



He Restores my Soul | Drawing Closer to Jesus in Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. 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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psalm 23 ESV

King David, who is called “the sweet psalmist of Israel.” [2 Samuel 23:1](#), penned Psalm 23. The Psalms that precede and follow Psalm 23 were also written by David. In Psalm 22, David prophesied about Jesus on the cross. Then in Psalm 24, David points us to Jesus again, but this time as our ascended King. Bookended by these two Psalms, Psalm 23 teaches us to walk confidently with our Good Shepherd, trusting Him as He leads us through the valley that sits between the two mountains in a Believer's life, Mount Calvary and Mount Zion.

Well hello! I'm SO glad you are joining us today. Let's spend some time drawing closer to Jesus, our Good Shepherd in the 23rd Psalm. Each of the six sections of this post will be separated by a large graphic to help you to quickly find where you left off. In each of these sections, you will find:

1. Each verse from Psalm 23 will be displayed twice, first in the ESV version and then followed by the Amplified version.
2. *Meditation/Guided Prayer* with applicable Scripture links.
3. *Digging Deeper*: Biblical, personal or historical insight. With some Bible Verses to research and study.
4. *Questions for Personal Reflection*.

Meditating on God's Word is a transformational practice that will deepen our love walk with Jesus. Not only will we relish the spiritual nourishment, peace and joy that comes from meeting with Him. But the more we do it, the more our hunger for God will grow. And the more our hunger grows, the *more* He fills us to overflowing. In His presence, we will find restoration for our souls (our mind, will and emotions). If God can save, heal and restore this ridiculously lost and broken girl right here ... well, I promise He can do the same for YOU!

Make this *your* special time with Jesus. Take time to pray, meditate, study and reflect through each section in a way that personally works for you and Him. You might work through one verse or section at a time. Or maybe start by reading a sentence or two and then close your eyes and ponder what you just read in your heart. I like to breathe in deeply as I read a verse, then close my eyes and exhale out very slowly as I attempt to recite the verse from memory. Or I close my eyes and literally imagine myself as a little sheep walking alongside my Jesus, as the hem of His garment brushes my side. When I meditate like this, it helps me to remember that I truly am like a sheep and how much I need my Good Shepherd!

I love how David begins Psalm 23 with the words “*The Lord is ...*” and finishes with these words “*... the Lord forever!*” His

words help us to not only see God as the good and very loving Shepherd in our life. But also to realize this intimate relationship will never end!

Let's begin shall we?

Verse 1: The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want ...

- *The Lord is my Shepherd (to feed, to guide and to shield me), I shall not want ... (amplified version)*

Meditation/Guided Prayer ...

Lord Jesus, *YOU* are my Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep. ([John 10:11](#)) I listen to Your voice, You know me and I follow You. You give me eternal life and I will never perish. No one can snatch me out of Your hand. ([John 10:27-28](#)) You call me by name and lead me out. You go before me and I will follow You. I will flee from a stranger and not follow him. I follow You and know Your voice. [John 10:5](#) I *know* that You, Lord, are God! You created me and I am Yours; I am one of the sheep of Your pasture. ([Psalm 100:3](#)) You give me life abundantly and protect me from the enemy. I belong to You, You know me and I know you. ([John 10:10-14](#)) I could search my entire life and never find a greater love than Your love for me. Lord, I am deeply known by You. You intimately know every intimate detail of my spiritual, mental and physical condition. ([Psalm 139](#)) I never need to fear being alone because

You are always with me. When I have wandered, You left the 99 to find me and I am forever grateful! ([Matthew 18:12](#)) As *Elohim*, my *Creator God*, You formed me and know exactly what I need to thrive. Be still my heart ... everything I will ever need is found in You alone, Jesus. Help me to trust You and I will follow my Good Shepherd for the rest of my days.

Digging Deeper ...

This beautiful imagery of God as the divine *Shepherd* is so explicably rich. The Bible points to God as our Shepherd, who cares for *all* of our needs, in numerous places in the Bible.

