

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Scripture Reading: Psalm 23

The shepherd always tries to persuade the sheep that their interests and his own are the same. —Stendhal

Of all creatures on God's green earth that could have been chosen to represent humans in relation to their Creator, God chose sheep.

Sheep are unique in some respects. Unlike some animals that are cunning and clever, sheep are not. Think of cats. What if the dominant animal metaphor for us humans in the Bible was the cat? Yet the cat is nowhere even mentioned in the Bible. It's sheep.

Sheep are not known for their cleverness. They lack cognitive acuity. If their leader walks off a cliff, they will follow to their deaths until the flock is destroyed. This has happened.

Unfortunately, humans often seem as dumb as sheep.

Sheep also don't seem to be able to get from point A to point B on purpose. They may wander accidentally to point B, but they haven't a clue as to how they got there. In other words, they lack a sense of direction.

We humans are like that, too, aren't we? Often we're just going through the motions. We know we're going somewhere, and often we are going there pretty fast. But it's just not the destination we really should choose. Like sheep, too often we're directionless.

Finally, sheep don't know how to defend themselves. Most animals have some sort of defense mechanism. Not sheep. They just stand there — easy pickings for the big, bad wolf. We, too, are often defenseless against the things that can destroy us.

Today's reading is Psalm 23, one of the most beloved passages of Scripture. This psalm reminds us that we have a Good Shepherd who leads us, and this Shepherd is as smart and wise as any shepherd ever. The psalm also reminds us that this Shepherd leads us safely to green pastures and still waters, through the valley of the shadow of death and on to the joy of our eternal rest.

Finally, we know that the Good Shepherd defends us. In fact, the Good Shepherd has given his life for us and defeated all our enemies, like sin, death and the devil. What a Shepherd! He is the Good Shepherd. He is the Great Shepherd.

Lord Jesus, thank You for being a good shepherd throughout my life. Amen.

ACTIVITY PAGE – THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Verse to Remember

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.” —John 10:14-15

"F"OUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE COMPLETE THIS BIBLE TRIVIA QUIZ

All answers begin with the letter F. Circle the correct answer.

1. Noah was in the Ark how many days during The Flood: a) 4, b) 14, c) 40, d) a fortnight, e) 50.
2. What character trait is a Fruit of the Spirit, according to the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22-23:
a) faithfulness, b) fortitude, c) forgetfulness, d) friendliness?
3. Protected by an armed cohort of 200 soldiers, 70 cavalry, and 200 men with spears, the apostle Paul was spirited away to the governor named: a) Fortunas, b) Fido, c) Ferdinando, d) Felix.
4. One of the gifts of the Magi was: a) fresh fish, b) frankincense, c) food, d) fruit.
5. The second of 10 plagues that beset the Egyptians according to Exodus 8 was: a plague of a) frogs, b) fleas, c) flies, d) flying fish.
6. Hebrews 11 is known as the _____ chapter: a) forgiveness, b) freedom, c) faith, d) friendly.
7. According to Psalm 150:1, we should praise God: a) in his firmament, b) in the flames, c) on his furniture, d) with a flute, e) with flowers.

FOR THE RECORD!

Who made the following statements in the Old Testament? Circle the correct answer.

1. “Speak, for your servant is listening!” Moses, Eli, Enoch, Samuel
2. “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!” David, Job, Isaiah, Solomon
3. “Here I am; send me!” Isaiah, Elijah, Elisha, Moses
4. “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” Naomi, Jezebel, Delilah, Eve
5. “I did not laugh.” Rebekah, Leah, Sarah, Bathsheba
6. “Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.” Rahab, Esther, Rachel, Ruth

Answers to "F"OUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE: 1. c, 2. a, 3. d, 4. b, 5. a, 6. c, 7. a. Answers to FOR THE RECORD! 1. Samuel, 2. Job, 3. Isaiah, 4. Eve, 5. Sarah, 6. Ruth

HUMILITY

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

They who jump to conclusions fall to their deaths. —Mark J. Ottaviani

Concert impresario Sol Hurok liked to say that Marian Anderson hadn't simply grown great; she'd grown great simply.

