)?

- And how did He minister to him again (verse 7)?

- What was the result of Elijah's rest and God's provision and care for him (verse 8)?

- How else did God tend to and encourage His faithful, tired prophet (verses 9-21)?

Your Moment with the Shepherd

1. Take a minute to think about the times when you need rest.
What is your mental condition?
 - And your physical condition?

 - And your spiritual condition?

 - How does a time of resting in the presence of the Lord refresh you?

2. Think about the three conditions that interfere with the rest every woman needs—fear, hunger, and fighting. How do these promises, assurances, and instructions contribute to your rest and peace?

Fear

- Consider Isaiah 41:10. How does God promise to fortify you?

- What does God promise in these verses?
 - Joshua 1:9—

 - Deuteronomy 31:6—

 - Exodus 33:14—

 - Psalm 3:5 and 4:8—

Hunger

“God’s ordinances are the green pastures in which food is provided for all believers; the word of life is the nourishment of the new man. It is milk for babes, pasture for sheep...a green pasture for faith to feed in.”³

- Do a heart check: Answer the following questions and if improvement is needed, note what you're going to do.
 - Do you consider your times in God's Word a *necessity*?

 - Do you enjoy the nourishment of God's Word *regularly*?

 - Is your appetite for God's Word *increasing*?

 - Which stage best describes your times in God's Word: cod liver oil stage, shredded wheat stage, or peaches and cream stage?

Fighting

- Describe your internal emotions and their physical effects on you when you're involved in an argument, quarrel, or dispute, or when you witness these between others.

- How does the elimination or solution of the problem bring rest?

3. Does it comfort you to know that the Lord “makes” you lie down in green pastures and rest? In your life, think of times God made you rest. How did He provide it? What were the results?

4. “Waiting” can become one of God’s opportunities for rest for His busy and breathless and sometimes beat-up sheep. How do you think waiting causes you to grow in patience?
 - How do you think waiting creates an opportunity to learn to trust the Lord?

 - How do you think waiting causes you to grow in patience?

 - How do you think waiting encourages and creates greater fellowship with God?

 - How do you think waiting will energize you for the day...or days...ahead?

 - What can you do today to “lie down” in God’s “green pastures” and experience His promised rest?

God's Peace Is Always Available to You

Our Shepherd knows our need for peace. He promises to lead us to places, such as still waters, to ensure that we drink in, take in, and bask in His peace.

1. Note how these scriptures show how the Lord leads us:

➤ Psalm 77:20—

➤ Isaiah 40:11—

➤ Isaiah 49:10—

The Still Waters

1. There's no doubt that every woman has a need for peace as she lives her busy life in a hectic world. However, throughout time God's people have found their "still waters," their "place," for tapping into God's peace. Note the places (or Person) where these people of God found peace.

➤ Abraham (Genesis 19:27)—

- ✦ David (Psalm 32:7)—

- ✦ The psalmist (Psalm 119:114)—

- ✦ Daniel (Daniel 6:10)—

- ✦ Mary (Luke 10:39)—

- ✦ Jesus (Mark 1:35)—

- ✦ Jesus (Luke 22:39-41)—

Meet Jehovah-Shalom and Gideon

1. *Jehovah-Shalom!* Quickly read through Judges 6:11-24.
 - ✦ How did the Angel of the Lord greet Gideon (verse 12)?

 - ✦ What did the Angel of the Lord ask of Gideon (verse 14)?

 - ✦ Why was Gideon so disturbed (verse 15)?

- How did the Lord calm Gideon's fears (verse 16)?

- What caused Gideon to fear for his life again (verse 22)?

- And what was the Lord's answer (verse 23)?

- And how did Gideon commemorate this encounter with God (verse 24)?

More About the Shepherd

1. God's peace is promised to you in the New Testament. What new information do you learn from these verses?
 - John 14:27—

 - Romans 5:1—

 - 1 Corinthians 14:33—

 - 2 Thessalonians 3:16—

2. Did you relate to the story of my friend and her struggle with “the four **A**’s”? Look at what God’s Word says about each of the “**A**’s.” While you work through this exercise, ask your heart if there is anything you’re failing to do to follow God.

