



RCCG OCEANIA

Faith & Trust

Living Near the Good Shepherd

At a Glance

BIG IDEA

Psalm 23 does more than comfort—it teaches what life looks like when the Shepherd is truly near. He provides what is needed, restores what is broken, and leads into rest and right paths. In Jesus, the Good Shepherd stands against the thief and gives abundant life, so goodness and mercy mark the journey and God's presence becomes the believer's desire and home.

PRIMARY PASSAGES

Psalm 23:1-6

John 10:10-11

Psalm 27:4

Key Takeaways

- When the Lord is your Shepherd, you are not left to lack (Psalm 23:1).
- The Shepherd leads into rest and restores the soul, guiding in righteous paths (Psalm 23:2-3).
- Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life and gives abundant life, unlike the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10-11).
- God prepares provision and honor even in the presence of enemies (Psalm 23:5).
- Goodness and mercy follow throughout life, and the goal is to dwell with the Lord (Psalm 23:6; Psalm 27:4).

Introduction

Psalm 23 is both comfort and instruction. It reveals what changes when God is not distant but near as Shepherd: anxiety gives way to trust, exhaustion gives way to rest, and confusion gives way to guided paths. This study traces the Shepherd's provision, restoration, and protection, and connects the psalm to Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The goal is not merely survival, but a life pursued by goodness and mercy, shaped by nearness, and anchored in the desire to dwell with God.

Scripture Reading

- **Psalm 23:1** — Establishes the relationship: the Lord as Shepherd is the foundation for confidence and contentment.
- **Psalm 23:2** — Shows the Shepherd's leadership into rest—green pastures and still waters picture calm, sustained care.
- **Psalm 23:3** — Highlights inner renewal: the Shepherd restores the soul and leads in right paths for His name's sake.
- **John 10:10-11** — Connects Psalm 23 to Jesus: the Good Shepherd gives abundant life and protects against the thief's agenda.
- **Psalm 23:5** — Teaches that God's provision and favor can be experienced even amid opposition and threat.

Scripture Reading (cont.)

- **Psalm 23:6** — Frames the whole journey: goodness and mercy pursue the believer, ending in dwelling with the Lord.
- **Psalm 27:4** — Clarifies the heart-response to the Shepherd's nearness: a singular desire to dwell with and behold the Lord.

Key Points

1. **The Shepherd Ends Lack** — Psalm 23 begins with belonging: "The LORD is my Shepherd." The psalm does not start with circumstances, but with relationship. Nearness to the Shepherd becomes the foundation for steady confidence. "I shall not want" describes settled trust rather than denial of real needs. The Shepherd's care means the sheep are not abandoned to scarcity or neglect. The focus is not on possessing everything, but on lacking nothing essential under God's faithful oversight. Living near the Shepherd reshapes what "enough" means. Contentment grows as the heart learns to measure life by God's presence and guidance rather than by fear of shortage.

- State your relationship to God plainly in prayer: "You are my Shepherd," especially when worry rises.
- Identify one area where fear of lack drives your decisions; choose one trust-based step of obedience instead.
- Practice contentment by naming what God has already provided for today's needs.
- When tempted to panic, pause and ask: "What would it look like to live as though the Shepherd is near?"

Scripture: Psalm 23:1

Key Points (cont.)

2. He Leads to Rest and Restoration — The Shepherd does not only drive forward; He leads into rest. Green pastures and still waters picture nourishment and calm—places where life is sustained without frenzy. Nearness to the Shepherd changes pace as well as direction. God also restores what is broken within: “He restores my soul.” Restoration speaks to inner renewal—strength returned, clarity regained, and the heart made whole again under His care. The Shepherd’s restoration is not aimless comfort. He leads in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Nearness to Him produces a life aligned with what is right, not merely what is easy.

- Build a regular pattern of rest that reflects trust in the Shepherd’s leadership rather than constant urgency.
- Bring your weary places to God honestly, asking Him to restore your soul instead of hiding exhaustion.
- Before making a decision, ask whether it fits “paths of righteousness” or only personal convenience.
- Choose one habit that increases nearness—unhurried Scripture reading, quiet prayer, or reflective worship.

Scripture: Psalm 23:2

Psalm 23:3

3. The Good Shepherd Gives Life — John 10 clarifies the Shepherd’s identity in Jesus. The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy—an agenda of loss and devastation. Jesus presents Himself in direct contrast: He came that the sheep may have abundant life. Abundant life is not defined here as ease, but as life sourced from the Shepherd’s nearness and protection. It is the difference between being consumed by the thief’s destructive aims and being held by the Shepherd’s saving care. Jesus also declares the cost of His shepherding: the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. His nearness is not sentimental; it is committed, protective, and sacrificial.

