

Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23?

“The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.” Psalm 23:1

To know the Shepherd that David talks about in Psalm 23 v 1 you need to look at how David would have been as a Shepherd himself in his time as young man.

Shepherding today looks very different to how David would have cared for His sheep. Today sheep are driven from behind, herded by dogs or 4 x 4's and in Australia and other places they use horses or even helicopters. But in David's time sheep were led from the front, so the Shepherd had to know his sheep and they had to know the Shepherd. “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—” John 10:14

The Shepherd would need to watch over the sheep at night in the sheep pen and to do this he would physically lay down across the opening to the pen to ensure that wild animals would not attack his sheep. He became the gate to his sheep. “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.” John 10:9

In watching over his sheep a Shepherd would put himself literally between the sheep and danger to protect his flock because each one was precious to him. ““I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11

Shepherds spent most of their lives with their sheep, so much so that they could call just one sheep out from within the whole herd to come to them and because they knew him, they would hear his voice calling and would go. “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.” John 10:16

So now seeing Jesus as our Shepherd through David's eyes and knowing we are his sheep, what have we learned? Jesus is a good Shepherd, who leads his sheep by example, He knows us. We need to know his voice and his calling upon our lives and follow his leading. Jesus is the only way to the father, and He loved us so much that he laid down his life for us.

“If you can't sleep don't count sheep, talk to the Shepherd.” Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? He knows you.

## Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 2

“The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.” Psalm 23:1

The second part of verse one says, “I lack nothing” but other translations say, “I shall not want”, “I don’t need a thing”, “I will always have everything I need”. Please note, it does not say he shall supply our wants, it says he supply’s our needs. Needs means we are already in a state of needing something.

So what do we need? I bet everyone probably has a list as long as their arm of things they need but the answer to the question will always be Jesus, the Shepherd of Psalm 23.

Even Paul knew what it was to be in need. “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:12- 13 What was His answer knowing that his needs would be met by the Lord and knowing his strength and provision came from God.

We need to come to the place where there is contentment and peace in the knowledge that The Lord is our Shepherd and that he will make a way that our needs will be met.

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”. Philippians 4:19

This is not us walking in monetary prosperity, it is us not being in want. Is God calling you to service? he will supply all you need, Are your circumstances dire? Have you given them to God and asked him for help? then have you waited for direction? You see we have a responsibility too. We need to give it all to God and seek his will and allow his voice to guide us.

The Shepherd of Psalm 23 laid down his life for us. He paid our debt, so why do we fret that what concerns us, would not be of importance to Him. Your need was and is met in Jesus.

““Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”. Matthew 6:25-34

## Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 3

“He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,” Psalm 23:2

Verse 2 of Psalm 23 paints an amazing picture of provision, peace, gentleness, tranquility and rest. But have you ever noticed that it doesn't say that the Shepherd suggests it might be a good idea to lie down? What it actually says is “He makes me lie down”. God is reminding us that there has to be times of rest, of being still and a regaining strength and direction from Him. Sometimes we feel if we aren't doing something to serve God then how will he ever be exalted in our town? but “He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”” Psalm 46:10 God will be exalted, even in our times of rest.

Being busy in service does not always mean we are being fruitful, what it means is that we are being busy in service. So God is reminding us, telling us, insisting that there has to be times where we stop, where we rest, where we lift our eyes to him, where we spend time with him and where we listen to his will for our lives, this is the greener pastures that are being described. It is when we rest, when we seek his guidance, that we find the pastures green.

Verse 2 also talks about quiet, still waters. David is talking about refreshing, for when we are busy serving, we can become thirsty and in need of fresh water “Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”” John 4:13-14 we need to be connected to the well that won't run dry.

David in Psalm 23 is reminding us to stop and spend time with God and to allow the Shepherd to tend to us, his sheep. If you are tired, if you thirsty, if you in need then Stop, lie down, rest, spend time with your Saviour and allow Him to refresh you and lead you.

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip, he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you, the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm, he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”. Psalm 121:1-8

Do do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 4

“he restores my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.”. Psalm 23:3

These first 4 words “he restores my soul” are a beautiful depiction of a loving and caring Shepherd who is interested in every part of our lives. The Lord is the lover of our souls, He cares for us like no one else. “I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.” Ezekiel 34:15-16

What an image that when we are hurting, when we are broken or even when we feel completely destroyed, The Shepherd of Psalm 23, our Saviour, comes looking for us, picks us up, strengthens us, ministers to our wounds, carries us on his shoulders until we are able to stand and walk in his strength again.

“He restores my soul” what a confidence these 4 words bring, because they also allows us to see that, we all struggle, we all have battles and that we were never ever supposed to do this walk alone or in our own strength. There is confidence and security in the promise of restoration for our souls. “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”. John 10:27-30

Are you tired, broken in heart or spirit? Then spend time with the Shepherd and allow him to restore your soul completely.

““What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.”

