

OVERFLOWING

PEACE



OVERFLOWING

PEACE

*What God Says About
A Peace-Filled Life*

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To my Mom, Linda.

You were the first one to teach me to love
my Shepherd and His sheep.
I am forever grateful.

I love you,
Tara





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Introduction

Overflowing Peace in a World That Is Peaceless

I can't tell you how much it means that you have chosen to read this book! After all, it is written on one of the most familiar and memorized passages in all the Bible. Maybe you grew up reciting this passage as a child in Sunday school. Or maybe you cling to these familiar words during difficult times. Though it is often read at funerals, I believe that Psalm 23, penned by King David centuries ago, contains words for every one of our lives today.

Friend, I wish I could be sharing these truths with you face-to-face over a cup of coffee. I would much rather be talking than writing anyway. But the privilege of serving you through the written word is not lost on me. I know this book

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will get into hands that I would not have the opportunity to serve in person. And I know that sometimes it's easier to pick up a book when you are on your lunch break, sitting in a carpool line, or from your bedside table before retiring for the night. I am thankful that I can serve you, wherever or whenever you read this book. Please know I have thought of you and prayed for you as I studied this familiar text. I believe these promises wholeheartedly, and have lived, breathed, experienced, and taught the lessons found in these pages.

And I'm so thankful to study these truths with you because I can imagine that you too may be struggling through the very same seasons I've faced. The seasons where you feel a total lack of peace. Where you are overwhelmed and running on empty. Where you feel like your life is a chaotic mess. My hope is that as you read these pages, you would feel like you have a friend sitting right beside you.

Sadly, peace is often lacking in our culture. Not only are our lives chaotic, but so is our nation and world. Wars rage. Politics devour. Racism divides. Peace is not the descriptor of our day. But God offers something remarkably different in His Word. He says that in Him, we can experience true peace.

I pray that God will meet you in His Word and teach you things that you didn't know before. I pray that after gleaning from the truths found in Psalm 23, you will love your Shepherd more than you do now and experience a life of peace in His care.

The Metaphor of Psalm 23

Through this book, we will explore a metaphor in which God explains His relationship to His people. This teaching technique is commonly used in the Bible because we typically understand difficult concepts more easily when they are compared to something we are already familiar with. God often uses the natural elements of our world to explain the supernatural aspects of our relationship to Him. In my first book, *Overflowing Joy*, we looked at Jesus's metaphor of the Vine and branches in John 15 to explain how His presence brings a life of complete joy. In this book, we will look at another metaphor: sheep with a shepherd. And it is my prayer that you will discover how your Shepherd's presence can bring a life of total peace for you, His sheep.

When David wrote this psalm, the shepherding lifestyle would have been second nature to the Israelites. After all, most of them were herders themselves or lived around shepherds. They were nomadic folk who spent their days surrounded by nature. But today, in the twenty-first century, we are far more removed from this agrarian way of life. Most of us live in towns or cities, where concrete is much more prevalent than green pastures, and water is found in running faucets rather than quiet brooks. But for us to truly understand God's lessons in Psalm 23, we need to understand this shepherding metaphor so that we don't miss the truths taught in God's Word.

Overview of This Book

Each chapter of this book will focus on a different image that David uses to teach us about our Shepherd and His care. We will look at the images of a shepherd and his sheep (chapter 1), pastures (chapter 2), water (chapter 3), paths (chapter 4), valleys (chapter 5), rods (chapter 6), staffs (chapter 7), feasts/tables (chapter 8), oil (chapter 9), and dwelling places (chapter 10). Since the Israelites would have naturally known much more about each of these things than you and I do, we must study them and seek to understand what God is teaching us through each one.¹ But as you will see, each image helps us to know a different attribute of who our God is and how we relate to Him.

One of the major objectives I have in this book is that I want you to see the connection between this psalm and Jesus Himself. I hope that you see, line by line, and image by image, that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Shepherd depicted in Psalm 23. Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He is the Provider of daily bread and living water. He restores our soul and is our Protector and Dwelling Place. In other words, while Psalm 23 certainly had a word for its original audience in its original time, it is ultimately a psalm about Jesus. And my prayer for you is that you will appreciate His sweetness toward us as we explore this psalm together.

Through the book, the main translation that I will be using is the Christian Standard Bible. However, I know this might not be the one you are most familiar with or maybe even the

translation from which you memorized Psalm 23. But don't worry! I will add in the other translations because they add to the fullness of our understanding and comprehension. So, keep your eyes out for your favorite wordings of this familiar psalm.