➤ **Anything** (Acts 9:6)—

➤ **Anywhere** (Isaiah 6:8)—

➤ **Any time** (Matthew 2:13-14)—

➤ **At any cost** (Philippians 3:7-8)—

3. How does Abraham’s obedience to God in Genesis 12:1 and 4 demonstrate the four **A**’s?

Meet the Prince of Peace

1. Have you made a “transaction” with *Jehovah-Shalom*, the Prince of Peace? If so, recount briefly how you became a Christian.

- If you haven't, why not? Do you want to do it now? Then ask God by praying this prayer or something similar.

Lord, I want to be Your child, a woman after Your heart. I want to live my life in You, and through You, and for You. I acknowledge my sins and shortcomings, my failure to live up to Your standards. I received Your Son, Jesus Christ, into my heart, giving thanks that He died on the cross for my sins. Thank You for giving me Your grace and Your strength so that I can follow You wholeheartedly. Amen.

2. What hurdle are you facing? And what fears do you have regarding the future?

- How does it encourage you to know that the Lord, your Good Shepherd, leads you every step of the way through life?
- How does it encourage you to know that God leads you to places of peace “beside still waters”?
- How does the fact that the Lord is with you strengthen your courage and give you peace to face what you know is coming...and what you don't know is coming?

3. Do you have a time and a place where you retreat regularly to commune with the God of peace? Describe them.

- My time is...

➤ My place is...

4. As you think about the four **A**'s, is there any area in your life where you are failing to follow God's leading? Can you pinpoint why? Are you afraid? Worried? Anxious? Disobedient? Are there fears? Worries? Anxieties?

➤ Ask God to give you His strength to commit to follow Him as He leads you so that you may experience His perfect peace.

5. After learning more about God's promise of peace, can you think of any instance when you should not enjoy God's peace? Please explain.

➤ How do you plan to use the truths learned in this lesson to fight against fear or worry and gain God's peace? Be specific.

Isn't it reassuring to have the promise of God's peace? How *could* we, as busy women, make it through life—even through one day!—without it? But God is faithful to lead us to a place of peace, at least in our hearts, if not in our surroundings. God's peace is promised and available...if we would but follow our Shepherd. So, dear one, *walk* with God. Then you will experience God's peace!

God Is Your Healer

What woman doesn't need her soul restored? And what woman doesn't need her spirit healed? Do you ever feel the need for a spiritual repair job? Take heart! Your Shepherd sees your need.

1. According to Hebrew scholars, the restoration of the "soul" in Psalm 23:3 means the rekindling or quickening of the exhausted spirit. Look up in a dictionary a few meanings of *restore* and jot them down.

2. Now that you have a better idea of the concept of restoration, what needs are revealed in these verses?
 - Psalm 19:7—

 - Psalm 23:3—

 - Psalm 51:12—

 - Psalm 147:3—

 - Isaiah 61:1—

✎ Jeremiah 3:22—

✎ Jeremiah 27:22—

✎ Jeremiah 30:17—

✎ Galatians 6:1—

The Character of Jehovah-Rophe

1. *Jehovah-Rophe*, meaning “Jehovah heals,” teaches us more about God’s ministry of healing and restoration. What great event in Israel’s history is told in Exodus 14:27-31?

✎ How did the Israelites respond (15:1)?

✎ According to 15:22-23, what was the first trial God’s people faced in the wilderness?

✎ And how did they respond (verse 24)?

✎ What was God’s solution (verse 25)?

- ✎ List the four requirements God laid out for His people in verse 26.

- ✎ What did God promise to do if these four conditions were met?

- ✎ How does God refer to Himself in verse 26?

The Case of Elijah

1. As we've already learned, Elijah was one of God's cast-down sheep. List "The Course of Restoration":
 - ✎ Stage 1—

 - ✎ Stage 2—

 - ✎ Stage 3—

2. Read again 1 Kings 19. Note these three stages of restoration in Elijah's cast-down condition. How did God "heal" and restore His beloved prophet and servant?
 - ✎ Stage 1—

➤ Stage 2—

➤ Stage 3—

More About the Shepherd

1. God's restoration is also emphasized in the New Testament. List God's concerns for the saints in these verses. Notice that the emphasis is on spiritual restoration rather than on physical restoration.