From 1925 to 1970, Anderson was a major recording artist with a repertoire that spanned opera to spirituals. According to Hurok, a reporter once interviewed Anderson and asked her to name the greatest moment in her life.

"I was in her dressing room at the time," Hurok writes, "and was curious to hear the answer. I knew she had many great moments to choose from. There was the night Toscanini told her that hers was the finest voice of the century. There was the private concert she gave at the White House for the Roosevelts and the King and Queen of England. She had received the \$10,000 Bok Award as the person who had done the most for her hometown, Philadelphia.

"To top it all, there was that Easter Sunday in Washington when she stood beneath the Lincoln statue and sang for a crowd of 75,000, which included Cabinet members, Supreme Court justices and most members of Congress."

Which of these big moments did she choose?

"None of them," said Hurok. "Miss Anderson told the reporter that the greatest moment of her life was the day she went home and told her mother that she wouldn't have to take in washing anymore."

The psalmist said, "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). That's another way of reminding us to take stock of the good moments God has brought to us.

So what has been the greatest moment in your life so far? Perhaps you have "tasted" more than one.

And perhaps more are to come!

Gracious God, thank You for being faithful to me throughout the years and bringing to me so many blessings for which I am now thankful. Amen.

ACTIVITY PAGE – HUMILITY

Verse to Remember

Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. —Ephesians 4:1-2

MYSTERY STATES

Can you name the states suggested by the clues below?

1. New name for land conquered in war (1846-48)
2. The Duke of York of England
3. Algonquian for “big river”
4. Otos name meaning “flat water” for Platte River
5. Dakota Sioux tribe called “Ayouos” (French), “Ajoues” (Spanish) or “loways” (English), possibly meaning “beautiful land”
6. King George II of England
7. First president of the United States
8. Spanish for “snow covered”
9. Spanish for “flowery” as in “flowery Easter”
10. “Land of the Indians”
11. Coastal county in southern England
12. Aleut for “mainland” or “land facing the sea”
13. Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of England’s King Charles I
14. Queen Elizabeth I, the “Virgin Queen”
15. Spanish for “mountain” or “mountainous”
16. Similarity of a state island to the Isle of Rhodes or Dutch for “red island”
17. Spanish for “colored red”
18. Probably refers to the “mainland” as opposed to coastal islands
19. King Louis XIV of France
20. French for “green mountain”

STATES

- A. Colorado _____
- B. Alaska _____
- C. Virginia _____
- D. Montana _____
- E. New Mexico _____
- F. Washington _____
- G. Iowa _____
- H. Maryland _____
- I. Vermont _____
- J. New Hampshire _____
- K. Louisiana _____
- L. Indiana _____
- M. Georgia _____
- N. Nevada _____
- O. New York _____
- P. Nebraska _____
- Q. Mississippi _____
- R. Maine _____
- S. Florida _____
- T. Rhode Island _____

Answers:

1. New Mexico
2. New York
3. Mississippi
4. Nebraska
5. Iowa
6. Georgia
7. Washington
8. Nevada
9. Florida
10. Indiana
11. New Hampshire
12. Alaska
13. Maryland
14. Virginia
15. Montana
16. Rhode Island
17. Colorado
18. Maine
19. Louisiana
20. Vermont

CAUGHT IN NOWHERE

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139

*When the winds of change blow, some people build walls;
others build windmills.* —Chinese proverb

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, a new opportunity arose. Some people thought it was crazy. Others proclaimed it to be a waste of time and energy.

A few airlines in wildly different locations offered to fly passengers to “nowhere.” Now who would get on a flight that landed at the same location from which it took off? Sometimes, the airline called them “scenic” flights. Clearly, however, the flights were targeted at those who were desperate to escape the ennui of their new normal.

I thought about this when, much later, I was on a road trip with my wife. We were on a barren and desolate stretch of I-84 that runs northwest from Tremonton, Utah, to Burley, Idaho. We pulled off to get some snacks at small gas station. It had one pump, a shack with shutters banging in the wind, and goats grazing nearby. In a dirty window, a greasy sign identified our location: “Welcome to the Middle of Nowhere.”