- Name areas where “the thief” has been stealing life (hope, peace, integrity); ask Jesus for guarding and renewal.
- Define abundant life by closeness to Jesus rather than by changing circumstances.
- Respond to the Good Shepherd’s sacrifice with trust and obedience, not self-protection.
- When tempted toward destructive patterns, choose one concrete step that aligns with life under the Shepherd’s care.

Scripture: John 10:10-11

Key Points (cont.)

4. Provision in the Presence of Enemies — Psalm 23 teaches that God's shepherding does not depend on a conflict-free environment. The Shepherd prepares a table in the presence of enemies. Provision is real even when opposition is near. A prepared table communicates intentional care and steady hospitality, not hurried survival. God's nearness can sustain dignity, strength, and focus when threats or hostility remain unresolved. This also reframes fear: enemies may be present, but they are not ultimate. The Shepherd's presence and provision set the terms for how the journey is lived.

- In a stressful or opposed setting, look for the "table" God has provided—daily strength, wise boundaries, needed help.
- Refuse to let opposition define your identity; anchor your confidence in the Shepherd's nearness.
- Practice gratitude in hard moments by listing specific provisions God has prepared for you.
- Choose a peace-making response that reflects trust in God's care rather than retaliation or despair.

Scripture: Psalm 23:5

5. Goodness Follows; Dwelling Becomes the Goal — Psalm 23 ends with a lifelong horizon: goodness and mercy follow all the days of life. The Shepherd's care is not occasional; it is persistent. The language suggests being pursued by God's faithful love through every season. The destination is relational: "I will dwell in the house of the LORD." The highest good is not merely receiving gifts from God, but living in His presence as the defining home of the heart. Psalm 27:4 expresses the same single desire—to dwell with the Lord and behold Him. Nearness becomes not only comfort in trouble, but the core aim of life.

- Ask where your deepest desire is pointing; realign it toward dwelling with God rather than temporary control.
- Keep a record of evidences of goodness and mercy to strengthen faith during uncertain days.
- Make one weekly choice that prioritizes presence with God (unhurried worship, prayerful reflection, Scripture meditation).
- When making plans, consider whether they support a life oriented to dwell near the Shepherd.

Scripture: Psalm 23:6 Psalm 27:4

Group Discussion

Tip: Use these questions to guide the group from seeing → understanding → applying.

Observation

- What actions does Psalm 23 attribute to the Shepherd (provide, lead, restore, prepare, pursue)?
- What images are used in Psalm 23:2, and what do green pastures and still waters suggest in the text itself?
- In Psalm 23:5, what is surprising about the table being prepared in the presence of enemies?
- In John 10:10-11, what contrast is made between the thief and Jesus as the Good Shepherd?
- What repeated or concluding ideas in Psalm 23:6 and Psalm 27:4 emphasize the theme of dwelling near God?

Interpretation

- How does "The LORD is my Shepherd" function as the foundation for the rest of Psalm 23?
- What might "I shall not want" mean in terms of trust and contentment, without denying real needs?
- How does restoration of the soul connect to being led in paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3)?
- How does Jesus' statement about abundant life deepen the meaning of Psalm 23's Shepherd imagery?
- What does it mean for goodness and mercy to "follow" all the days of life, and how does that shape a believer's outlook?

Application

- Where is fear of lack most influencing your choices, and what would it look like to live near the Shepherd in that area?
- What is one practical step you can take to pursue rest and soul restoration under God's leadership this week?
- How can you recognize and resist "the thief" patterns (steal, kill, destroy) while choosing the life Jesus gives?
- What "table" might God be preparing for you in the presence of enemies—what provision do you need to notice or receive?
- What would change if your main aim became to dwell with the Lord (Psalm 23:6; Psalm 27:4) rather than merely solve problems?

Prayer Focus

- Confess the Lord as your Shepherd and surrender areas of fear and lack
- Ask for soul restoration and guidance into righteous paths
- Seek protection from the thief's destructive patterns and grace to receive abundant life in Jesus
- Pray for a deeper desire to dwell with God and make His presence your home

Next Step

Read Psalm 23 slowly, name one place you need the Shepherd's nearness, and take one concrete step of trust-filled obedience.

Conclusion

Living near the Shepherd is a whole-life posture: trusting His provision, receiving His rest and restore work, and walking in right paths for His name's sake. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, stands against the thief's destructive agenda and gives abundant life through His sacrificial care. Even with enemies present, God prepares a table, and the long story is marked by goodness and mercy. The fitting response is a focused desire to dwell with the Lord—making His presence the believer's home and highest pursuit.

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