➤ Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-18—

➤ Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19—

➤ Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:9-11—

➤ Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9-12—

➤ John's greeting to Gaius in 3 John 2—

Your Moment with the Shepherd

1. In general, how do you respond to physical or emotional testing?
 - What spiritual responses does God desire from you, regardless of your physical condition?

2. As you think about God's promise in Psalm 23:3 to heal and restore your broken heart and crushed spirit and to bind up your wounds (see Psalm 147:3), what better response will you give to testing in the future?

3. What encouragement do you receive from God's restoration of His prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 19:4-15?
 - And what practical lessons do you learn from taking care of your physical and spiritual condition?

 - About ministering to others?

4. What actions can you take to ensure spiritual health and healing in...
 - feeding on God's Word?

✦ communing with God through prayer?

5. Jot down a plan of action that will help you look to God to rekindle and quicken your soul the next time you are down or discouraged or suffering physically.

Healing. Just hearing the word we immediately think of physical healing. Physical health is definitely important, especially when it's deteriorating. But how encouraging to know that God is more concerned for our spiritual health, and He promises to strengthen us spiritually for the physical trials that will most assuredly come our way. Though outwardly we are wearing down and wasting away, inwardly we are being restored and renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Dear one, rather than giving up or giving in to weakness, weariness, and depression, let us look up—up to God and to His high and treasured promises. Let God give us His promised strength to deal with the inevitable and trust Him to work out the impossible.

God Will Guide You

God not only leads us as His women beside His still waters and restores our souls, He promises to guide us in the paths of righteousness.

As a child of God (and a sheep of the Shepherd!), your desire is to follow His guidance. What do you learn from these scriptures about that desire?

1. What does the psalmist cry out for in Psalm 16:11?

➤ And in Psalm 27:11?

2. What does the psalmist say will help him stay on the path (Psalm 119:105)?

The “Paths”

1. The word “path” is also translated “way” in the Bible. What do you learn from these verses?

➤ Proverbs 12:15—

➤ Proverbs 31:27—

☞ Isaiah 30:21—

☞ Isaiah 55:8-9—

The God of Righteousness

1. Our Shepherd faithfully guides us, but we have choices to make about following. What do these references teach you about following the Shepherd's guidance?

☞ Psalm 119:30—

☞ Psalm 119:59-60—

☞ Proverbs 3:6—

2. Read Proverbs 4:14-15. List the six specific instructions God gives us for walking in righteousness and staying on His righteous path.
3. Now read Proverbs 4:23-27 and 23:19. Itemize the specific instructions God gives us in each verse for walking in righteousness and staying on His righteous path.

The Purpose of God's Guidance

1. According to Psalm 23:3, why does God guide us in the paths of righteousness?

2. *Jehovah-Tsidkenu* means “the Lord our righteousness” and reveals the righteousness of God to us and His standard of righteousness. As we look into the history of this name of God, we learn that God’s people continually sinned against Him for 100 years before being taken captive. Obviously they needed help in meeting God’s standard. What was God’s solution (Jeremiah 23:5-6)?

➤ What promise from God would this future event fulfill (2 Samuel 7:16)?

More About the Shepherd

1. As New Testament believers we receive help from God to walk in His paths of righteousness. What do you learn from these scriptures about how God helps us?
 - John 16:13—

 - Galatians 6:1—

 - James 1:5—

➤ Hebrews 13:17—

Your Moment with the Shepherd

1. Evaluate “the path” of your life. Are you walking in God’s “stiff and straight” path of righteousness? Explain.

➤ Are there any areas where you have strayed off the path of righteousness?

2. List the seven A’s that quickly turn our bad habits and wrong ways into a righteous walk.

➤ Which of these areas are you weak in? Check or circle them, explain, and write down what you’ll do to remedy any problems.

3. We are constantly bombarded by other voices. According to Scripture, what are some of these influences?

➤ 1 Corinthians 15:33—

➤ Galatians 5:16—

 1 John 2:15—

4. Are you listening to voices other than God's? Explain.

5. Now look at Psalm 119:30. God *promises* to guide you. Do you need to spend more time in His Word looking at His “stiff and straight” ordinances and being guided by Him?
 -  What plan of action can you make...and take to improve in this area?

