

**Sunday School Lesson: Psalm 23 (part 3)**

Today's HOPE (main point): We can find comfort in our our Shepherd who restores us and leads us.

This month's theme has been COMFORT, and we've been looking at Psalm 23 to see how the Lord is our shepherd- how He guides us, leads us, and comforts us.

So let's start by reciting (or reading) the first 4 verses of Psalm 23 and then review what we've learned.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

We started with verse 4, talking about the shepherd's rod and staff, and then we backtracked to learn about the ways God provides for us and protects us.

What can you tell me about what we have learned so far? (*take answers...give some time...may need a little prompting...*)

*Main points to bring up if no one can remember them: the rod is used for fighting off enemies, it symbolizes God's power and protection; the staff is*



*used to bring sheep back into the fold when they've wandered off, it symbolizes God's guidance and lovingkindness; God provides for our needs so that we lack nothing; sheep only lie down when all their needs have been met and they feel totally safe and at peace, only God can meet those needs for us and cause us to rest in Him; sheep need help finding pure water, God Himself is our living water in Jesus Christ.*

Now let's go to verse 3. He restoreth my soul... The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and the Hebrew word for restores helps us understand what David meant when he wrote this. In Hebrew, the word David used here means "to turn back, to bring back, to return to."

We've learned some interesting things about sheep so far, and there's another fact about sheep we should know as we consider this verse. Sheep often get themselves turned over on their backs and then cannot get up again by themselves. Once a sheep gets into this position, it struggles frantically with its feet up in the air, unable to stand up. As it struggles, gases begin to build up inside the sheep's stomach and then its circulation gets cut off. If not found quickly and stood back up, the sheep will die within a few hours or a few days, depending on the weather.

Sometimes, like sheep, we find ourselves on our backs, spiritually speaking. Let's look at how sheep end up on their backs so we can see if there's a connection to us.

Often sheep will end up on their backs because they chose a soft place to lie down. They choose a comfortable, soft, rounded hollow in the ground and then they roll over on their backs. What about us?



Sometimes in the Christian life, we look for the easy place, the comfortable place where we have no hardships or demand for endurance and self-discipline. There is great danger in that! When we do that, we can easily fall into the sin of pride, self-indulgence, and self-reliance.

There are two other reasons that sheep end up on their backs-- they have too much wool or they are too fat. When their fleece becomes too long and heavily matted down with mud and debris, it's much easier for them to end up on their backs. Being too fat has a similar effect; their extra weight makes them less agile and nimble on their feet.

This reminds me of what scripture says about being weighed down with sin. Hebrews 12:1 says, Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let's rid ourselves of every obstacle and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let's run with endurance the race that is set before us.

We can become weighed down with sin, with the cares of the world, with working too hard for material things...there are many things that can knock us off our feet and find us helplessly on our backs, like sheep.

When a shepherd finds a sheep on its back because it has too much wool, he will shear the sheep. And this is not a pleasant process; sheep don't like it! But it's necessary for their safety. If the sheep is too fat, the shepherd will take steps to adjust its diet and increase its activity. God will do the same for us when we are weighed down with sin. He will help us get rid of the things that are harming our souls.

Hebrews 12: 5-6 says, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are punished by Him; For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He punishes every son whom He accepts."

Did you know that shepherd must constantly be on the lookout for sheep who have ended up on their backs? Because it can be so dangerous for them, the shepherd always counts his sheep and if one is missing, he immediately goes to look for it because time is of the essence once a sheep has landed on its back.

That understanding of a shepherd brings a new special significance to what Jesus said in Luke 15: 3-7...

Luke 15: 3-7 And so He told them this parable, saying, 4 "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the other ninety-nine in the [c]open pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he puts it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!' 7 I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, longs to find His lost sheep and to restore our souls!

Let's go the next part of Psalm 23, verse 3. What comes next? He restoreth my soul.....? (*Wait for residents to recall or read next part...He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*)

Another thing I learned about sheep is that they are creatures of habit. When left to themselves, they will follow the same trails until they become ruts. They will graze the same paths until the grass is gone and the ground is barren. This results in the ground becoming filled with parasites that then infest the sheep. So the greatest single safeguard that a shepherd has in handling his flock is to keep them on the move.

Scripture makes it pretty clear that we are like sheep. God uses the metaphor all throughout the Bible. Isaiah 53:6 says, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way."

That means that we do what we want. I carry out my own ideas and act in the way I want to act. Just as sheep will blindly and habitually follow one another along the same paths until they are worn and barren, so we often insist on hanging on to the same habits and behaviors that we've seen are proven to destroy people's lives. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, says "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 He will lead us in paths of righteousness if only we will follow.

What about when we don't want to follow? Sometimes, just like a sheep keeps gnawing at a favorite grazing spot, we have a favorite sin, something we don't really want to walk away from.

The good news is that God, through the Holy Spirit, will help us in those times. Sometimes we have to pray, "God help me to love you more! Help me to hate my sin." If we are earnest in our desire to obey, to follow Him, He will help us. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."

One of the best things about the gospel of Jesus Christ is that He will help us obey Him! He knows we can never be good enough on our own and we need help. The Spirit will help us obey by reminding us of scripture and by giving us endurance and encouragement.