Matthew 18:12-13 I read this the other day while studying “To some it doesn’t make sense for the Shepherd to leave behind the 99 to look for the 1 until you are the 1.” suddenly “He restores my soul” made perfect sense, on Calvary’s cross I was the 1, you were the 1 and he came looking for us and He restored our souls completely.

Oh what a Saviour is Jesus my friend.

Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 5

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley” Do you see it? Even when we are in our darkest, toughest and sometimes sorrow filled times of life we are never meant to stop and give up, we are called to walk. But we never walk alone for God never leaves us, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:6

Even when your family, friends and colleagues desert you through hardship valley, God stays right by us walking every step with us. “One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 18:24

Do we need to be afraid of the darkest valley? “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans’ 8: 37-39 Not only that we can walk in peace “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

It may be a dark valley we are walking through, but we have the light. “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

Keep walking in faith, keep praying, keep trusting and remember it is always darkest before the dawn. God is in every circumstance, even in the darkest valley you are are not alone.

Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 6

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4

Remembering David who wrote this Psalm, was a Shepherd himself you can understand how depicting the Lord as a Shepherd with a “rod and staff” would indeed bring him comfort as they were tools of his own trade. But what do they do and why do they bring us comfort?

We all know that a shepherds rod was essentially a long stick but how does that bring comfort?

Well firstly you need to look at the type of ground that David and the shepherds of the time would have been travelling on. It was dry ground, mountainous and stony under foot. The shepherds rod would be used to help steady your footing as you walked and would help stop you from falling. “He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber;” Psalm 121:3

The rod would also be used for protecting the sheep when a wild animal would try to steal one. So it was also used to preserve life “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” John 10:28-29

The shepherds crook was the half loop at the top of the staff and this would be used to lift and rescue sheep either by their leg or by the neck when they had found themselves in a dangerous situation or stuck in the mud or mire. The Shepherd would then lift them back to solid and safe ground. “I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.” Psalm 40:1-3

So maybe now you can see why the rod and the staff of the shepherd in Psalm 23 brings comfort, it helps us stand firm, it provides protection and it is our source of rescue in difficult times. “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

In troubled times our comfort will always be found in Jesus Christ the Lord, our Shepherd. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

## Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 7

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.” Psalm 23:5

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” I was thinking about this first part of verse 5 and was captured by the thought of how it is a picture of provision and security in God. That even when we are surrounded by enemies and trials, the Lord takes time to prepare a table, sit with us and spend time with us, right there in the midst of trouble. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. “The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” Psalm 46:1, 7, 10-11

Esther and the Jews faced death at the hands of Haman, she was literally standing in the presence of her enemy when she approached the king uninvited but the king lowered his sceptre and bid her approach. “Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfil my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.””

Esther 5:7-8 What did she do? She invited the King and Haman to dinner. God had Esther prepare a table in the midst of her enemy, the very man who wanted her dead. But we know that the banquet turned the tables on Haman and he lost his life and Esther and the Jews were saved. And how did they celebrate? “In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.” Esther 8:17 They set the table and gave thanks to God.

My Mum used to say “Jesus is the unseen guest at every table” so maybe we should remember to set him a place and remember that there are times that we even sit at the table he has prepared for us, where we feast on His word, spend time in His presence and dwell in security. Throughout scripture we repeatedly see Jesus at a table sharing a meal because He desires to be where the people are. So do you want or need to spend time with the Shepherd? Then get into his word, spend time in prayer and sit at His table with him a while.

## Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 8

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.” Psalm 23:5

The second part of verse 5 says “You anoint my head with oil” I had never really thought about what it actually meant for me before. So I started to research what it meant for a Shepherd in David’s time. What I discovered was that in the heat and dry and dusty land that the sheep would graze on, there were insects that would attack the sheep and would leave the sheep in pain and their skin broken and damaged. But also the heat would cause their skin and wool to become dry and course, so the Shepherd would anoint the sheep’s head and back of the neck with oil, this repelled the insects and the oil would also keep the skin moisturised too.

So why did David say that the Lord his Shepherd anoint his head with oil? Because He knew in whom lay his protection from his enemy and he knew that, that was where his times of refreshing came from and this was how his anointing had already come from the Lord. “But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.” So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.” So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.” 1 Samuel 16:7, 11-13

Do you feel like you need refreshing? Do you feel like you are searching for direction? Or do you feel like the enemy is pressing in? Then your prayer and declaration today is and has to be the Lord is my Shepherd and He anoints my head with oil. Spend time in his presence and allow his oil of gladness to flow. “You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad.” Psalm 45:7-8

When we allow the Shepherd, the Lord, to be Lord of all in our lives, we will truly understand what a difference the anointing of the Lord makes to our lives. You see the anointing of the Holy Spirit bring the power and authority of God into our lives. “So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” Zechariah 4:6

Always remember to spend time with the Shepherd and allow yourself to receive fresh oil daily for protection, power and refreshing. Why are we anointed? For purpose and calling. ““The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”” Luke 4:18-19

## Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 9

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.” Psalm 23:5

In the final part of verse 5 we read “my cup overflows.” some translations say “my cup runneth over” so what was David saying in these words. Well, to begin with “my cup runneth over” is originally found in the Torah and means “I have more than enough for my needs”. It first and foremost is talking of God being Jehovah-Jireh, our provider. “So Abraham gave that place a name, Jehovah-Jireh “The Lord Provides.” Even today people say, “On the mountain of the Lord, he will give us what we need.”” Genesis 22:14

God never said He would supply our wants but Paul lived and shared the promise, that he knew God did supply all that he needed “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Philipians 4:19-20

So when we entrust our lives to the Lord’s care we can trust in Him to supply our needs, but the scripture doesn’t say my cup is full, which would be just enough for us, it says “my cup overflows” which speaks of what we have, we have to share and give away. Remember the Torah says, “I have more than enough for my needs”. More than, imply’s enough to share and to help others. What if your standing with your cup overflowing and the person next to you has a half filled or nearly empty cup, what do you do? We share the overflow from our cup of course.

I am always reminded of the story of Elijah when he met the widow who’s cupboards were bare and was about to prepare a final meal for her and her son and Elisha’s prophecy said if you will bake a meal for me first God will not allow your oil or flour to run out until the rain falls again. The widow gave of the little that was left in her cup and what happened? “She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.” She shared what she had been given with Elijah and fed him also out of the overflow.

When God provides and supply’s our needs it is never, just for us. We have a responsibility to give the blessings away. To share His love, share his peace, share Him to all who’s cups are not full yet.

Part of the Shepherds roll was to meet the needs of his sheep. David not only knew this but knew the Lord had met his needs too and that is why he could write “my cup overflows”.

## Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 10

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” Psalms 23:6

Have you ever stopped and actually thought about the first part of verse 6? “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:” I had always saw it as a wonderful, delicate wee promise to hope for, but I had never saw it in the context of Psalm 23 being written in David’s time, when I did suddenly it depicted a different image and took on a whole new meaning for me.

Firstly why did David use the word “follow”? When I started researching why David wrote “follows” I thought about the when in bible we see anyone had a personal encounter with God or anyone spent time with Jesus, goodness and mercy followed. Take Jesus and his encounter with Zacchaeus, his life was full of wrongdoing and theft but after his encounter with Jesus his life was filled and followed by goodness and mercy.... “But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”” Luke 19:8-10

Secondly, we need to look at the Hebrew root word for follow “Radaph” which actually means to pursue, chase to catch or hunt down with intent. Suddenly it not such a delicate wee promise is it? In this verse David is describing how he had seen God actively pursued him, hunted him down and daily ensure that he would know the goodness and mercy of God in his life. God brought victory to David in times where others felt he would fail. One of the greatest days of goodness and mercy in David’s life may have been the day he faced Goliath. “David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.” As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.” 1 Samuel 17:45-50 God’s goodness, mercy, victory and freedom followed David that day.

When I think about this verse now, I see a different picture. I see a God who actively seeks me out, who pursues me with intent to bless me with his goodness and mercy. But I also feel challenged to be like Jesus, that when I spend time with others I ensure that I share God’s love, his goodness and mercy by listening, speaking and loving like Jesus.

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.” John 15:12-17

My prayer for you is that you know that God follows, pursues you today with the intent to bless you with his goodness and mercy.

Do you know the Shepherd of Psalm 23? Part 11

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” Psalms 23:6

The final part of Psalm 23 “and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” Brings us a promise of forgiveness, belonging and security in Christ. David was so passionate about his eternal home with the Lord that it was something he repeatedly sought “One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.” Psalm 27:4-5

Repeatedly throughout the Psalms we see people with a passion and longing for the house or dwelling place of the Lord. “How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.” Psalm 84:1-4

This made me think are we living our lives daily with that same passion and longing for spending the rest of eternity in the presence and house of the Lord? Are we living a life that would tell others of this hope?

How do we live like this? We share the Gospel, we share Jesus. We tell them of how Jesus loved us so much that He took our sin upon his shoulders, how He bled and died for us, to fully pay our debt and how He conquered death, hell and the grave, that He rose 3 days later and the grave is empty. And this was God’s plan to redeem us all, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” John 3:16-18 Jesus brought salvation and a new covenant was established. God’s love was poured out and Jesus became the way for us to “dwell in the house of the Lord for ever”

How different life may look if we lived every day living with an eternity outlook. What affect would it have on our lives and on the lives of those we touch and finally what if you are the one who God chooses to help guide others to His Holy dwelling place? After all God sent someone to guide us. For me it was my precious Mum who showed and shared God’s unfailing love with me and I am forever grateful to her and my precious Saviour. I can only hope and pray that as I live my life in the light of eternity and share the gospel of my Lord Jesus Christ and His unfailing love, I can be used to help guide others to a forever dwelling place with the Him. “In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.” Exodus 15:13