6. “For His name’s sake” is an important reason God guides us. How does this relate to you and your family? How can you more rigorously guard your family’s reputation? How can you more faithfully watch over the ways—the paths—of your loved ones (Proverbs 31:27)?
 -  What can you do today to be more careful to guard your Shepherd’s name and reputation?

7. Check the “heart check” questions at the end of this chapter in the main text. Then pray along with David in Psalm 139:23-24 and search your heart:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.*

- ✦ What must you do to benefit from God's promise to guide you as you obediently follow Him?

My friend, it doesn't matter *where* God is leading and guiding you. It only matters that *He* is your Guide, and that He *is* leading you in *His* paths of righteousness!

God Never Leaves You

Our walk through God's promises turns from green pastures, still waters, and paths of righteousness to the valley of the shadow of death. God's promises will assist us in this new path we travel with Him.

The Way of the Path

1. Note how the Bible uses "the valley of the shadow of death" and any other descriptive words used with "shadow of death."
 - ✦ Job 3:5—darkness, cloud, blackness
 - ✦ Job 10:21-22—
 - ✦ Job 16:16—
 - ✦ Job 24:17—
 - ✦ Job 28:3—
 - ✦ Job 34:22—

- ✦ Job 38:17—

- ✦ Psalm 44:19—

- ✦ Psalm 107:10 and 14—

- ✦ Jeremiah 2:6—

- ✦ Jeremiah 13:16—

2. In ten words or less, summarize the meaning of “shadow of death.”

Walk in the Path

1. Psalm 23 is full of peaceful, pastoral imagery. But leading sheep was a dangerous profession. David knew what it was like to walk daily with the sheep. What did he experience along the way (1 Samuel 17:34-36)?

2. In Genesis 31:38-40 Jacob details what it was like to shepherd the flocks of Laban. What were some of the dangers and drudgeries?

3. Describe the gruesome scene pictured in Amos 3:12.

4. According to Luke 2:8, what was another duty of shepherds?

More About the Shepherd

1. Even with the dangers of the shadow of death, why was the psalmist not afraid (Psalm 23:4)?

 - ✦ Deuteronomy 31:6—

 - ✦ Joshua 1:9—

 - ✦ Psalm 46:1-2—

 - ✦ Isaiah 41:10—

3. The New Testament is also filled with promises of the presence of God. What do these scriptures reveal?

 - ✦ Matthew 28:20—

➤ Acts 18:9-10—

➤ Hebrews 13:5-6—

Your Moment with the Shepherd

1. Clearly shepherding had its dangers and terrors. Every shepherd and his flock spent time in “the valley of the shadow of death.” And so do we. What was the last time you faced a particularly dark and difficult situation? How did the promise of God’s presence help you?

2. Is there anything you dread in the future? Why? How can the promise of God’s presence dispel your fear?
 - How does David’s famous “I will” from Psalm 23:4 help you with the temptation to fear?

3. Every woman faces trials and tragedies, difficulties and discouragements. In your current difficulty, how are you looking to the Lord, counting on His promised presence, and refusing to fear?
 - What three commands does Jesus give in John 14:1?

- How are you doing in the Trust Department? What can you do to increase your trust in God and His promises?

 - Look again at the promises regarding fear and the presence of God in chapter 3. Which one stands out to you the most? Memorize it...and fear not!
4. What does Jesus say is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives today (John 14:16-17)?
5. At all times—even in the darkest times—you...
- ...walk by divine appointment
 - ...walk in divine presence
 - ...walk by divine grace
 - ...walk by divine purpose
- How can you put these to use in your current hard time? What can you do to remember them for the next time you face difficulties?

It's also true that the more lofty our thoughts about God, the better we are able to cope with the issues of life. Write out how your attitude would improve in your current trials by remembering who God is and His characteristics and promises.

