

The Shepherd Provides

**The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
(Psalm 23:1-2)**

Good pastureland may be found at higher elevations at one time of the year and in valleys at another time. The shepherd must take the initiative to find good pasture and then lead the sheep to that place. Without his guidance sheep will constantly graze on the same land eating the grass down to the root. The sheep will then become under-nourished and sickly. In addition, the land itself will suffer. So, locating good pasture is not only for the present good of the sheep, but by proper land management, it is for their future good.

The Psalmist writes that the shepherd 'makes me' lie down in green pastures. The phrase, *makes me*, should not be understood in the same way that a parent might *make a child* clean his room. The Hebrew term indicates *cause*, not *force*. It draws attention to the role of the shepherd: The shepherd *causes* this to happen. He does so by first searching out the green pasture and then leading the sheep to that place. The shepherd brings about this good result, not the sheep.

The shepherd will also be busy searching out good, clean water sources. Without his careful attention, sheep might stop and drink from a mud puddle even when a clean water source is within view.

Because sheep are so easily frightened, the shepherd avoids a stream or river where the water is too swift. Quiet, or restful, waters will promote the well-being of the sheep.

Are you easily agitated or filled with anxiety over your basic needs in this life? Financial difficulties weigh heavily on many people in volatile economic times: Shrinking job pool; college education for the kids; saving for retirement; and care for aging parents. Stress also comes from day-to-day demands: Relationship challenges in the home and at work; sickness or injury; the car; the house; I'm getting older; and on and on it goes.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." Later, in the same sermon, he taught that we should not worry about food and drink and clothing. Those are the worries of the people of the world who have only themselves to lean on. Difficult challenges are sure to visit the lives of each one of us. The question is whether we will remain steadfast in our faith in God.

Like King David, we are helpless sheep who are easily agitated and frightened by the circumstances of life.

Have you wandered off into 'self-dependence' yet find it impossible to maintain control your life. It is time to refocus your eyes on the Good Shepherd. Give yourself over to him and he will supply rich spiritual pastureland. Drink from the Living Water of Jesus Christ and find answers, find contentment, and find rest in the satisfying word of God.

**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
(Matthew 6:33)**