If you have any questions about today's lesson, or if you aren't sure if you know Jesus as your Shepherd, please come talk to me afterwards.

We have one more week of studying the 23rd Psalm, so be sure to come back next week!

Let's read this prayer together: God, thank you for loving me even when I act like a sheep who goes astray. Thank you for restoring my soul and for leading me in paths of righteousness. Help me to follow hard after you. Amen.

*This lesson, and all the Psalms lessons, were inspired by the book, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23, by W. Phillip Keller. Faithful Friends Kentucky highly commends this book to you!*



## Faithful Friends

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**Hebrews 12:1** Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let's rid ourselves of every obstacle and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let's run with endurance the race that is set before us.

**Hebrews 12: 5-6** My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are punished by Him; For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He punishes every son whom He accepts.



**Luke 15: 3-7** And so He told them this parable, saying, 4 “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the other ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he puts it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!’ 7 I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.

**Isaiah 53:6** We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.

**Proverbs 14:12** There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

**John 14:6** I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

**Philippians 2:13** For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for loving me even when I act like a sheep who goes astray. Thank you for restoring my soul and for leading me in paths of righteousness. Help me to follow hard after you. *Amen.*



## Jesus Calls Us

1. Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult  
Of our life's wild, restless sea;  
Day by day his sweet voice soundeth,  
Saying, "Christian, follow me."

2. Jesus calls us from the worship  
Of the vain world's golden store,  
From each idol that would keep us,  
Saying, "Christian, love me more."

3. In our joys and in our sorrows,  
Days of toil and hours of ease,  
Still he calls, in cares and pleasures,  
"Christian, love me more than these."

4. Jesus calls us; by thy mercies,  
Savior, may we hear thy call;  
Give our hearts to thine obedience,  
Serve and love thee best of all.

*Is this a new song for you? It's a good one to remind us to  
follow our Shepherd!*

## **Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us**

1. Savior, like a shepherd lead us,  
Much we need thy tender care;  
In thy pleasant pastures feed us,  
For our use thy folds prepare.

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast bought us, thine we are.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast bought us, thine we are.

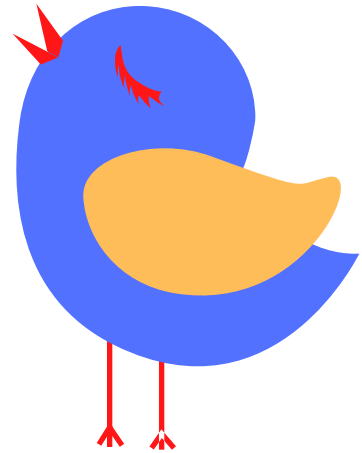
2. Early let us seek thy favor,  
Early let us do thy will;  
Blessed Lord and only Savior,  
With thy love our bosoms fill.

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast loved us, love us still.  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast loved us, love us still.



## His Eye is On the Sparrow

1. Why should I feel discouraged?  
Why should the shadows come?  
Why should my heart be lonely  
And long for heaven and home,  
When Jesus is my portion,  
my constant friend is he:



His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me;  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.

I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,  
For his eye is on the sparrow,  
And I know he watches me.

I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,  
For his eye is on the sparrow,  
And I know he watches me.

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me

*Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Luke 12:6-7*

## Blessed Assurance

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior, all the day long;  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long.*

2. Perfect submission, all is at rest,  
I in my Savior am happy and blest,  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior, all the day long;  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long.*



## Amazing Grace

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

3. Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

4. When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun!

## Psalm 23

Use the words in the word bank to help fill in the blanks of Psalm 23.

Created on TheTeachersCorner.net Fill-in-the-Blank Maker

The Lord is my \_\_\_\_\_  
; I shall not \_\_\_\_\_  
He maketh me to lie down in  
\_\_\_\_\_

He \_\_\_\_\_ me beside  
the still \_\_\_\_\_ .

He \_\_\_\_\_ my soul ;  
He leadeth me in the paths of  
\_\_\_\_\_ for His name's  
sake .

Yea though I \_\_\_\_\_  
through the \_\_\_\_\_ of  
the shadow of \_\_\_\_\_ ,

I will fear no \_\_\_\_\_ for thou art with me .

Thy rod and thy staff , they \_\_\_\_\_ me .

Thou preparest a \_\_\_\_\_ before me in the presence  
of mine \_\_\_\_\_ ; thou anointest my

\_\_\_\_\_ with oil ; my \_\_\_\_\_ runneth  
over .

Surely \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ shall follow  
me all the \_\_\_\_\_ of my life

and I will \_\_\_\_\_ in the house of the Lord

\_\_\_\_\_ .

forever want  
green cup  
death goodness  
shepherd  
pastures valley  
restoreth days  
dwell walk  
leadeth head  
enemies comfort  
mercy waters  
evil table  
righteousness

# Words of Comfort

FOR THE WEEK AHEAD



**Monday:** I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD. Psalm 27:13-14

**Tuesday:** Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

**Wednesday:** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

**Thursday:** The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. Nahum 1:7

**Friday:** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11

**Saturday:** The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:2



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