God's Comfort Is Only a Prayer Away

Jehovah-Shammah

1. *Jehovah-Shammah*, “Jehovah is there,” brings much comfort as we walk with God through life. God promised His presence among His people from the beginning. Note some of the manifestations of His presence:
 - Exodus 23:20—

 - Exodus 40:34-38—

 - 2 Chronicles 7:1-3—

2. Due to the desecration of God's temple by God's people what happened (Ezekiel 10:18)?

3. What is the final promise for the new heaven and earth (Ezekiel 48:35)?

Ezekiel 48:35 says: “the city is called YHWH [Jehovah] Shammah, ‘The LORD is there.’” The departed glory of God...has returned...and His dwelling, the temple, is in the very center of the district given over to the Lord. With this final promise, all of the unconditional promises God made to Israel in...

the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12),
the Levitic Covenant (Numbers 25),
the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7), and
the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31)

have been fulfilled. So this final verse provides the consummation of Israel’s history—the returned presence of God!⁴

4. Note what these verses say about God’s presence.

➤ Psalm 46:1—

➤ verses 4-5a—

➤ verse 7—

➤ verse 11—

➤ Psalm 132:13-14—

➤ Isaiah 12:6—

✎ Isaiah 63:9—

✎ Jeremiah 3:17—

Comfort Is There

1. When David acknowledged God's presence in Psalm 34:4, what effect did it have upon him?

2. Who are the people who enjoy God's comfort in Psalm 34:18?

✎ And in Psalm 145:18?

3. As a New Testament believer, you have another source of help and comfort. What Person of God is always present with you according to these scriptures?

✎ John 14:17—

✎ 1 Corinthians 3:16—

✎ 1 Corinthians 6:19—

- Regarding comfort, what promises, truths, and benefits do you discover in 2 Corinthians 1:3 and 4? (Don't forget to notice that God's comfort is active, extensive, purposeful, and specific.)

The Rod and the Staff Are There

1. In addition to God's marvelous presence, you also have the presence of His weapons—His rod and His staff—to comfort you. Note some of the uses of these two weapons.

- Genesis 49:10—

- Exodus 21:19—

- Leviticus 27:32—

- 2 Samuel 7:14—

- 2 Samuel 23:21—

✦ Micah 7:14—

✦ Zechariah 8:4—

As you can readily see, these two implements had a variety of uses. In the imagery of Psalm 23, you can also sense the comfort and confidence the rod and the staff brought to the shepherd and the sheep.

Your Moment with the Shepherd

Comfort! What woman doesn't need it daily? And yet we have all the comfort we need in the presence of God, who is near to all who believe in Him and belong to Him.

1. How does the knowledge of the Shepherd's weapons and His ability to use them on your behalf comfort you? And in what specific situations?

2. How does God use these tools to protect you?

✦ To correct you?

✦ To guide you?

➤ To dispel your fears?

3. As you think about your day, your week, the year ahead, and the path of the future, how does the promise of God's presence comfort you? After writing out your answer, thank God for His presence and care every day, all the way.

God Is Your Friend... and So Much More

Some say there's nothing like Middle Eastern hospitality. Let's learn a little more about what it meant to be a guest in a Middle Eastern home or tent at the time Psalm 23 was written...and how as one of God's women you can extend hospitality and friendship today.

The Server, the Supply, and the Style

1. Look at the scene of the gracious hosts, Abram and Sarai, in Genesis 18:1-8. Note the preparations they made for their guests. Also write down what is related to the server, what is related to the supply, and what is related to the style.

➤ Eagerness (verse 2)—

➤ Posture (verse 2)—

➤ Attitude (verse 3)—

➤ Provision (verse 4)—

➤ Menu (verses 6-8)—

➤ Preparation (verses 6-7)—

➤ Presentation (verse 8)—

2. Now look in on the scene in Genesis 19:1-3. What similarities do you notice? Again, note the information about the *server*, the *supply*, and the *style*.

➤ Verse 1—

➤ Verse 2—

➤ Verse 3—

3. Consider “the wise woman” from Proverbs 9:1-6. She is a model of hospitality for every woman. What was a part of her work (verse 2)? Once again, what described the server, the supply, and the style?

➤ What kind of attitude did she exhibit toward hospitality (verse 3)?

4. A few scenes of hospitality and friendship in the Holy Land from

the New Testament reveal the same importance. As usual, pay attention to the *server*, the *supply*, and the *style*.

- Who extended the loving care and service of hospitality in John 13:2-5?

- And to whom?

- And in John 21:12-13?