Old Testament: ([Gen 48:15](#); [Gen 49:24](#); [Psalm 80:1](#); [Psalm 79:13](#); [Psalm 95:7](#); [Psalm 100:3](#); [Exekiel 34:31](#); [Isaiah 40:11](#); [Hosea 4:16](#); [Micah 7:14](#); [Psalm 28:9](#); [Jeremiah 31:10](#); [Psalm 119:176](#); [Isaiah 53:6](#); [Ezekiel 34:11-16](#); [Jeremiah 23:1](#); [Psalm 95:7-8](#))

New Testament: ([Matthew 18:12-14](#); [Luke 15:3-7](#); [Matthew 2:6](#); [John 10:11](#); [John 10:14](#); [John 10:1-5](#); [John 10:25-29](#); [1 Peter 2:25](#); [Luke 12:32](#); [Hebrews 13:20](#); [1 Peter 5:4](#); [Rev 7:17](#))

The Expositor's Bible Commentary on Psalm 23:1, from Bible Gateway:

"The first word of the psalm, "The LORD," evokes rich images of the provision and protection of the covenant-God. The

emphasis of the psalmist is on "my." The temptation in ancient Israel was to speak only about "our" God (cf. Dt 6:4), forgetting that the God of Israel is also the God of individuals. The metaphor of the shepherd is not only a designation or name of the Lord, but it points toward the relation between God and his covenant-children: "I shall not be in want."

NOTE: When the psalmist says *I shall not want*, this does not mean all our selfish cravings will be satisfied if the Lord is our Shepherd. We must be careful to not create, entertain or pursue any wants or desires outside of God's will for us. These self made desires have the potential to birth an unholy and insatiable craving within us that will put a wedge between us and Jesus. What God wills for us, He takes responsibility for. If we entertain a *want* that is outside of God's loving boundary of protection, it can open the door to the enemy. The craving itself can become a cruel master over us. It will drive us, steal our peace and give the enemy opportunities to destroy our relationships and lie to us that our Good Shepherd is holding something back from us, which is never true. When David says that God's sheep will not be in want, he means we will never lack anything we truly need and will enjoy peace and rest in His presence.

3. *Jehovah Rohi* means *The Lord is my Shepherd* in Hebrew. Do you see Jesus as your *very* personal Jehovah Rohi, who intimately cares for your *every* need?

4. As a Shepherd, how does Jesus care for us? How does this help to build your trust in Him? See: [John 10:7-11](#).

5. Have you in the past or do you presently struggle with contentment? Do you find yourself creating unholy wants and desires outside of God's best for you? Write your prayer here, asking God to help you with this.

6. Do you believe that God cares about what is going on in your life? Why or why not?

Verse 2: He makes me lie down in green pastures ...

- *He lets me lie down in green pastures ... (amplified version)*

Meditation/Guided Prayer ...

In a world that constantly presses me to *do* more and *be* more, what a relief that You, Jesus, beckon for me to draw near to You. In You, Jesus, I have *everything* I need. In Your presence, Lord, I will always find a steady flow of peace, joy, comfort, and rest for my soul. You instruct me to come to You when I am tired and worn out. You lead me away with You to a quiet place so I can *recover* my life. You desire for me to walk with you and work with Your unforced rhythms of grace. Your yoke is always easy and You never lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on my shoulders. In Your presence, I learn to live freely and lightly.

[Matthew 11:28-30](#) But sometimes I can be stubborn (as a sheep) and refuse to heed Your promptings to pause and rest. Lord, when You feel the need to touch my circumstances to force me to lie down and take a rest, help me to see it as Your mercy to keep me from burning out. Even when it appears that the world and the stresses of life are closing in on me, You make me lie down and rest in Your presence. Not a minute has ever gone by in my life that You were not thinking of me. Every minute of every day, You are tending to me, planning and preparing for me. You even go ahead of me and make provision for needs that I don't even know I have yet. I can stop worrying that I will miss out on any opportunities that are in Your will for me. So I can

resist the worry and panic that tries to grip me and become my master. Help me to cease my grasping and striving. I can be *still* and *know* that You are God. [Psalm 46:10](#)

Digging Deeper ...

Excerpt from *A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23* by Phillip Keller:

“The strange thing about sheep is that because of their very make-up it is almost impossible for them to be made to lie down unless four requirements are met. (1) Owing to their timidity they refuse to lie down unless they are free from all fear. (2) Because of the social behaviour within a flock, sheep will not lie down unless they are free from friction with others of their kind. (3) If tormented by flies or parasites, sheep will not lie down. Only when free of these pests can they relax. (4) Lastly, sheep will not lie down as long as they feel in need of finding food. They must be free from hunger.”