I laughed. I wasn’t sure I had ever been to nowhere. But here I was. And not only in nowhere, but the *middle* of nowhere. Not *west* nowhere, or *south* nowhere, but the *middle* of nowhere. I could not get more “nowhere” than I was right then.

This was challenging for me, because I am a person who has always wanted to go *somewhere*, *anywhere*. Yet here I was smack dab in the middle of nowhere.

I thought of those times in my life when I was completely muddled, confused, flummoxed and lost. I wondered then if I’d ever find my way out of the maze, the wilderness, the confusion — find my way out of nowhere.

Perhaps you feel this way, too.

But, as the Lord told the prophet Habakkuk, *we live and walk by faith*. It’s sort of like flying by instruments. We are in the middle of nowhere, but fortunately we have “instruments” that advise us of our location, altitude and distance to our destination.

We returned to our car, left nowhere and went on to Boise. And I remembered that in those confused times of living spiritually in the wilderness, I had always been led by the Spirit of God from nowhere to somewhere. In drawing close to God, God had drawn close to me, like the gravitational pull of the moon to its planet.

—Timothy Merrill

*Loving God, I am lost and alone without You. I long for Your presence. Show me the way.
Amen.*

ACTIVITY PAGE – CAUGHT IN NOWHERE

Verse to Remember

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You ... are acquainted with all my ways. —Psalm 139:1,3

WHAT IS LEFT?

Directions: Cross off words according to the instructions below. The remaining words will form a message from left to right, top to bottom.

1. Cross off all words that rhyme with MAN.
2. Cross off all 6-letter words that contain a C.
3. Cross off all words that are vegetables.
4. Cross off all 2-letter words in columns A and D.
5. Cross off all 4-letter verbs in columns B and C.
6. Cross off all words that name a piece of sporting equipment.
7. Cross off all words that are names of capital cities.

A	B	C	D
PEA	BAN	ASCENT	IN
THE	WEEP	CAN	GLOVE
BAT	FEAR	SING	ETHICS
TAN	BOISE	OF	CORN
DEVICE	THE	RACQUET	LORD
VAN	BECAME	IS	AUSTIN
DENVER	RADISH	THE	FAN
BEGINNING	WEAR	OF	SALEM
IT	IMPACT	HOWL	OF
RAN	BALL	WISDOM	LILACS

Hidden Message: _____

TWO WORD SHUFFLE

Two 6-letter words with their letters in the correct order are combined in each row of letters. Separate both words. Example: SDYISATPEMER= SYSTEM, DIAPER.

1. TRISOLAPNIDC _____
2. CGELROBSEILT _____
3. HNEALRMEROTW _____
4. WEMORBTLHYEM _____

TRIPLETS

This alphabetical list of random and unrelated words consists of 10 groups of three related words. Your job is to sort these words into 10 groups. Some words might work in more than one group, but each word can be used only once.

ANGER	AROMA	BAIT
BALL	BEANS	BEAR
BILLS	BOOT	BOXER
CANOE	CATAMARAN	CAVITY
COBBLER	COIN	DINERO
FEAR	FOX	HOOK
LURE	MOLAR	MUG
MUTT	PLEASURE	POODLE
RABBIT	RACQUET	SANDAL
SCORE	SHIP	TOOTH

1. BOAT _____, _____, _____
2. SHOE _____, _____, _____
3. ANIMAL _____, _____, _____
4. DOGS _____, _____, _____
5. DENTISTRY _____, _____, _____
6. GAMES _____, _____, _____
7. MONEY _____, _____, _____
8. EMOTIONS _____, _____, _____
9. COFFEE _____, _____, _____
10. FISHING _____, _____, _____

Answers:
WHAT IS LEFT?
 Hidden Message: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*
TRIPLETS: 1. ship, canoe, catamaran;
 2. cobbler, sandal, boot; 3. rabbit, fox, bear; 4. boxer, poodle, mutt;
 5. tooth, cavity, molar; 6. ball, racquet, score;
 7. dinero, coin, bills;
 8. fear, pleasure, anger; 9. aroma, bean, mug; 10. lure, bait, hook. **TWO WORD SHUFFLE:**
 1. TROPIC, ISLAND;
 2. CLOSET, GERBIL;
 3. HELMET, NARROW;
 4. WORTHY, EMBLEM.

