

FELLOWSHIP NOTES ~ April 19th, 2020



Part 1 – Verse 1

Background to the Psalm

King David wrote this song as an expression of his personal relationship with the Lord. David was himself a shepherd from childhood and eventually used that experience in his role as Shepherd-King of God's people Israel. David used imagery that was not only natural and easy for him to use but would have been easy for anyone of his time to identify with since the occupation of shepherding was common in the Near East. The Israelites especially were known as shepherds (Genesis 46:28-34). While few of us in our society understand the culture of shepherding in the ancient Near East, we can still grasp the message that Psalm 23 communicates: when you have God as your Lord and Savior you experience all the blessings that comes from being in relationship with Him, from His care, His protection, and His eternal provision in heaven.

1. The Analogy

- 1.) God's relationship with mankind as shepherd/sheep is seen throughout the Bible:

"You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." Psalm 77:20

"Then we, your people, the sheep of your pasture, will thank you forever; we will declare your praise to generation after generation." Psalm 79:13

"For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, the sheep under his care." Psalm 95:7

"Acknowledge that the Lord is God. He made us, and we are his – his people, the sheep of his pasture." Psalm 100:3

"He protects his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in the fold of his garment. He gently leads those that are nursing." Isaiah 40:11

- 2.) The sheep/shepherd relationship is exemplified in Jesus – John 10:1-18; Luke 11:4-6; Hebrews 13:20; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:4; 2:25

2. The First Acknowledgement: "The LORD is my shepherd..." - 1a

- 1.) David's acknowledgement emphasizes God's sovereign _____ and _____ over his life.



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The video as well as a printable manuscript of the message and this handout are available online.

2.) David's acknowledgement emphasizes the _____ nature of one's relationship with God.

FACT: Our experience with God only becomes personal with our acknowledgment of His right to own us and be the Lord of our life through salvation. Only when we come to faith in Jesus Christ as our good shepherd will we come to know Him in this personal way.

3. The Second Acknowledgement: "I have what I need." – vs. 1b

1. David's acknowledgement emphasizes God's complete and wholistic _____ for us.
2. David's acknowledgement emphasizes his own personal _____ of God's faithfulness to him.

FACT: Our sufficiency in Christ means we no longer need what any other "shepherds" might promise to provide. It means that with Christ as our shepherd we don't need to grasp for what looks like "greener grass" in the world. Christ is enough, He's all we need.



"Seeing Jesus Through the Uncertainty" is a four-part interactive family devotional with everything your family needs to discuss and learn about the faithfulness of God in difficult times, including Bible studies with discussion questions, activities, and coloring sheets.

Each study in this series can be downloaded separately at:
<https://www.namb.net/seeing-jesus-through-the-uncertainty/>

Devotional by Pastor Ray Stedman

“The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need.” Psalm 23:1

Because the Lord is my shepherd, I do not lack anything. He satisfies my needs. That is the place where God wants to bring us. He wants us to be independently dependent upon Him, to need Him alone. It struck me as I was studying this psalm that there are really only two options in life. If the Lord is my shepherd, then I shall not want; but if I am in want, then it is obvious that the Lord is not my shepherd. It is that simple. If emptiness, loneliness, despair, and frustration exist in our lives, then the Lord is not our shepherd. Or if anyone or anything else is shepherding us, we are never satisfied. If our vocation shepherds us, then there is restlessness and feverish activity and frustration. If education is our shepherd, then we are constantly being disillusioned. If another person is our shepherd, we are always disappointed, and ultimately we are left empty. If drug abuse is our shepherd, then we are wasted, as one rock artist said recently. But if the Lord is our shepherd, David says, we shall not want.

It occurs to me that if Jehovah is to be our shepherd, then we have to begin by recognizing that we are sheep. I don't like that analogy, frankly, because I don't like sheep. I come by my dislike honestly. I used to raise sheep. In high school I was in the 4-H Club, and I had a herd of sheep and goats. Now goats I can abide, because they may be obnoxious, but at least they're smart. Sheep are, beyond question, the most stupid animals on the face of the earth. They are dumb and they are dirty and they are timid and defenseless and helpless. Mine were always getting lost and hurt and snakebitten. They literally do not know enough to come in out of the rain. Sheep are miserable creatures.

And then to have God tell me that I am one! That hurts my feelings. But if I am really honest with myself, I know it is true. I know that I lack wisdom and strength. I'm inclined to be self-destructive. Isaiah said it best: We all, like sheep, have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way (Isaiah 53:6). I know my tendency toward self-indulgent individualism, going my own way and doing my own thing. That's me. I'm a sheep. And if Jesus Christ is to be my shepherd, I have to admit that I need one. It is difficult, but that is where we must start. Once we admit that need, we discover the truth of what David is saying. We shall not want.

Life Application: If emptiness, loneliness, despair, frustration, hopelessness, or wants exist in our lives, then the Lord is not our shepherd. Can we recognize His call to rescue us?