Take a minute to drink in this beautiful passage from Ezekiel:

"I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice." [Ezekiel 34:14-16 NIV](#)

The King James Study Bible Notes, from Bible Gateway:

"Psalm 23 has been a favorite of God's people through the ages and with due reason: it expresses as simply and clearly as any the role of God as our protector and provider in life. The charm of the psalm rests on two figures of speech: the Lord is compared to a shepherd and the believer to His sheep (vv. 1–4); then the Lord is likened to a host with the believer as the guest (vv. 5, 6). The image of the Lord as shepherd is a frequent one in both the Old Testament (Is. 40:11; Jer. 31:10) and the New (John 10:11–16; Heb. 13:20). (See the note on Jer. 23:3.) Believers are never pictured in Scripture as mighty lions, independent and self-sufficient; rather, they are sheep who are dependent on their Shepherd for His provision and protection. The believer is more than a dependent sheep, however; he is also like an honored guest, since the Lord prepares a table for him (v. 5). Connected with this honored position is abundant provision, vindication before one's enemies, and eternal celebration of God's goodness."

Questions for Reflection ...

1. Did you know the saying, *"God helps those who help themselves"* is actually not found anywhere in the Bible? How does knowing that God doesn't expect this of you, help you to be more comfortable in your role as a sheep who desperately needs the Good Shepherd?

2. Do you struggle to slow down and rest?

3. What have you learned from trusting in something or someone (including yourself) besides God?

4. Has God ever had to *touch* your circumstances to *force* you to slow down? What happened? How did you respond?

5. Did you know there is never any condemnation in asking God to help you, not just with your circumstances but also in helping to grow your trust and faith in Him? Pause and write a heartfelt prayer to Jesus. Ask Him to help you ...

6. Is there something you are grasping or striving for today? Would you be willing to lay it down at the Shepherd's feet right now? Write your intentions here, ask the Lord to help you lay it down ...

He leads me beside still waters ...

- *He leads me beside the still and quiet waters ... (amplified version)*

Meditation/Guided Prayer ...

Lord, I close my eyes and imagine myself peacefully walking beside You. On one side of me I feel the hem of Your garment as it gently brushes against me. On the other side of me is a peaceful brook of water. I love the sound of the water and I can hear it gently dancing and bubbling among the smooth rocks. Whenever I need to, You gently pause to give me all the time I need to drink deeply of Your living water. I can clearly see my reflection in the still water and I can see Your reflection, too. I look at Your reflection and I am in awe of how You would even want to associate Yourself with me. As a sheep, I can get myself into some pretty big messes that end up soiling me. But You, Jesus, wash me clean in Your Word. In fact, You are the Word, Jesus. You, Yourself, wash me clean. You are my living water. I want to immerse myself in Your grace and feel my thirst being quenched to overflowing. Even if a storm is brewing around me, I will keep my eyes focused on You and my ears tuned in to Your sweet still voice as You lead me beside Your still waters. As long as I keep my eyes steadily focused on You Jesus, I will be able to walk on top of the waters that someone who doesn't know You might drown in. (Pause and say a quick prayer for the person who just came to your mind). In Christ alone I find my

fountain of Living Waters [Jer 2:13](#). And this is my inheritance for all eternity! [Rev 7:17](#) tells me that "*The Lamb at the center of the throne will be my Shepherd; He will lead me to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from my eyes.*"

Digging Deeper ...

The NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, from Bible Gateway:

"Psalm 23:2 green pastures ... quiet waters. Sheep in the Levant grazed on the fertile grass produced by rain. In the summer and autumn they fed on weeds and stubble left over from harvest. Like camels, sheep can go long periods of time without water and then drink as much as 2.5 gallons (9 liters). In contrast to goats, which are quite independent, sheep depend upon the shepherd to find pasture and water for them. Shepherds also provided shelter, medication, and aid in birthing. In sum, sheep were virtually helpless without the shepherd. In an Old Babylonian text, King Ammiditana claims that the god Ea gave him the wisdom to shepherd his people. He continues the metaphor by saying that he provides them with fine pastures and watering places, and makes them lie down in safe pastures."

We serve a God who tells us, simply, "*Anytime you're thirsty, slow down and come to Me.*" How do people (even born again Christians) become spiritually dehydrated? Why do we often settle for less, *something or someone other than Jesus*, to quench our thirst? What did Jesus promise He will provide for us in [John 7:37-38](#)? Do you remember how the Prophet Jeremiah

responded when he found the words of God? Read [Jeremiah 15:16](#).

