



Let's take a look at Psalm 23 and how to use it as a prayer guide or devotional tool.

David had just said in Psalm 23:3, “He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His namesake”. So how is it that in verse four he then says, “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 comfort me”? How can these two scenarios:

- being led by still waters,
- being restored,
- being led in paths of righteousness
- which all reflect the goodness of David’s shepherd and his reputation, and the second scenario in verse 4:
- walking through the valley of the shadow of death,
- fearing no evil because the shepherd is present.
- The shepherd's rod and staff comfort him.

So how do we connect the dots in both of these scenarios so we are not thrown into a ball of confusion about how our life of discipleship should look. Why is this important? It is important because depending on the day or the circumstance it is easy for us to take on the attitude of those in the storm with water filling their boat and asking Jesus, “carest though not that we perish”. Yes, of course he does. What we don’t want to wrestle with is his rebuke to them “O ye, of little faith”.....OUCH!

Can I encourage you with another translation of verse 1? In the KJV the author is depicted as speaking “**about**” the Lord which most have embraced as their method but in the Message paraphrase version the author is speaking “**to**” the Lord, saying “God, my shepherd, I don't need a thing”. The shepherd will lead the sheep to places that are lush, that are quiet, that are void of fear and predators and offers communal comfort. This is the typical picture some Western churches paint, but life will bring other circumstances to us as well. This is where the valley, though literal for David as his shepherding years speaks of but for us can also refer to challenges ordinary life brings, comes into play.

In the Hebrew, valley means - tsalmaveth which translates into “deep darkness” as in the place of a dark, narrow gorge, a drop off between two sides of a high place such as a mountain ridge and it is dark even in the daytime. Perhaps thinking of a long tunnel where a train goes through will give you a better picture.

As disciples we may not travel through the valley as quickly as a train would a tunnel, but we still have the Lord, our Shepherd from whom we can expect the following as we are on our faith journey. Let us not rely on the pleasantries that are so applauded in this world as though that is all this life has to offer. Let us rather rely solely on the Lord as our Shepherd who provides the following caregiving plan for us as:

- ✓ Shepherd
- ✓ Guide
- ✓ Protector
- ✓ Provider
- ✓ Constant companion

David was speaking to the Lord on a personal level, and we can learn this lesson from him. I would like to invite you to make a prayer of Psalm 23 using the five attributes that reflect the Lord in our lives. You can use this prayer during your daily devotions or save it for those times when the “valley” is obvious and looming in your life. Either way, your faith in Christ will be secure as you declare “Oh Lord, You are my Shepherd”.

There is a free PDF with an example. Remember being a disciple is not just about one who is taught but more describes the one who sticks close and learns from their “Teacher”. In Jesus’ case he is the “Rabbi” who calls his followers to stick close to him, sit at his feet and learn of and from him (Luke10:38-40). You can do this alone, as a couple or in a group as a small bible study. Enjoy the journey!

Use the following descriptions of a “good shepherd” (in blue), they speak directly of Jesus. John 10:11 (NIV) “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”. I have provided an example of what this prayer may look like (in red). Of course, rewrite it as your own or use it as your daily prayer or meditation. Go ahead and do the same for the rest. The definition has been provided, just write out the prayer of praise using Jesus as the person in this position. There is a journal for you to write down what the Lord is speaking to your heart about.

SHEPHERD

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters”. Psalm 23:1-2

- responsible for leading, protecting, and caring for a flock of sheep or goats.
- vigilance, courage, and a nurturing spirit.
- a metaphor for leadership and pastoral care.
- attributes of diligence, compassion, and watchfulness-central themes woven throughout Scripture.

Jesus is aware his disciples are going to have to endure opposition when he returns to the Father. He has left instructions for leadership whose job it is to care for the flock (ESV, 1 Peter 5:2-3) *“shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight,[a] not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock”.*

My prayer:

Lord, thank You for being my Shepherd. Because of You all my needs are met either now or will be in the future because You lead, protect, and care for me. It is You who guards me against evil and wickedness that I am blind to, but that You clearly see. Thank You for being a Shepherd who is diligent, compassionate, and ever watchful over my total wellbeing. I deposit my welfare in Your hands for today and forever. Thank You for laying down Your life for the sheep. Amen

(If you are not under pastoral leadership or are considering making a change let these attributes lead your heart as the Lord directs your steps to get there)

Rewrite your own here:

Journal any thoughts the Lord is speaking to you about:

GUIDE

“He restores my soul. He leads (guides) me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake”. Psalm 23:3

- ✓ lead or direct in a way; to conduct in a course or path; to pilot; as, to guide a traveler.
- ✓ regulate and manage; to direct; to order; to superintend the training or education of; to instruct and influence intellectually or morally; to train.
- ✓ leads or directs another in his way or course, as in a strange land; one who exhibits points of interest to strangers
- ✓ Shepherds guided their animals to safe pastures, guarded against predators, and ensured a consistent water source.

