

Psalm 23

We are so blessed to be where we are in our relationship with God. We've been given His Word and His truth many have yet to fully understand. I'm sure that when we started out on our journey into God's Word, and even still, there are times when we do not completely comprehend what we are reading. The direction we have been heading is focused on learning and understanding God's Word by breaking down the scriptures and discussing their meanings. Asking questions dispels doubts and can fill in the blanks we seek.

As we all know we are instructed in God's Word "to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4). Teaching "how" to read the Bible is foundational to coming to a place of understanding and knowledge of what we are reading. Without direction, scripture can become to many just words on a page. For the task at hand, wisdom and understanding scripture is critical to our spiritual growth and future service to those about us and to God in His Kingdom.

For some reason, Psalm 23 came to mind. It is one of the most recited of the Psalms like the "Lord's Prayer" is from **Matthew 6:9-13**. Do we understand the

meaning in each verse? Can we see other scriptures throughout the Bible that relate to this short Psalm? Absolutely! Isaiah 28:9-10 puts emphasis on knowing the totality of God's Word.

Isaiah 28:9-10- "Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? *Those* who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts, For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little;"

Looking and searching the scriptures in both the Old and New Testament is necessary to wholly grasp what it is we are reading. With that being said, we will break down Psalm 23's six verses. It is only six verses but prepare for scriptural overload and those listed are in no way exhaustive for each verse but sufficient to support each line and each precept.

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

Beginning in verse one, we know David is the author of this Psalm as he was for the majority of all Psalms. David describes God as his Shepherd and his provider.

1. The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want.

“The LORD is my Shepherd.” From our source at Merriam-Webster, a shepherd can be a person who attends sheep or a “Pastor.” A pretty clear and straight forward definition. A **shepherd** or **shepherd** is a person who tends, herds, feeds, or guards flocks of sheep. *Shepherd* derives from Old English *sceaphierde* (*sceap* 'sheep' + *hierde* 'herder'). Shepherding is one of the world's oldest occupations, and existing in agricultural communities around the world and an important part of pastoralist animal husbandry.

We are called sheep throughout scripture as is Christ called our Shepherd. A Shepherd tends to His flock and watches over them. Jesus is our Protector and our Keeper.

Psalm 121:1-8- “I will lift up my eyes to the hills: from where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He Who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He Who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve

your life. The LORD shall guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.

He gave His life for His sheep. Because of the vastness of the profession, numerous religions and cultures have symbolic or figurative references to the shepherd profession. Jesus referred to Himself as “The Good Shepherd.”

John 10:11- “I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”

Hebrews 13:20-21- “And *may* the God of peace, Who raised our Lord Jesus from among *the* dead—**that great Shepherd of the sheep**—through *the* blood of *the* everlasting covenant, Perfect you in every good work in order that you may do His will; accomplishing in you that which *is* well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom *be the* glory into the ages of eternity. Amen.”

Jesus Himself was also referred to as the “Lamb of God,” fulfilling the role of Shepherd and Sheep as He was human.

John 1:29- “On the next day, John sees Jesus coming to him, and he says, “Behold the **Lamb of God**, Who takes away the sin of the world.”

John 1:36- “And as he gazed upon Jesus walking, he said, “Behold the **Lamb of God!**” (also, **Revelation 5:6,12-13, Revelation 13:8**)

Jesus established Himself as human and His dependence on God the Father.

John 5:30- “I have no power to do anything of Myself; but as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father, Who sent Me.”

We too acknowledge our dependence on God for everything as David did.

Matthew 5:3-4- “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

“**I shall not want.**” Again, Merriam-Webster defines “want,” as a deficiency or **lack**. David has confidence that he would lack nothing for life as God would supply all his needs.

Psalm 34:8-10- “O taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. O fear the LORD, all you saints, for there is nothing lacking to those who fear Him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, **but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.**”

Psalm 84:11- “For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; **no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.**”

When we choose The Lord to be our Shepherd, we too have that faith and assurance God will supply all our needs.

Matthew 6:25-26- “Because of this I say to you, do not be anxious about your life *as to* what you shall eat and what you shall drink; nor about your body *as to* what you shall wear. Is not life *more* than food, and the body *more* than clothing?

Observe the birds of heaven: they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor do they gather into granaries; and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?”

1 Corinthians 1:7-9- “So that you do not lack *even one spiritual* gift while you are awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will also strengthen you to

the end that you may be unimpeachable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God *is* faithful, by Whom you were called into *the* fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

2. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

David relates himself to being a lamb lying calmly in a grassy meadow. We can envision a place of serenity being at peace and safe as the Shepherd watches over him. We can relate to his reference to being a sheep or a lamb under the Shepherd’s care.

Luke 10:3- “Go forth! Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.”

John 10:2-3- “But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”

1 Peter 2:25- “For you were as sheep going astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

3. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

David *knew* he was a sinner. “He restores my soul,” David knew God had redeemed him from his sins. David knew the joy of forgiveness as do we.