Questions for Personal Reflection ...

1. Why do you think sheep have to be led to quiet and still water before they will drink? Do you struggle to drink from/of Jesus when life gets crazy or difficult? It's in those hard times we need Him even more, amen? Your thoughts?

2. Jesus tells us that His sheep listen to His voice [John 10:27](#). Many of us participate in Bible Study but that doesn't mean we are pausing to listen for His voice. Even when we are busy completing daily tasks, we can begin to practice tending to His presence. Talk to and *listen* to Jesus as if He is sitting or standing right next to us in the room. Ask God to help you begin to practice His presence each day ...

3. Do you give Jesus time to fill your cup to overflowing on a regular basis? If not, what is stopping you?

4. Even if we are not aware of our own spiritual impoverishment, the Christians around us can usually pick up on it. If we are constantly running on empty, they will know. We can begin to put unrealistic demands or pressure on other Believers to *tend* to us and fill our cups. This is literally asking them to take the place of Jesus in our lives. It is *our* own responsibility to take the time to meet with *Him* and get our cups *filled* to overflowing by Him alone. What are your thoughts on this?

5. [Isaiah 55:1](#) is an invitation to those that are *thirsty*, which is every single one of us, even if we don't realize it just yet. Click the link and write down this beautiful Bible Verse and your heart's response to it here ...

6. [Matthew 11:28-30](#) in the Message version is one of the MOST beautifully written Bible Verses. Take time to write it down here and meditate on it. What do you think is meant by *unforced rhythms of grace*? Share your heart with your Good Shepherd here ...

Verse 3: He restores my soul ...

- *He refreshes and restores my soul (life) ... (amplified version)*

Meditation/Guided Prayer ...

Jesus, You restore and refresh my soul (mind, will and emotions) during times of sweet fellowship with You. The fruit of establishing oneness and peace with the Lord is I am flooded with the peace of God. With Christ as my Good Shepherd, I can say it is well with my soul no matter my feelings at any given moment. I am secure in Him and truly lack for nothing and my soul can find rest and divine healing in my Lord. At one time, my emotions were devastated because I demanded my will be done and the enemy ravaged my thought life. But Jesus, You came to give me life and life more abundantly. John 10:10 You lead me to meditate on Your Words to bring healing to my mind and my soul. In Your presence is fullness of joy. You build me up in a world that tries to tear me down. I close my eyes and imagine You, my loving Creator, gently holding me in Your strong arms and whispering Your truths into my ear. It is Your truth that restores my diseased and weary soul back to the way You originally designed it. It is Your truth alone that sets me free. Nothing and no one else can offer me that. When Jesus is my Good Shepherd, I'm always completely secure, fed and taken care of by Him. I lack absolutely nothing that I truly need right now. You are always working on my behalf even when I can't see it. You teach me to seek Your will above my own and it

is in my surrender and obedience that I find your protection. I will wait upon the Lord to supply all my needs rather than panic and turn to sin or set anything in motion that should remain still. My soul is restored ...

Digging Deeper ...

From NKJV Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible Notes: Answers to Life's Questions ... *How can I find renewal and restoration?*

“He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul” (Ps. 23:2, 3). Most likely you have heard this passage quoted more times than you can count. No matter how often this much-loved psalm is recited, however, we still seem to miss the full impact of the message: God restores our souls. How does He do this? He restores our souls through fellowship with Himself. Even though at times we stray far from Him, He remains the Good Shepherd. Though we wander, He receives us back gladly and willingly pardons His wayward sheep.

Why would we ever leave such a loving Guide? Most likely you have never made a conscious decision to forsake the Father; instead you may have slipped away slowly and subtly as a result of wandering desires and selfish attempts to meet your own needs. But when you strive to attain comfort and safety apart from God, you stray farther and farther away from Him.

In restoring our souls, God is more than a pardoning Shepherd. He is also a providing Shepherd. He knows what we need before we even ask, and He delights in meeting our needs (Matt. 7:9–11). That means He knows what you need physically, emotionally, and spiritually, right now. In fact, He is already at work, accomplishing and providing the things you need, even though you may not even have thought of them yet.

God refreshes and restores us with His presence and His Word. Take a look at this beautiful verse ...