Jesus warns his disciples of following those who would ultimately lead them into a ditch. Neither would know this has happened, but **they would know something** has happened to hinder their forward progress. (Matthew 5:14)

My Prayer

Oh Lord, help me to be a sheep who follows your lead. There are so many bright lights and pleasant noises that I hear and see. Honestly, I want to wander off and see what they are all about. They excite my sense of sight and smell and provoke desires in me that are not for my wellbeing. I realize this is dangerous because I do not know what the outcome will be. Help me to dampen my curiosities and appetites for things of this world and stay focused on where You are guiding me in this life as you prepare me for the next, according to God's will and purpose.

Amen

Rewrite your own here:

Journal any thoughts the Lord is speaking to you about:

PROTECTOR

*“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”. Psalm 23:4 (ESV)*

The Hebrew verb **גָּןַן** (root: **ג-נ-ג**) means “**to shield,**” “**to cover,**” or “**to protect.**” It is often used in poetic and prophetic contexts to describe divine protection—particularly God’s shielding of His people, city, or sanctuary. The imagery behind the root involves enclosing or surrounding something to keep it safe.

- **to shield, to cover** (rare)
to be shielded, to be surrounded (passive or intensive)
It is related to the noun **גָּןָן** (**shield**) and shares thematic connections with protection and defense.

Jesus was very aware of the opposition his disciples would face while with them in the “flesh”. The Lord, however, continues to be our protector after his ascension to heaven. He is well able to guard and shield us during our journey of faith while we await His soon return. In what ways do you need His protection most?

My Prayer:

*Lord Jesus, David said your rod and staff comfort him. May I find the same protection and comfort as I go through this day and the continuous challenges of (_____).
Help me to know you are the shield who covers me and the light that guides me. Amen*

Rewrite your own here:

Journal any thoughts the Lord is speaking to you about:

PROVIDER

“you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows”. Psalm 23:5 (ESV)

The idea of God as The Provider is first introduced in the Old Testament. In [Genesis 22:14](#), after God provides a ram as a substitute sacrifice for Isaac, Abraham names the place "The LORD Will Provide" (Yahweh Yireh), signifying God's provision. [This event underscores the belief that God sees and meets the needs of His people.](#) The Hebrew definition for this word is “pronoeo” and its attribute is:

- to consider in advance, i.e. look out for beforehand

Jesus understands that the provision the sheep need far outweighs the material provision most seek for. This provision goes to the depths of our loudest cry for belonging and comfort which sheep so desperately need. Yes, the LORD provided a substitute for Abraham which aligned with His future plan for him who is now called the “father of our faith”. But also God does not expect “child sacrifices” from us just as He did not allow Abraham to follow through with such a horrific and pagan practice. Our Lord makes provision for us in all areas that pertain to “life and godliness”. [2 Peter 1:3 \(ESV\)](#) “*God has given us everything we need for life and godliness through His divine power*”.

My Prayer

Yes, Lord. You are my provider and my soul rejoices that You according to Your promise have not forsaken nor abandoned me. Thank You for knowing my immediate needs and providing for my future ones. Help me not to be anxious about anything as the Scriptures say in [Philippians 4:6](#), but to make my requests known to You in faith ([James 1:8](#)). Help me also to continue to trust Your faithfulness when it seems like the walls are closing in and provision seems scarce. Amen

Rewrite your own here:

Journal any thoughts the Lord is speaking to you about:

CONSTANT COMPANION

*“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 23:6*

David concludes his song of praise to the Lord with a confident assurance of his constant companion’s presence now and for eternity. After all of the challenges David has overcome; some due to his own choices, others from those he considered to be friends but were actually enemies, he has looked forward to the eternal companionship from the Lord who is his Shepherd. He truly is the friend spoken of in *Proverbs 18:24* – “*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*”.

David was well acquainted with family members that turned sour on him, business partners that would rather see him dead than ascend to the promised prophetic position awaiting him, wives that saw him as a benefit rather than a blessing. Yet, his “constant companion” from the stinky sheep fields while watching his fathers flock, to the cavernous toilets he had to hide in while running from Saul to the forgiveness given for a number of sins committed against God and innocent others, he remains confident in the Presence of his Shepherd!

My Prayer

Lord, my Shepherd. After all the things wherein, You have been so faithful towards me, thank You. Whether the need was spiritual and mental because I was spinning out of control, physical because I was overeating like a starving pig, financial because I did not have the means to meet my needs; You have been my constant companion. You taught me, without making me want to hide under a rock. Your gentle guidance and commanding correction both comforted me then and still do now. Help me continue to trust Your shepherding abilities for they speak more about You,, Your love and faithfulness than 1,000 words could ever say of me. Amen

Rewrite your own here:

Journal any thoughts the Lord is speaking to you about:

I pray this PDF was a useful tool as you continue your faith journey with the Shepherd! We hope to share lessons, prayer guides, bible studies, and other faith forming content as we all learn more of and from Jesus, receive His patient and enduring love for us and honor the Father in all we do!

Danette

References

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Protector / Constant Companion - <https://biblicalhebrew.org/hebrew-verb-ganan-to-shield-cover-or-defend.aspx>

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