In addition, before each chapter begins, you will see the entire chapter of Psalm 23 written out. I have bolded the verse that we will be looking at in the subsequent chapter, but I believe it is helpful to see it in the total context of the chapter. Though you might be tempted, please don't skip over that page. Read Psalm 23 in its entirety before you begin the next chapter, remembering what we have covered and looking ahead to what we will still discuss. I pray this exercise is an encouragement to you as you proceed through the book.

I will also be including many other Scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments so that you can see how these themes are not just isolated to Psalm 23. The promises and truths of Psalm 23 are woven in rich ways throughout the whole Bible. Your God is good, and His presence and compassion for His people can be seen from Genesis to Revelation.

Friend, our God invites you to have complete, total, and matchless peace that is only found in Him. So, let's dive in right from the beginning and take it word by word. David writes in Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd, I have what I need." We have a good Shepherd. And in Him, we truly do have everything we need.

Resting in His peace,

Tara



*The LORD is my shepherd;
I have what I need.*

He lets me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside quiet waters.

He renews my life;
he leads me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Even when I go through the darkest valley,
I fear no danger,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
as long as I live.

Psalm 23



Chapter 1

Peace in the Shepherd: Our Good

Have you ever received a gift that you weren't expecting? At our wedding shower, we received many of the normal gifts from our wedding registry: everyday dishes, fine China, crystal, bedroom linens, towels, pots, pans, and kitchen appliances. But I can remember opening one gift that was not on our registry. It was a gift from my mentor, chosen just for us. As I opened the beautiful gold frame, I was taken aback by the hand-drawn sketch, set in a navy-blue mat. A lamb was nestled in a shepherd's bosom, and the shepherd was resting his face upon the sheep's head. It was, and still is, the most tender picture of a shepherd who loves his sheep. To this day—twenty-five years later—this piece of art is displayed on our living room bookshelf because I love it so much. And,

friend, when I imagine the shepherd of Psalm 23, this beautiful sketch is what comes to my mind.

Our Shepherd Is the Lord Almighty

David begins Psalm 23 with “The LORD is my shepherd, I have what I need.” What a truth-packed verse! It is the most essential statement in the whole psalm. If we truly believe this, then everything else will make sense. Therefore, this chapter will only focus on David’s first five words: “The LORD is my shepherd.” (Don’t worry—we won’t forget the second part of verse 1; it’s in chapter 2.) It is important that we understand who God is before we look at what He does or how He acts.

Look at the name of God which David uses to start verse 1: “The LORD.” In our English translations of Psalm 23, it is not written “Lord” with lowercase letters. God’s name is written with all uppercase letters, “LORD.” This means that David uses a special name that God gave to Himself. It is four Hebrew consonants, and the English transliteration is YHWH, pronounced “Yahweh.” In our English Bibles, you will find it translated LORD, Yahweh, or Jehovah. Remember, names have meaning, especially in the Old Testament. We must understand the meaning of this name of God so that we can better interpret and understand who He is as our Shepherd.

Though God has more than 1,000 different names in the Bible, Yahweh is the name for God Almighty and stands

alone as the most sacred. In Jewish tradition, Yahweh is too sacred to even utter aloud. Jewish priests could pronounce it only one time a year in the temple, behind the veil of the Holy of Holies. This name for God occurs more than 6,519 times in the Old Testament and is the name most closely linked to God's redemption of His chosen people.² It means the self-existing one who never had a beginning or has an end. The name Yahweh was first revealed to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:13–15:

Then Moses asked God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what should I tell them?" God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you." God also said to Moses, "Say this to the Israelites: *The LORD*, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. *This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation.*"

Yahweh, the Great I AM, uses this name for Himself. And it is the name by which He has chosen to be remembered throughout all generations. While God uses "I AM" to communicate Himself as the self-existent, eternal God—the

One who was and is and is to come and has no beginning or end—He uses another name to communicate His covenant faithfulness to Israel especially. Though He needs nothing for His existence and is wholly self-sufficient and eternal, He reveals Himself as something even more to His chosen people: Yahweh. The LORD. This name reflects not just His creative power and self-sufficiency in a general way; on top of that, it reflects His faithful character to His own.