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

Psalm 19:7 ESV ([Verse on Bible Hub](#))

Click on the above link to see Psalm 19:7 in many different versions on Bible Hub. Scroll all the way down to the bottom of the page and you will find the original Hebrew meaning of the words in this Psalm. We can see the original Hebrew meaning for *revive* or *reviving* in Psalm 19:7 is to *turn back* or *to retreat*.

reviving

מְשִׁיבָה (mə·šî·bat)

Verb - Hifil - Participle - feminine singular construct

[Strong's 7725:](#) To turn back, in, to retreat, again

Now check out the original Hebrew meaning of *restores* from Psalm 23:3. It also means to *turn back or to retreat*.

He restores

יְשׁוּבֵב (yə·šō·w·bêb)

Verb - Piel - Imperfect - third person masculine singular

[Strong's 7725](#): To turn back, in, to retreat, again

Only God's presence and His Word will completely restore us to our right minds, heal our emotions and set us on the right path in life. He will bring about the transformation. Our part is to yield and cooperate with the Holy Spirit within us as He leads us into freedom. But did you know that *Jesus Himself is the Word*?

Look at this passage from one of my favorite books in the Bible, the Book of John ...

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:1-5 NIV ([Read](#))

Our healing and restoration is found in our Good Shepherd alone. The One Who was present when we were created. The One Who intimately knows everything about us. The only One Who can return us to 'factory settings' (so to speak) and help us return to His original design for us.

Questions for Reflection ...

1. Are you needing restoration or replenishment? Where does Jesus, our Good Shepherd, lead those who need to be filled? See [Mark 6:31](#).
2. What does the Good Shepherd do for the soul of those who follow Him? Read Psalm 23:2-3 again.
3. What did you feel when you learned that our healing and restoration is actually found in the person of Christ Himself, our Good Shepherd, and not in another source?

4. The enemy likes to silence us, keep us isolated and fill us with shame because he reigns in the darkness. If you have unresolved pain in your soul, do you know that there is absolutely no shame in bringing things into God's healing light, talking to a Christian friend or seeking a Christian Counselor who can point you to Christ and help you unpack your life's journey? Your thoughts?

He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake ...

- *He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake ... (amplified version)*

Meditation/Guided Prayer ...

As my Shepherd, please help me to make my intimacy with You my highest priority and this will help everything else in my life to fall into its rightful place. I know Your heart for me and You will never lead me astray, even when I don't understand what

You see up ahead. You sweetly and patiently make me lie down in Your green pastures. You gently lead me beside Your still waters for so much more than just satisfying all my physical needs. Your Kingdom is SO much more than that. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. [Romans 14:17](#) Your green pastures and still waters provide me so much nourishment, rest, and peace for my soul. You also instill in me Your good and perfect law so I am able to remain free from becoming or remaining entangled with the world and the enemy's lies and schemes. When I yield to Your Spirit, Your Name is glorified. My Father God gave me right standing with Him through the blood of His Son, my Good Shepherd, Jesus. My life is no longer my own. I am now hidden in Christ and locked in covenant relationship with Him. I need more of You and less of me, Jesus. Only You can lead me down the right paths of life for my ultimate good and Your glory. You bring light, love, goodness, and righteousness into my life for Your Name's sake. You lead me to do Your will even when I can't understand or see the big picture. But I can always trust that doing things Your way will always cause my life to stay on course and be blessed. And that points others to Christ and brings You much glory, too.

Digging Deeper ...

The NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Psalm 23:3 *for his name's sake*, from Bible Gateway ...

"Yahweh's reputation is bound up with his holy name (see Psalm 8:1; see also Psalms 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; 143:11; Isa 48:9; Ezek 20:44; cf. Rom 1:5). He promised to care for his people, including David, his anointed king, so he did so for the sake of his own glory."

Questions for Reflection...

1. What path does our Good Shepherd lead those who desire to follow him?

2. Have you ever walked down the path of unrighteousness?
If so, where did it lead you?

3. What does it mean when you read that God leads us into the right paths “for his name's sake?”

4. Read [1 Peter 2:24-25](#). Share your heart with God here.
Thank Him for what His Son, our Great Shepherd, has done for us.

5. How does the Good Shepherd provide the right paths for us?

6. Do you like being led by the Good Shepherd or do you feel some (or a lot) of resistance? Why might that be? Ask God to reveal to you what might be holding you back. Pray for a heart of trust to follow Him where-ever He leads you ...