- And to whom?

5. Lydia extended hospitality and friendship to many. Who were the recipients of her graciousness in Acts 16:14-15 and 40? What did she offer?

6. Aquila and Priscilla continually opened their hearts and home to others. To whom—and in what ways—did they extend their gracious hospitality and friendship in...

- Acts 18:1-3—

- Romans 16:3-5—

- 1 Corinthians 16:19—

7. Mary, the mother of John Mark, also opened her heart and home to others. To whom and for what purpose, according to Acts 12:12?

8. What does the New Testament say to you in this vital area of hospitality and friendship with other believers?
 - Romans 12:13—

 - Hebrews 13:2—

 - 1 Peter 4:9—

A Sample of Blessings

1. List the ten blessings that are available and that you can enjoy as a child of God. Also note your personal pattern of hospitality toward others. When was the last time someone offered you the blessing of hospitality? What did he or she do?

Your Moment with the Shepherd

1. Think about your family and your opportunities to minister to their physical and spiritual needs at the table. Then read over

the ten blessings characteristic of a visit in the Lord's tent. How do you rate as a server?

➤ How would you rate your supply? Your style?

➤ How can you make the time spent at your table more of an intimate feast and a festival of joy?

2. As you take in these warm and generous and gracious instances of friendship to strangers, or "stranger love" (the meaning of hospitality), what do you conclude about hospitality?

➤ About mealtime?

➤ About meal preparations?

➤ Can you think of two or three changes you need to make in the area of hospitality?

3. What blessings do your family and guests experience when they step into your house? Is there more you can do to make them feel welcomed and loved?

Dear sister, I have read countless surveys that identify the Number One problem women face as loneliness. Most of the women who report this as a pressing problem are either single and have no close friends or they are married to husbands who are distant either by design or because of the demands of work.

For a Christian woman, loneliness should be only a fleeting issue. Why? Because we have a friend who is always here—Jesus—whom we can always talk to and visit with.

Think about this: Your hospitality—your open heart and open home—is a way you can extend the care and friendship you enjoy with Jesus to others.

God Will Always Protect You

Wasn't it exciting to look at the generous hospitality portrayed in Psalm 23:5? Now let's consider the setting for this gracious provision—"in the presence of my enemies." The host promises his guests protection.

The Situation

1. What was the situation and the setting described for the weary pilgrim's feast in Psalm 23:5?

2. In the book of Ezra we meet Ezra, a godly man preparing for a pilgrimage from Babylon to Jerusalem.
 - What did he do for protection before beginning his trek (Ezra 8:21)?

 - Why (verse 22)?

 - How did God answer Ezra's prayer (verses 23 and 31)?

 - Those who entered a Middle-Eastern home were promised protection by the host, regardless of cost. Look at

Joshua 2:1-6 and briefly note the host and the guest(s) and the details surrounding their safety.

The Scene

1. Describe the lavish provisions listed in Psalm 23:5.

2. Review the story of Lot's hospitality to his guests in Genesis 19.
 - Describe Lot's attitude (verse 1).

 - Describe his invitation (verse 2).

 - When the angels declined, how did Lot persist (verse 3)?

 - Once his guests were inside, what did Lot do (verse 3)?

Protection and Security

1. In Lot's hospitality to two angels, what happened after dinner (verse 4)?

- What did the people want (verse 5)?
- What did Lot do about the situation (verses 6-7)?
- In verse 8?
- What next happened to Lot (verse 9)?
- How far was Lot willing to go to protect his guests?

Victory

1. Sometimes a prisoner was chained to the pillars of a palace and forced to “feast” his eyes on a feast celebrating his defeat. In Judges 16:23 who was celebrating?
 - How did they celebrate (verse 25)?

Our Savior, Jehovah-Nissi

1. Even when there is no home or host in sight, you have the Lord to protect you from your enemies. This protection is provided by *Jehovah-Nissi*—meaning “Jehovah, my banner.” Look at Exodus 17 for the history of this great name of God.

- What is happening in this scene (verse 8)?

 - How does Moses respond (verse 9)?

 - What is Moses' role (verse 9)?

 - How does the battle go (verses 11-12a)?

 - And how is the problem solved (verse 12)?