Said another way, “I AM” is who God is to the whole world, and Yahweh is a covenant-keeping God *with His people*. Notice the specific audience God has in mind when revealing this name: “Say this to the *Israelites*.” He made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and will keep His promises to their offspring for a thousand generations. “A thousand generations” is another way of saying over and over again, forevermore. And their offspring? Well, if you’re in Christ, you’re included in that (Gal. 3:29). Friend, because of these truths, you can trust that the Lord will do what He says He will do. He does not change. He is Yahweh to you—your all-powerful, self-sufficient, covenant-keeping God. And He always will be.

Here are a few other Scripture verses that use this name for God, displaying His unchanging, eternal, and almighty character, along with His faithfulness to His own:

Isaiah 42:8: “I am the LORD. That is my name, and I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”

Psalm 83:18: “May they know that you alone—whose name is the LORD—are the Most High over the whole earth.”

Jeremiah 16:21: “Therefore, I am about to inform them, and this time I will make them know my power and my might; then they will know that my name is the LORD.”

Isaiah 41:4: “Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I am the LORD, the first and with the last—I am he.”

Deuteronomy 7:9: “Know that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps his gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commands.”

Friend, please do not miss this truth: Yahweh—the Great I AM—is eternal, self-sufficient, and almighty. And the same God, who created the world and redeemed the people from slavery in Egypt thousands of years ago, is the same covenant-keeping God of today. He is faithful, gracious, and loyal for a thousand generations. And this Lord is the one that David declares as the Shepherd: “Yahweh is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1 Lexham English Bible).

We Are His Sheep

So if this covenant-keeping, almighty God is our Shepherd, do you know what that makes us? His sheep! Psalm 95:7 describes us this way: “For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the sheep under his care.” Psalm 100:3 agrees: “Acknowledge that the LORD is God. He made us, and we are his—his people, the sheep of his pasture.”

When we meditate on these verses, we realize that as the great I AM, our God made us, and as Yahweh, our God chose us out of the world and into His own fold. We are not just His creation in a general sense, though that is awe-inspiring itself. We are also His sheep—sheep He takes particular favor in and specific responsibility over.

And “sheep” is a really good description of us. Just like sheep, we can be foolish sometimes. We can get ourselves in some real messes. We need constant attention and care, because we are needy. We must have a shepherd who will provide and care for us.

In Ezekiel 34, God describes this need and how He stepped in to provide for His sheep as the Good Shepherd. The whole chapter describes this incredible provision, but I want to show you a few verses that are particularly poignant about God’s personal involvement as our Shepherd. Notice all the “I” statements of God that include such promises for us as His sheep:

“For this is what the Lord GOD says: See, I myself will search for my flock and look for them. As a shepherd looks for his sheep on the day he is among his scattered flock, so I will look for my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and total darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples, gather them from the countries, and bring them to their own soil. I will shepherd them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the land. I will tend them in good pasture, and their grazing place will be on Israel’s lofty mountains. There they will lie down in a good grazing place; they will feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will tend my flock and let them lie down. This is the declaration of the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, bring back the strays, bandage the injured, and strengthen the weak, but I will destroy the fat and the strong. I will shepherd them with justice. . . . Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people. This is the declaration of the Lord GOD. You are my flock, the human flock of my pasture, and I am your God. This

is the declaration of the Lord GOD.” (Ezek.
34:11–16, 30–31)

God Himself, the Great I AM, is our Shepherd. Ezekiel 34 says that He cares for us, His sheep. He searches for us, rescues us, guides us, feeds us, and lets us lie down in rich pastures. (Doesn't that sound a lot like Psalm 23?) He seeks those who are lost, restores the injured, and strengthens the weak ones. We are His flock and He is our Lord God.

When I was eight years old, I learned firsthand the important truth of having an attentive shepherd who did these things. My family lived in England for three months, while my dad worked overseas with his computer company, IBM. During our stint in the United Kingdom, my mom was fascinated by the many black-faced sheep grazing on the green hills south of London. So, for one of our field trips, she arranged a visit to a sheep farm for us. We walked around the farm with the shepherd as he told us about his daily routines. He showed us how he prepared their food. He called the sheep by name. He led them to the right pastures. He tended to their wounds. He fed the baby lambs with bottles to make sure they got enough nutrition. He knew their tendencies and behaviors. And he loved each one. He was a personal shepherd.