Verse 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 ...

- *Even though I walk through the (sunless) valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod (to protect) and Your staff (to guide), they comfort and console me ... (amplified version)*

Meditation/Guided Prayer

The psalmist's perspective suddenly changes from "He" in verses 2-3 to "You" in verse 4. It is during our darkest moments that God feels nearest of all. In the presence of God, we will always find comfort, peace, and rest, even if we seem to be completely surrounded by the toils and stresses of life. God didn't tell us that we will not face any fear when we walk through the dark valleys in life. Especially when death is imminent for us or a loved one, the process of dying and death itself can bring much pain and heartache on this side of Heaven. But even when the shadow of death dims the light in the valley, we don't need to fear any evil because our Good Shepherd is *always* with us and fighting *all* of our battles for us. The Psalmist, David, came up against many giants (spiritual and physical) in his lifetime, not just Goliath. But in David's estimation, there was only ONE giant allowed to be on his radar at any given time ... God! His perspective caused everything and everyone else to pale in comparison to His giant God. Whenever the valley we are walking through feels dark and it's hard to see, we can remember Psalm 91. God is our refuge and He is in full control of our lives at all times. Lets close our eyes and choose to believe that the light has dimmed because we abide in the shadow of the Almighty. Just as no one and nothing can out-giant our great big God, we need to also believe that nothing can out shadow or snuff out the light which is our great big God, and He is *always* with us. Let's believe in faith that the light may

dim during hard times because God has reached out His arm and cupped His hand over us to shield us from all evil. The Lord is Jehovah Shammah (The Lord is there, Ezekiel 48:35) and is always with the believer in life, in death, and for all eternity. For the believer, “to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” Psalm 91:1-2

Digging Deeper ...

This Psalm is often read at funerals but the 'valley of the shadow of death,' to which the Psalmist refers, is also a place of danger of some sort and not necessarily a death experience.

The NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible, from Bible Gateway ...

"Psalm 23:4 darkest valley: The peaceful and luxuriant picture of security in vv. 2–3 (“green pastures,” “quiet waters”) gives way to a terrifying image; the Hebrew evokes “the shadow of death” (see NIV text note). The type of valley in view here is the deep, rocky wadi, a dry streambed carved by rushing waters in the spring but dark and forbidding most of the year. Dangers included flash floods and attacks from animals or outlaws. Yet even here, Yahweh leads David so that he fears no evil. you are with me. These words—affirming God’s presence and relationship—stand out by virtue of their being at the exact structural center of the psalm (see note on 100:3). God promised

3. *Think back on a time when you felt alone or discouraged. A time when you walked through a dark valley in your life. Where did you turn for help? How did this turn out for you?*

4. *Do you see the dark valleys as a place you are just passing through with your Shepherd (as Psalm 23:4 implies)? Or do you pitch a tent when you find yourself in a dark valley, as if you believe you will have to remain there forever?*

5. *What has God taught you in the valley seasons that you couldn't have learned if things were always great and you experienced nothing but mountain top experiences in life?*

6. Jesus never told us that we would live a life without troubles. But He does comfort us with a promise. Read John 16:33 and fill in the blanks from the NIV version:

"I have told you these things so that _____ you may have _____. In this world you will have _____. But take _____! I have _____ the _____."

Verse 5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows ...

- *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You have anointed and refreshed my head with oil; My cup overflows ... (amplified version)*

Meditation/Guided Prayer ...

Lord Jesus, You are our Good Shepherd Who is leading us *through* this broken world until we arrive safely at home in Heaven. We are like sheep who cannot rest sometimes until everything feels *good* in our lives. But You don't wait until things are perfect or until we arrive home to bless us. You anoint us now and provide for all our sweet blessings in the midst of this evil world. Until we make it home and sit at the table You have already prepared for us in Heaven, where no evil can abide or even exist, we can by *faith receive all that Jesus prepares for us here on earth. Even though our enemies surround us in this world, we can trust to be safe at Your table, under the Shepherd's care. Jesus is not moved by the enemy's presence and neither should we let the haters and the naysayers in this present world prevent us from living and enjoying the blessings of our good God. Your Word tells us that Your blessings will never bring us sorrow [Proverbs 10:22](#) . Our Good Shepherd is always actively preparing for and providing all that He knows is necessary for our spiritual, emotional and physical growth, despite the presence of our enemies in this world [John 15:18-19](#). He also took into account the failings of our flesh [Galatians 5:17](#) and our true enemy, the devil himself [1 Peter 5:8](#). When we stay close to our Good Shepherd, He will always fight off our enemies for us and assure us victory to keep moving forward into all He has for us. The Lord anoints the believer's head with oil and we are filled to overflowing with His Holy Spirit. Our*