 - And what is the result (verse 13)?

 - How does Moses respond to this (verse 15)?
2. How do you think Moses interpreted the victory of the Israelites? And why?
3. *Nissi*, or standard, or banner, was a pole with an emblem on top. For a better understanding of the use of a banner, look at Numbers 21.
- What was the problem (verses 5-6)?

 - What did God tell Moses to do (verse 8)?

- And what was the result?

- How were those who looked at the banner or bronze-serpent ensign on the pole protected?

More About the Shepherd

1. How do these verses describe some of the many ways God protects you as His dear child?
 - Proverbs 18:10—

 - Psalm 3:5 and 4:8—

 - Psalm 27:1—

 - Psalm 34:7—

 - Psalm 121:7-8—

 - John 10:28-29—

2. God has given you armor. Read Ephesians 6:10-17.
 - What commands are given to you in verses 10-11?

- ✦ What are the six most necessary pieces of spiritual armor God gives His children (verses 14-17)?

God's promises to protect every man and every woman who believes in, belongs to, and obeys Him!

Your Moment with the Shepherd

1. What is your favorite promise from the Bible that reminds you of God's protection? Record the situation that brought it to your mind.

2. When did you experience a victory or "won a battle" in the presence of your enemies because God's banner was over you? Explain.

3. What truths regarding the protective presence of the Lord are revealed in Psalm 139:1-12? Which of these truths mean the most to you...and why?

Does this bring to mind the popular chorus "His Banner over Me Is Love"? What a wonderful protection God's love is! God loved the world and sent His Son (John 3:16). Christ loved the church and died for her (Ephesians 5:25). And Jesus loves me, and nothing can separate me from that love (Romans 8:38-39). What a marvelous protection God's banner of love is for me...and you!

God Is Your Hope

In the final verse of Psalm 23, David turns his thinking from what God does and has done for him to what God will do for him forever.

Looking Back...and Up

1. Remember the box I shared about that held the receipts that showed how Jim was taking care of me and planning for my future? Psalm 23 is “the ultimate box” for us. Note all God promises in Psalm 23:1-5 that show He’s going to provide for His people.

Moving from Experience to Faith

1. Write down what God promises to provide for His own in the future as noted in Psalm 23:6.

Seven Reasons for Hope in the Future

1. **God’s Continued Goodness.** *Goodness* is one of God’s attributes and a grace He promises to His people. Read Exodus 33:12-23, an amazing scene between God and His servant Moses.
 - ✦ What was Moses’ request in verse 18?

- Why (verses 12-17)?

- What was God's response to His timid servant (verse 19)?

- And in Exodus 34:6?

- What do you learn about God's goodness from this verse?

- And from Psalm 31:19?

- And from Psalm 100:5?

2. God's Continued Mercy. *Mercy* is another of God's attributes and another of His graces that He promises we, as His people, will enjoy. In the following scriptures what do you learn about God's mercy and the hope His mercy brings?

- Exodus 33:18-19 and 34:6—

- Psalm 100:5—

- ✦ Psalm 103:4—
- ✦ Lamentations 3:22-23—
- ✦ Titus 3:5—

3. God's Continued Pursuit. David explains that God's goodness and mercy will "follow" him. These two solid, dependable qualities of the Lord will most assuredly "follow after" and "pursue" and "accompany" David. How vigorously? As vigorously as David's enemies pursued him!

- ✦ How did this promise bring hope to David's life?
- ✦ How does it bring hope to you?

4. God's Continued Presence.

- ✦ How long does David say God's goodness and mercy will pursue him?
- ✦ How does this promise bring hope to David's life?
- ✦ And to yours?

Your Moment with the Shepherd

1. Throughout our walk with the Shepherd in Psalm 23 we've focused on what we consider to be needs and God's gracious provision for those needs.

- ✦ What present difficulties are you dealing with?

- ✦ How does God's goodness and mercy provide hope and encouragement in your trials?

2. What possible future problems are you likely to encounter?

- ✦ How does the thought of God's goodness and mercy encourage you as you think about these problems?

3. Jesus commanded, "Do not worry about your life" (Matthew 6:25). Take a minute to evaluate yourself in this area of anxiety over the daily demands and circumstances of life. Rate yourself on a 1 to 10 worry scale (10 being really worried) and note how your behavior relates to Jesus' command to not worry.

