

The Shepherd Provides

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
(Psalm 23:1-2)

Good pastureland may be found at higher elevations at one time of the year and in the valleys at another time. The shepherd must take it upon himself to find good pasture and then lead the sheep to that place. Without his guidance sheep will constantly graze on the same land eating the grass down to the root. The sheep will then become under-nourished, sickly. In addition the land itself will suffer. So, locating good pasture is not only for the present good of the sheep, but by proper land management, it is for their future good.

The Psalmist writes that the shepherd 'makes me' lie down in green pastures. The phrase, *makes me*, should not be taken in the same way that a parent might have to *make* their child eat their vegetables. It is a term indicating 'cause,' not 'force.' It is a way of drawing attention back to the role of the shepherd. The shepherd *causes* this to happen. He *causes* it by first searching out the green pasture and then leading the sheep to that place. The shepherd is the one who brings about this good result, not the sheep.

The shepherd is also busy searching out good, clean water sources. Without his careful attention, sheep will actually stop and drink from a mud puddle even when a clean water source is within view.

Because sheep are so easily frightened, the shepherd avoids a stream or river where the water is too swift. Quiet, or restful, waters will promote the well-being of the sheep.

Are you easily agitated or filled with anxiety over your basic needs in this life? Financial difficulties weigh heavily on many people in our volatile economic times. Jobs are being lost and there is tremendous competition for a shrinking job pool. Add to this the challenges of a college education for children, retirement, and caring for aging parents.

People feel stress in their home life due to day-to-day demands. There are sometimes additional problems with children or spouse. Frustrated with difficult relationships, stress continues to mount when a family member becomes sick or suffers an injury. The car breaks down; a storm damages the house; and on it goes.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread."

Later, in the same sermon, he taught that we should not to worry about what we will eat, what we will drink, or how we will cloth ourselves. These are the worries of the people of the world who have only themselves to lean on. Jesus encourages contentment and dependence on our Heavenly Father.

Difficult challenges are sure to visit the lives of each one of us. The question is whether we will remain steadfast in our faith in God.

Like King David, we are helpless sheep who are easily agitated and frightened by the circumstances of life.

If you have wandered off into a mind-set of self-dependence, you have become well acquainted with frustration and anxiety because you cannot maintain control your life. It is time to refocus your eyes on the Good Shepherd. Give yourself over to him and he will supply rich spiritual pastureland that will give you strength and answers for life's questions. Drink from the Living Water of Jesus Christ and find contentment and rest in the satisfying word of God.

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
(Matthew 6:33)