lamps are fully lit and set on a hill to bring light into this dark world. The world's perspective is the cup either half empty or half full. As a Believer in Christ, our cup will always overflow. As born again Believers, we are welcomed children at His table forever. Jesus is the Fountain of Living Water and He saves the best wine for last. My cup will always overflow and will never be found empty.

Digging Deeper ...

Verse 5 speaks of “enemies.” Sheep are always threatened by predators (such as wolves). The shepherd has to keep a sharp eye out for them, specially while the sheep are feeding. In [Acts 20:29](#), Paul warns us of false teachers and calls them savage *wolves* who will come in among us, not sparing God's flock.” In the previous verse, [Acts 20:28](#), Paul calls upon the leaders of the church, who are made overseers of the flock through the Holy Spirit, to be alert as they “shepherd the church of God”, which was purchased through the blood of Christ. We, as the sheep of the fold, also need to be alert (mindful, not fearful) of those who would try to lead us down wrong paths away from our God.

In ancient times, honored guests were anointed with oil at banquets and feasts. See [Psalm 104:15](#) and [Luke 7:46-49](#).

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, from Bible Gateway:

"The Lord is the host at a banquet "table" laden with food and drink. Before entering the banquet hall, an ancient host would anoint the honored guests with oil made by adding perfumes to olive oil. The overflowing "cup" symbolizes the care and provisions of God, previously represented by "green pastures" and "quiet waters." Moreover, the Lord vindicates his servant "in the presence of [his] enemies," expressing both the adversities of life as well as God's love toward his own. In the presence of God, the guest forget their troubles and tears."

Questions for Personal Reflection ...

1. Oil in the Bible primarily refers to olive oil. This oil was used for food, for light in the oil lamps used in the Lord's Temple [Exodus 27:20-21](#), consecration of the Lord's chosen priests [Lev 8:30](#), to refresh an honored guest at the host's table [Psalm 23:5](#), and during the laying on of hands, invoking the healing touch of God in His Name [James 5:14](#). But most importantly, oil is connected with the Holy Spirit of God. In [Matthew 25](#), Jesus admonishes us to keep our lamps filled with oil for we don't know the hour He is coming. In your life, is your lantern filled with His oil? If not, write a prayer asking Jesus to fill you with His Holy Spirit. If you do have the Spirit within you, are you ever tempted to douse your light out of fear? Read [Matthew](#)

[5:14-16](#). Do you let your light shine brightly before men? Why or why not?

2. One of the Names of God is *Jehovah-Nissi*, which means *The Lord is my banner*. [Exodus 17:15](#). Picture a High School or College Band marching by in a parade. There is usually a banner that goes before them. With eyes of faith can you see the much bigger picture of the Lord marching before you? With eyes of faith can you see the much bigger picture of the Lord marching before you as your personal banner? This is what the enemy sees. You may *feel* all alone, but the Lord always goes before you. He is always preparing the way for you and making the crooked path straight. [Isaiah 45:2-3](#) How does this help you to remain confident in Christ in whatever you are facing at this moment?

3. I used to feel like I couldn't relax and enjoy the blessings of God until all my ducks were sitting pretty in a row, everyone in my sphere of influence was saved, and the enemy was nowhere to be found. Have you ever felt like this? After today, can you see how the Lord wants you to enjoy Him, right now in this moment? You've prayed earnestly for people and circumstances. Now let's trust that Jesus is working everything out for us. His love, presence and provision is constant even when things may not be going the way you think they should. Knowing that God is not moved by the enemy, how does this help you to relax in His presence?

4. Another Name of our God is *Jehovah Jireh*, which means *My Lord Who always provides for me*. [Genesis 22:14](#). Our Good Shepherd is always preparing for and setting the table before us with everything we will ever need, even when we don't know what to ask for. Even when it feels like we are walking through a dry season or completely immersed in a battle. Can you think of blessings that He provides that mean so much more than material things?