- ✦ How will David's statement of hope ("Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life") help you comply with Jesus' charge in Matthew 6:25?

- ✦ And Matthew 6:34?

Hope is not to be seen as an uncertainty. We are not hoping that God's promises will come true. No, we have confident hope in God's promises because we have confidence in the character of God. A promise is only as good as the one who makes it. Because of God's goodness and mercy, we can be confident that He will follow through on what He promises!

God's Home Is Yours... Forever!

Just mention the word *home* and our minds tend to race toward decorating, organizing, and cleaning. We think about the nest we're creating for our loved ones. Magazines like *House Beautiful* and *Better Homes and Gardens* quickly come to mind. What does the Bible say about "home"?

Seven Reasons for Hope in the Future

1. What are the four "Reasons for Hope in the Future" we've already discussed?

5. Eternal Worship. The desire to worship God resides at the core of every believer's heart and soul. We adore our God and yearn to express that adoration. Our souls long to praise Him, and our lips long to join in with joyful thanksgiving.

David wrote, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Throughout his life David longed *for* God and longed to *be with* God. His words expressed a deep desire for the continual presence of God and the realization of constant communion with Him. What can we learn about the "house of the LORD" and about David's desires from these verses?

✦ Psalm 26:8—

- Psalm 27:4—

- What did other biblical writers note about “the house of the Lord”?
 - Psalm 84:4—

 - Psalm 100:3 and 4—

6. Eternal Home. David spent much of his life on the move.

1. How and where did David live a great deal of his life?

- 1 Samuel 22:1—

- 1 Samuel 24:1-3—

- 1 Samuel 26:1-3—

- 2 Samuel 15:27-28—

2. How does the psalmist refer to himself in Psalm 119:19?

3. And how does Peter refer to all Christians (1 Peter 2:11)?
4. What does Jesus tell us about “home” (John 14:2-3)?
7. **Eternal Presence.** The greatest blessing in every believer’s life will be that of eternal, intimate fellowship with God—being in His presence forever. We live for it, we long for it, and we look forward to it.
- How does Psalm 84:1-2 express the longings of the soul for God’s eternal presence?
 - And how does Revelation 21:3-4 explain God’s eternal presence and our experience in His presence?
 - What (or Who!) awaits us in heaven, according to Hebrews 8:1?

Eternal worship, an eternal home, and eternal presence! We are most blessed by these divine promises! David desired the fullness of joy and the forevermore pleasures of the Lord’s presence in a forevermore home. And the same is true of you and me.

Your Moment with the Shepherd

It’s obvious as David closes Psalm 23 with “the house of the LORD” in mind that he was consumed with God and the thought of enjoying an eternal home with Him.

1. How do you think these practices will help you be “consumed” with the Lord? How would they better prepare you to be with God forever?

- ✦ Matthew 6:19-21—

- ✦ Colossians 3:1—

- ✦ Colossians 3:2—

- ✦ Hebrews 10:25—

2. Meet Anna. She desired eternal worship, an eternal home, and the eternal presence of God. She also teaches us how to be consumed with God. Read her story in Luke 2:36-38, keeping in mind that she was probably a woman who had no kin.

- ✦ How did Anna choose to live out the days of her earthly existence? And which of the three reasons for hope did this choice fulfill?

- ✦ Where did Anna choose to live out her days? And which two of the three reasons for hope did this choice fulfill?

- ✦ What did Anna do that instructs us on what it means to

be consumed in the here-and-now with God while we wait for the hereafter?

- What can you do to live more like Anna and be more consumed with God and His promises?

3. Look again at Revelation 21:3-4. What about this scene causes you to yearn for a home in heaven?

4. How deeply do you long for heaven?

- What can you do to move your desire closer to David's desire to dwell in the house of the Lord forever?

5. Of the 12 promises described in Psalm 23, which one or ones give you the greatest assurance as you face the future?

These 12 promises from Psalm 23 are promises for a lifetime. But, dear one, there are more—many more!—promises available to you as you trek through life. The more you study God's Word, the more hope and joy you'll have. Keep in the Word!