

The Lord Is My Shepherd:

Discovering the Personal, Powerful Nature of God's Leadership

The familiar words of Psalm 23 have echoed through hospital rooms, funeral services, and countless moments of human desperation. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." We know these words. We've heard them. But have we truly grasped their weight?

What if this beloved psalm isn't primarily about comfort in death, but about God's relentless commitment to shepherding us through every day of our lives? What if it was written not by a dreamy shepherd boy gazing at stars, but by an aging king—perhaps David around 60 years old—who had fought battles, carried burdens, and weathered the rebellion of his own son?

This changes everything.

The Good Shepherd Who Never Abandons

In John 10, we encounter three profound truths about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. First, He gave His life for the sheep. This isn't theoretical theology—it's the foundation of everything. When the wolf comes prowling, the hired hand runs. He has no real investment in the sheep. But the Good Shepherd? He stays. He fights. He dies if necessary.

Second, He knows His sheep intimately. "I know my own and my own know me," Jesus declares, "just as the Father knows me and I know the Father." Think about that comparison. The depth of communion between Father and Son—that eternal, perfect knowing—is the same quality of relationship Jesus offers us. He doesn't know us casually or from a distance. He knows us the way the Father knows Him.

Third, He is the only door. There's no alternate entrance, no side gate, no secret passage. Jesus is it. And through that door lies not mere survival, but abundant life—life overflowing with purpose, meaning, and the very presence of God Himself.

As C.S. Lewis reminds us through Mr. Beaver's words about Aslan: "Of course he isn't safe. But he is good. He's the King, I tell you." God isn't a tame deity we can control or predict. But He is profoundly, unchangeably good.

When You Cannot Find God But He Knows Exactly Where You Are

Job's wrestling in chapter 23 captures something many of us feel but rarely voice: "I go forward, but He is not there; I go backward, but I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand when He is working, I cannot behold Him; I turn to the right hand, but I cannot see Him."

Have you been there? Searching for God in your job uncertainty, your parenting challenges, your ministry efforts that seem to produce no fruit? You're doing everything right—reading Scripture, praying, obeying—and yet God seems absent?

Here's the pivot: "But He knows the way I take. When He has tried me, I shall come out like gold."

God isn't lost. You haven't wandered off His radar. He's working even when you cannot perceive it. He's training you, disciplining you—not as punishment, but as a coach disciplines an athlete. The 4 a.m. wake-up call isn't cruelty; it's preparation for the race ahead.

Job concludes with stunning certainty: "He is unchangeable. Who can turn Him back? What He desires, that He does. For He will complete what He appointed for me."

God will finish what He started. Whether it takes three days like Jonah in the fish, or forty years like Israel in the wilderness, God will have His way. The question is whether we'll make it easy or hard on ourselves.

The Chief Shepherd and His Under-Shepherds

First Peter 5 reminds us that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd over His church. He works through elders and pastors, but they are merely under-shepherds following His lead. Their job isn't to dominate or control, but to open the Word of God and help people hear what the Chief Shepherd is saying.

When Scripture says "obey your leaders," the word means "be persuaded." Position yourself to be persuaded by the Word of God as it's faithfully taught—not by charisma, smoke machines, or clever rhetoric. And "submit" means "resist no longer." Stop fighting what God is clearly doing through His appointed shepherds.

This isn't about hierarchy or blind obedience. It's about recognizing that God has ordained a structure for our growth and protection. The elders aren't there to tell you what to do; they're there to help you recognize God's voice and remember what He's already told you.

You Cannot Escape the Shepherd Who Pursues

Psalms 139 reads beautifully—until you realize David isn't writing a sweet devotional. He's describing divine pursuit. "You hem me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me."

David is pinned. Surrounded. And his response? "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence?"

If he ascends to heaven, God is there. If he descends to Sheol, God is there. If he takes the wings of the morning and dwells in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there God's hand will lead him and God's right hand—the hand of strength, power, and authority—will hold him.

Even darkness cannot hide us from God. He saw us being formed in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Before we existed in physical form, God had faith in us—seeing the substance of things unseen.

David's conclusion after this intense pursuit? "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Surrender. Not defeat, but trust.

The Lord IS My Shepherd

Three small words carry enormous weight: "The Lord IS my shepherd."

Not was. Not will be. IS.

Not "a shepherd" among many options. MY shepherd—personal, intimate, committed.

We are not our own. We were bought with a price. God owns us, and that ownership is the most liberating truth we'll ever encounter. He conceals things from us because He's God and we're not. He disciplines us because He loves us and wants us to share in His holiness. He speaks to us personally because He's big enough to give each of His children individual attention.

The great Shepherd equips us with everything good to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight. He doesn't just feed us; He teaches us to feed others. The little boy's five loaves and two fish became abundance in Jesus' hands—not because the boy had much, but because he brought what he had to the Shepherd.

So bring what you have. Stop comparing yourself to others. Stop running from the divine pursuit. Stop fighting the discipline that's making you golden.

The Lord is your shepherd. You shall not want.