5. A heart that is filled with gratitude is more equipped to remember God's goodness and faithfulness in the past and trust that the Lord is busy preparing a table of blessings before us even when we can't see what He is up to. I have been letting God work on my heart, you know ... *my attitude of gratitude*. I still have a long way to go, but the more I grow in this, the faster I remember His goodness when I'm tempted to fret. How about you? How is your attitude of gratitude? There is no condemnation here, just awareness.

6. Before you surrendered your heart to Christ, did you see your proverbial *cup* as being half empty in life? Or were you one of *those* hopeful people, you know the idealistic or optimistic sort? Always declaring your cup was half full? But now as Believers in Christ, we *know* that our cups are more than just half full. They are *always* overflowing because Jesus is our never ending source! Even when we don't realize it, the people around us can feel a little splash from the overflow of our cups whenever they come around us. How does this bless you to hear today?

Verse 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 ...

- *Sure goodness and mercy and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell forever (throughout all my days) in the house and in the presence of the Lord ... (amplified version)*

Meditation/Guided Prayer ...

God's mercies are new every morning. Good and upright is my Lord. [Psalm 25:8-10](#) Every morning, we receive fresh grace for today from God's endless supply of goodness. The vision of being hemmed in by the goodness and mercy of the Lord is overwhelming! Our Lord is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth. [Exodus 34:6](#) Whatever is happening in my life right now is not the end of my story. "Eternity with my Jesus" is where my story is headed because of His work on the cross. In the company of my all-sufficient risen Savior, I need not fear any part of my journey in this transient valley that stretches from the cross to the crown. You lead me down paths You have already walked and prepared for me. Your goodness and mercy shall follow me, protect me and satisfy me all the days of my life. And nothing and no one can ever snatch me out of Your hands. Where-ever Your presence dwells will be 'home' for me, whether here on earth or

in glory someday. I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple. [Psalm 27:4](#) You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever. [Psalm 16:11](#) I will not lose heart because I believe that I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. [Psalm 27:13](#) I will be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting. [Psalm 100:4-5](#) The LORD will guide me continually, giving me water when I am dry and restoring my strength. I will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. [Isaiah 58:11](#) Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are we when we trust in Him! [Psalm 34:8](#) Amen!

Digging Deeper ...

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, from Bible Gateway ...

The "goodness" of God is demonstrated in his abundant care and promises, evidence of his blessing. The "love" of God is his covenantal commitment to bless his people with his promises.

Instead of being pursued by enemies who seek his destruction, God's "goodness and love" follow the psalmist. He need not fear, because God's loving care follows him throughout life. The psalmist's experience of God's "goodness and love" is equivalent to dwelling "in the house of the LORD," a phrase that signifies abiding in the environs of salvation. The believer gets a taste of everlasting fellowship with God.

The New Bible Commentary - Shepherd, Companion and Host

"The threefold testimony, I shall lack nothing (1), I will fear no evil (4) and I will dwell (6) encapsulates the psalm, dividing it into three parts: the sheep and the Shepherd (1–3), the traveler and the Companion (4) and the guest and the Host (5, 6), respectively teaching the providence of God, appointing life's experiences, his protection over life's pathway, and his provision now and always."

Questions for Personal Reflection:

1. The house of the Lord simply represents where God is. The Amplified Bible says "the house of the Lord (and His presence) shall be my dwelling place." Does this paint a picture of intimate and eternal fellowship with God for you? Share your heart with Him ...

2. How do the words of David help you to gain an eternal perspective?

3. Prayerfully read through Psalm 23 once more. Do these six verses hold new meaning for you now?

4. What is one area of life where you struggle to follow Jesus as your Good Shepherd? Ask the Lord to help you to understand why this is and help you to surrender anything that is getting in the way of intimacy between you and Him...

5. If you woke up tomorrow morning and all you have is Jesus, would He be enough for you?

6. For the sheep to survive and thrive, they need to trust and yield to their shepherd's leadership. Many people recite this beautiful Psalm but have yet to make Jesus the Lord of their lives, so they hear about the promises but have not experienced them yet. How about you? *Is the Lord Jesus truly your Good Shepherd, the Lord of your life?*

Thank you for spending your time with me today. I pray that after this study, you will share in David's confidence in our Lord. What line of this Psalm resonates with you the most and why? Bless you sweet sister! Remind yourself daily that you have all you need in Christ! See: [Philippians 4:19](#).

He Restores my Soul | Drawing Closer to Jesus in Psalm 23
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