WARNING SIGNS

Scripture Reading: Genesis 37:3-4, 12-28

*Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is mystery. Today is a gift of God,
which is why we call it the present.* —Bil Keane

A few summers ago, I was driving through the Rocky Mountains on Interstate 70 on my way to Denver. As I approached an area known as Genesee, I began a steep descent of a 6-7 percent grade. At one point, the highway leveled out. But it was brief. It was then I saw the warning sign:

NOT DOWN YET. MORE CURVES, STEEP GRADE AHEAD!

Now, if you're a trucker in an 18-wheeler, you are happy to see that sign! You aren't angry. You don't whine. You don't grumble. Instead, you are grateful that the Colorado Department of Transportation erected that sign so you can adjust your driving accordingly. You will continue to drive slowly. You will keep the truck in a low gear. You are glad to know there are still many curves in the road ahead. If you heed the warning, you will be safe. You will not try to take a curve too fast or recklessly.

The last curve of that 7-mile descent into Denver on I-70 is known as "Dead Man's Curve." Over the years, quite a few truckers have lost their lives by failing to heed the warning!

The Bible has many warnings. Rather than being upset and irritated when we read warnings and admonitions in God's Word, we should be thankful! God loves us enough to explain how to be safe. In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul says, "Him (Christ) we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (1:28 NKJV, emphasis added).

Here's one example: "Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).

Can you think of other "warnings" in the Bible for which we can be grateful?

—Timothy Merrill

Gracious God, thank You for loving us enough to warn us about dangerous choices and careless actions. Help me to heed Your warning signs. In Jesus' name. Amen.

ACTIVITY PAGE – WARNING SIGNS

Verse to Remember

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. —Ephesians 5:15-16

KNOW YOUR ABCs!

Directions: Insert a different letter of the alphabet into each empty box to form words of five or more letters reading across. The letter you insert may be at the beginning, the end, or in the middle of the word. Each letter of the alphabet is used only once. Cross off each letter in the list as you use it. All the letters in each row are not necessarily used in forming the word. EXAMPLE: In the first row across, we have inserted the letter B to form the word CLOBBER.

A ~~B~~ C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

H	U	M	C	L	O	B	B	E	R	H	O	W
P	E	N	B	R	A		E	N	N	E	R	T
E	G	O	T	I	S		A	C	T	I	F	Y
P	I	N	T	H	R		L	L	O	U	I	S
C	H	A	F	E	F		A	S	I	B	L	E
S	C	A	L	L	O		X	Y	I	A	N	T
P	I	H	A	T	C		M	P	E	L	B	A
B	U	O	Y	I	S		U	O	R	U	M	Y
M	Y	S	T	E	R		L	E	I	C	E	L
G	I	E	W	A	I		E	P	H	Y	R	D
P	U	P	P	Y	A		L	A	R	I	F	Y
A	B	A	C	K	L		G	I	R	A	F	F
K	E	N	A	Y	O		I	B	R	A	N	T
L	A	M	P	I	L		O	W	L	I	S	H
E	V	O	R	T	E		C	L	U	E	G	E
P	I	Z	Z	A	N		R	A	N	T	I	C
S	U	N	U	P	O		D	E	R	B	Y	E
L	E	A	T	H	E		U	T	H	O	U	R
J	A	C	Q	U	Y		I	N	G	H	Y	O
M	A	Y	V	E	N		O	Y	A	C	H	T
S	C	H	I	G	H		A	Y	O	N	O	M
C	O	L	E	Z	A		R	U	D	G	E	L
A	L	G	E	B	R		A	L	M	A	N	Y
H	U	G	L	O	S		O	M	P	H	U	T
O	C	O	N	S	U		E	W	Y	R	A	N
M	A	R	A	G	O		N	I	F	O	R	M

USE THIS SPACE FOR NOTES

Answers: clobber, brake, egotist, thrill, feasible, scallop, hatch, quorum, mystery, zephyr, clarify, backlog, vibrant, pillow, vortex, frantic, ponder, leather, dinghy, enjoy, highway, grudge, algebra, gloss, consumer, uniform