Isaiah 44:22- “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins; return to Me; for I have redeemed you.”

Isaiah 51:11- “Therefore, the redeemed of the LORD shall return and come with singing into Zion; and everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head. Gladness and joy shall overtake *them*; sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”

Psalms 31:5- “Into Your hand I commit My spirit; You have redeemed Me, O LORD God of truth.”

Psalm 51:1-2- “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin,”

Psalm 55:18- “He has *redeemed* my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, for there were many against me.”

Lamentations 3:58- “O LORD, You have pleaded for the causes of my soul; You have *redeemed* my life.”

We too are led by God on His path of righteousness. We know that following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and obeying ***all*** of God’s Commandments we are blessed *through* our obedience. We *glorify* God in our Sabbath keeping and observing His Holy Days.

Psalm 119:172- “My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness.”

Like David, God leads us when we love Him first! It was God who called us out of a world of sin and death. Our love, trust, and obedience are a reflection on His Name.

“Leads me”

Psalm 37:23-24- “The steps of a good man are made firm by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the LORD upholds him with His hand.”

Psalm 143:10-11- “Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground of uprightness. O LORD, for Your name’s sake quicken me; in Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.”

4. Yea, 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.

This verse finds its way to many uses, mostly on t-shirts boasting of bravery or other statements of bravado. David was professing His faith in God’s protection

even in the face of death. David's confidence was in being at peace with God, the type of peace that *only comes* from God.

Philippians 4:6-7- “Do not be anxious about anything; but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God in everything; And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.”

2 Timothy 1:7- “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound mindedness.”

David knew God would be with him *always* and in every circumstance. He knew he would never be alone. **Neither will we.**

Isaiah 41:10-11- “Do not fear; for I *am* with you; be not dismayed; for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you; yea, I will help you; yea, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.’ Behold, all those who were angered against you shall be ashamed and confounded; they shall be as nothing. And those who strive against you shall perish.”

1 Chronicles 28:20- “And David said to Solomon his son, “Be strong and of good courage, and do *it*. Do not fear, nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, *even* my God, *will be* with you. **He will not fail you nor forsake you** until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.”

David’s love for God cast out his fears. Even in “the valley of shadows,” he knew the Shepherd’s staff and rod would protect him.

1 John 4:18- “There is no fear in the love *of God*; rather, perfect love casts out fear because fear has torment. And the one who fears has not been made perfect in the love *of God*.”

We need to remember this love for God and know He will never leave or forsake us either. We have His promises throughout His Word. Keep these words in mind when you find yourself in the valley of the shadows.

Hebrews 13:5-6- “*Do not allow the* love of money to influence your behavior but *be* satisfied with what you have; for He has said, “In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.” So then, let us boldly say, “*The Lord is* my helper, and I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

Our faith must remain strong until our last breath. Our reward awaits.

Revelation 2:10- “Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer.

Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.”

5. You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

David knew that if he remained faithful *even* in the face of his enemies or adversity God would deliver him.

Psalm 143:9- “Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies; I flee to You to hide me.”

(also, **Psalm 27**)

God’s Word promises to bless us even when we are faced with trials and challenging times. We cannot give up and surrender. We know that trials and storms are for the strengthening of our faith.

James 1:2-4- “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials, Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But let endurance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything.”

God will not only supply our needs, but He will supply abundantly above all that we ask or think.

John 10:10- “The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and may have it more abundantly.”

Ephesians 3:19-20- “And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge; so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is *working* in us,”

Our works are reciprocal. God sees our efforts and knows our hearts. If we are truly seeking to grow in our relationship with Him, Jesus said He will give back to us.

Luke 6:38- “Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete out, it shall be measured again to you.”

Preparing a table in the presence of his enemies is a display of David’s confidence in God keeping him safe and taking him through the storm even when he was surrounded by danger. We have the same promises from God ***if*** our faith and obedience are unmistakable.

We are called out and set apart. We are anointed at baptism with God’s Holy Spirit. The abundance of life is a gift from God to those who obey His Word.

1 Corinthians 6:11- “And such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

2 Corinthians 1:21-22- “But He Who establishes us with you in Christ, and Who has anointed us, *is* God, Who has also sealed us and has given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

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.

David knew God was his provider and protector. He knew God would always provide and sustain his needs for life. He knew he would have peace following God's way of life. David knew his sins were forgiven and that he had been redeemed. David had no fear because of his love for God and his faith in Him. He was confident that God would lead and guide him through adversity even when surrounded by it. He knew he had been set apart and anointed for God's purpose. David knew *without a doubt*, God's promises were true and just and if he were faithful to his calling, he would dwell in God's Kingdom forever.

We have the peace and comfort of knowing that we belong to the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. *When* we live obedient lives according to God's Way, He claims us as His Own.

Psalm 100:3- "Know that the LORD, He is God. He has made us, and we are His; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Amen.