

# **“The Lord is my Shepherd” – A In-depth Study of Psalm 23**

**Teacher: Nick Watts \* Verse 3**

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

## **In This Session, We Will Learn:**

1. What it means to be “restored” by Christ.
2. Why being “lead-able” is vital to our spiritual health.
3. That not all paths are “right”, but only those shown to us under the guidance of the Shepherd.
4. How seriously God takes “His name.”



## **Introduction**

- For a brief introduction to the Psalms, Psalm 23, Christ’s presence in the Psalms, and of Christian author/shepherd, W. Phillip Keller, please see “Session One.”

## **Psalm 23:3**

- **“He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.”**

### **1. “He restores my soul”**

- A. From the Amplified: “He **refreshes** and **restores** my **life** (myself);”
- B. Steven Lawson; *Holman Old Testament Commentary* – This statement is subject to different interpretations. It may refer to the restoring of a **wayward believer**, or a restoring of our **emotional/physical health**. The context supports both interpretations.
- C. Restoration of emotional/physical health
  - I. Bruce Waltke & James Houston; *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* – **“He restores/refreshes my vitality.”**
  - II. Personal illustration – working out with Michelle. Need....rest....water....food...
  - III. 1 Samuel 14:27 - After [Jonathan] had eaten [the honey], he felt **refreshed**.
  - IV. In light of vss 1-2, the implication is that the Good Shepherd “replenishes/restores” what is lacking due to “the stuff of life on earth” sucking vitality out of us.

- a. Matthew 11:28-30 (Message) Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.
  - V. Psalm 62:5-6 (Message) Everything I hope for comes from [God]....He's solid rock under my feet, **breathing room for my soul,....**
  - VI. Willem VanGemeren; *Expositor's Bible Commentary* - In short, the combination of "green pastures" and "quiet waters" portrays **God's "refreshing care"** for his own.
- D. Restoration of Intimacy with the Shepherd
  - I. I was a teenager when I heard a preacher say, **"When you find yourself not as close to God as you once were, make no mistake as to who moved."**
  - II. Earthly observations
    - a. Keller – Technically, "cast down" or "cast" is an old English term for a sheep that's turned over on its back and cannot get up again by itself due to either one, or a combination of conditions: (1) misjudging a "soft spot" in the grass, (2) its wool has become too heavy, and/or (3) over-weight.
    - b. Keller – A cast sheep is a pathetic sight. Lying on its back, its feet in the air, it flays away frantically struggling to stand up, without success. Sometimes it will bleat a little for help, but generally it lies there lashing about in frightened frustration.
      - 1. If the owner does not arrive on the scene within a reasonably short amount of time, the sheep will die:
        - a) Internal danger: Because of the sheep's awkward position, gases begin to build up in the sheep's stomach, building up to a point where they cut off blood circulation to the extremities, especially the legs. If the weather is very hot, the sheep could die in a few hours.
        - b) External danger: The sheep is 100% helpless.
      - 2. It is the **shepherd** who keeps a sharp eye on his flock, counting them daily. **He, alone, is their source for life.**
  - III. Biblical implications based on earthly observations
    - a. DC Talk; *What If I Stumble*: What if I stumble? What if I fall? What if I lose my step, And I make fools of us all? (Good questions.)
    - b. Keller – Many people have the idea that when a believer falls, God becomes disgusted, fed-up, and even furious with them. **This is simply not so.** God's heart is revealed to us in the Person of His Son, our Shepherd, Jesus Christ. In the Gospels, we see Jesus, over and over again, gently & tenderly "finding, picking up and restoring cast sheep." (cf. Luke 15:1-7)
    - c. The Bible, beginning in Genesis 3, tells of **God's unfolding plan of restoring us, redeeming us, saving us.** Furthermore, in Luke 15, Jesus (God with

skin on), tells not one, not two, but **three stories in a row** reminding us of His relentless pursuit of us.

1. Luke 15:22 (niv) "But the father said to his servants, '**Quick!** Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and **sandals on his feet.**"
  - a) The father's command, "Quick!" represents the speed with which God desires to restore intimacy with us.
  - b) Footwear signified immediate restoration into the family.

## 2. "He leads/quides me in paths of righteousness.... "

### A. Earthly observations

- I. Lawson – Unlike other animals, **sheep lack a sense of direction and become easily lost**, even in the most familiar environment. They **easily go astray as they are prone to wander**. As they are being moved from field to field they can easily fall into deep crevices or fall off ragged cliffs. The shepherd must continually guide them to right paths, safe paths.
- II. Keller – **Sheep are notorious creatures of habit**. If left to themselves, they will follow the same trails until those trails become ruts; graze the same hills until they turn to desert wastes; and pollute their own ground until its corrupt with disease and parasites....**No other class of livestock requires more careful handling, more detailed direction, than do sheep.**

### B. Biblical implications based on earthly observations

- I. Proverbs 14:12/16:25 - **There is a way that seems right to a man**, but its end is the way to **death**.
- II. Psalm 25:12 (nlt) Who are those who fear the Lord? **He will show them the path they should choose.**
- III. Psalm 32:8 (nlt) The Lord says, "**I will guide you** along the best pathway for your life. I will **advise you** and **watch over you.**"
- IV. Psalm 119:9 (Message) How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully reading **the map of your Word.**

## 3. "...for his name's sake. "

A. Lest we forget, our lives are ultimately for **God's glory**, not our own.

B. Rick Warren; *Purpose-Driven Life* – very first line in the book: **"It's not about you."**

- I. Philosopher/atheist, Bertrand Russell – Unless you assume [the existence & personal interaction with] a God, the question of life's purpose is meaningless.
- II. Colossians 1:16 (Message) For everything, **absolutely everything**, above and below, visible and invisible...everything got started in Him and finds its purpose **in Him**.
  - a. Both, the quote & verse, cited above were cited by Warren.

### C. The Name of God

- I. Names in the Bible are pregnant with meaning. Waltke & Houston write that, in the Bible, **“a person and their name is inseparable.”** For instance....
  - a. Daniel 1:6-7 - Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official (from Babylon) gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.
  - b. All three Hebrew names have biblical meaning. All three Babylonian names have pagan meaning. For instance, “Daniel” means “God is my judge,” while “Belteshazzar” means “Bel protect the king.”
- II. Exodus 3:14-15 - God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said,...**“This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”**
  - a. Exodus 9:16 - But for this purpose I have raised you (Pharaoh) up, to show you **my** power, so that **my name** may be proclaimed in all the earth.
  - b. 2 Chronicles 7:14 - if my people who are called by **my name**....
- III. Exodus 20:7 – (10 Commandments) “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”
  - a. Jeremiah 29:15-23 (nlt) But this is what the Lord says...I will make [the false prophets] an object of damnation, horror, contempt, and mockery....This is what the...God of Israel, says about your [false] prophets....who are lying to you **in my name**