

# Coping In Crisis: *A Good Shepherd in Bad Times*

We have a dog named Samson. He's not a bird dog. He's not a guard dog. He's a snuggle dog...and he likes to *back into you* and snuggle up. We call it "booty bumping."

That's what we are doing with Psalm 23...backing up to it and snuggling in.

*"The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.  
He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams.  
He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name.  
Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me.  
Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.  
You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies.  
You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.  
Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:1-6*

*[Jesus] "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11 (NIV)*

- ◊ Remember the "Dinner Blessing" learned as a kid..."God is great, God is good..." (Also learned..."Good bread, good meat...Good Lord let's eat." But my parents wouldn't let us say that one.)
- ◊ A saying from Africa – "God is good" and response is "All the time." And then, reverse it. "All the time...God is good."

## Questions:

- ◊ Is that true?
- ◊ Do you believe it?
- ◊ What about when bad things happen to you?
- ◊ What about when you're sick?...depressed?...sad?...stressed?...worried?...scared?...hurting?...Is God still good then?
- ◊ What about when God feels distant...you can't feel Him at all?...Is He still good then?
- ◊ Is God really good all the time?...in a pandemic?...in jail?...in a hospital bed?

## Answer:

- ◊ He is. But sometimes, we doubt that don't we?...because we can't feel it for ourselves.

I get it...me too sometimes. It's easy to have faith when things are going great - we're happy, sitting back smacking on Krispy Kreme donuts while the band plays our favorite song.

What we have to remember, and hold on to, is that **God Is Good all the time**...in tough times, when we're in pain or hurting or scared....whether we feel it or not.

*"For the Lord is always good. He is always loving and kind, and His faithfulness goes on and on to each succeeding generation." Psalm 100:5 (TLB)*

## Focus on God's Goodness

### Example -Focus vs Unfocused (hold finger at arm's length then focus on finger, then on screen)

- ◊ We tend to focus on the closest thing to us.
- ◊ We need to learn, and practice, focusing on **beyond** what's right in front of us (problems, pain, etc.)...focus beyond those things and focus on God and His Goodness.
- ◊ "Here are my problems all around me. They are close; they are real. But I'm going to **REFOCUS** beyond them - focus on God; and remember that He is good and He loves me.

### Example - Warning Light in Car

- ◊ Helpful if you pay attention to it ("Oh, gauge getting close to E, better get some gas soon." Very helpful)
- ◊ There are some warning lights when we lose focus on **God's goodness**...not just lose focus on God. Some people focus on God; but they forget that He's good and loves them.

## Here are some Warning Lights that let us know we aren't focused on the goodness of the Good Shepherd

### 1. We get scared. We are worried and fearful.

*"Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'" Matthew 14:29-30 (NIV)*

- ◊ So...focus on Good Shepherd and be brave!

### 2. (When we lose focus on the Good Shepherd...) We take credit for things we shouldn't.

*"...I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" Luke 12:18-19 (NIV)*

*"What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as though you are so great, and as though you have accomplished something on your own?" 1 Corinthians 4:7 (TLB)*

*"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights..." James 1:17 (NIV)*

- ◊ So...focus on God's goodness and **be grateful to Him**.

### 3. (If we forget how good God is and that He loves us...) We tend to stop asking Him for help.

Just makes sense...if you're not sure if God is listening or has your best interest in mind, you'll stop going to Him for help.

### *Pattern of Learning to Trust*

- ◊ **A. Kid recognizes** they need something they can't get for themselves. (Baby suddenly realizes that he's hungry.)
- ◊ **B. Kid expresses** that need to a parent. (Starts screaming his head off.)
- ◊ **C. Parent meets** the need. (Wife finally wakes husband - because it's way past his turn to get the bottle.)
- ◊ **D. Eventually...kid learns to say "Thank You"**. (Could take up to 30 years.)

*"So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." Luke 11:13 (NLT)*

*"So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." Hebrews 4:16 (NLT)*

- ◊ So...let's remember that God is always good and **go to Him for help**.

### **4. (If we forget that God is always good and always loves us...) We'll quit trusting Him in tough times.**

*"The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away." Matthew 13:20-21 (NIV)*

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance." James 1:2-3 (NIV)*

- ◊ So...let's remember that God is always good and **strengthen our faith and cling to Him in tough times**.

### **What IF...what if we do these things?**

- ◊ What if we **REMEMBER** that God is good all the time?
- ◊ What if we stay **FOCUSED** on the goodness of God and how much he loves us?

### **What if we pay attention to the WARNING LIGHTS in our life?**

- ◊ **1. Fear.....**We could refocus on God's goodness and be strong and brave and true.
- ◊ **2. Taking Credit.....**We'll have a heart of gratefulness, thankfulness, humility and appreciation for what God has given to us.
- ◊ **3. Stop Praying.....**We will go boldly to God and receive help and deep friendship.
- ◊ **4. Doubting/Not Trusting God.....**We can be strong in tough times. Our faith won't shrink but will go richer and deeper...like a tree putting down deep roots, our roots will grow deeper into God.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- ◊ -Text MyNextSteps to 313131

Today, I want to receive Jesus as my Lord and Good Shepherd today.

This week I will intentionally focus on God and his goodness by...

\_\_\_reading the Bible every day.

\_\_\_praying every day.

\_\_\_memorizing some scripture.

\_\_\_helping someone anonymously

## **Prayer**