And that is who our God is to us. He is a Shepherd who knows His sheep. Jesus says in John 10:14, “I know my own, and my own know me.” Friend, our Shepherd is the Lord, Yahweh who made heaven and earth. You can rest in His

power and might. But you can also rest in the fact that we have a personal, intimate Shepherd who knows and loves His sheep. Listen to Isaiah 40:11: “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.” He knows us, He loves us, and He carries us. He is our Shepherd, and we are His sheep.

Our Shepherd Is Personal

As I mentioned already, “The LORD” (or Yahweh) is the only name in Scripture used to describe the personal relationship that God has with His people. This is *His* particular, covenantal name for *Himself*, which declares how *He* desires to relate to *His* people. In the verses we explored above, it is clear God desires to call His chosen people by the name of “His” own sheep who are under “His” care and in “His” pasture (Pss. 95:7; 100:3). He is owning His side of things. Said another way, He looks at His people and considers them “*My* sheep.” But what about the other side of the relationship? How far is the personal nature of God allowed to reach? Can His people dare to say “my” toward Him in return? This is exactly why David says, “The LORD is *my* shepherd” (Ps. 23:1). The intimacy goes both ways! David contrasts the greatness of Yahweh with the intimate, personal pronoun “my.” In this one sentence, we see God’s deity and transcendence contrasted with His humanity and eminence.

David juxtaposes the Almighty, powerful characteristics of God, with the tender, personal attributes of God. Yahweh is an intensely powerful yet personal God, who does not merely want to own His sheep in a one-sided way, but wants a relationship with His children.

Angel Martinez, one of the greatest American evangelists of the 1900s, understood this dynamic. He preached about this personal nature of God and the extent to which it reaches. He was saved in a Baptist mission in San Antonio, Texas, in 1935. Angel ended up preaching Christ for more than sixty years, witnessing some 500,000 accept Jesus as their Savior. He had the entire New Testament memorized and famously preached these words about God, his personal Shepherd:

The Lord, who made the Universe, is *my* Shepherd.

The same God, who made the stars, walks with me when my heart is broken in the valley of the shadow of death. The same God, who lit the sun and gave the stars their celestial push and placed them in their orbit, is *my* Shepherd.

The same God, who took a carpet of green grass and put it upon the earth and nailed it down with beautiful flowers, is *my* Shepherd.

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The same God, who took the rainbow and wove it into a scarf and draped it about the shoulders of a dying storm, is *my* Shepherd.

And the same God, who in the dawning of a new day opens the door of the morning and floods the world with light and beauty, is *my* Shepherd.

The same God, who at evening time pulls down the shade of the nights and shoots it through the sunset fire, is *my* Shepherd.

The Lord, the Lord, *my* Shepherd.³

My heart echoes these thoughts. Yes, indeed He is all of these things and more. He was Angel Martinez's shepherd. He was David's shepherd. But sister, He is your Shepherd too. Just as He looks upon you and says "My," you too get miraculous permission to return His gaze and say the same. Luke 12:7 says that He knows everything about you, even the hairs on your head: "Indeed, the hairs of your head are all counted. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." He knows your name. He knows the number of hairs on your head and those that have fallen out on the bathroom floor. He knows every nook, cranny, and wrinkle of your skin and of your heart. And He cares for you. I hope these words from Psalm 139:1–6 comfort you today:

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LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I stand
up;
you understand my thoughts from far away.
You observe my travels and my rest;
you are aware of all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue,
you know all about it, LORD.
You have encircled me;
you have placed your hand on me.
This wondrous knowledge is beyond me.
It is lofty; I am unable to reach it.

You are fully known and fully loved by your God. He is a personal Shepherd.

Our Shepherd Is Good

Not only is our Shepherd almighty and personal, but He is also good. Just as David describes God as his Shepherd, Jesus describes Himself similarly in John 10 and adds a noteworthy adjective. Jesus says, “I am the *good* shepherd. The *good* shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). And then just three verses later He repeats this truth again: “I am the *good* shepherd” (John 10:14). The word *good* is repeated three times in four verses. I think Jesus is trying to reiterate a truth to His listeners: He is *good*!

But what does it mean to be good? Jen Wilkin defines *good* this way in her book, *In His Image*:

[God] is immutably good, unchangingly good. His goodness undergoes no increase or decline, nor does it waver. In him there is no darkness at all, nor has there ever been, nor will there ever be. He is good and he does good. There is no better version of him to come, no progress from good to better to best for him. God's goodness is his utter benevolence, the complete absence of malice. God does not, cannot, and need not improve with age. He is as good as he ever has been or will ever be. Perfectly good. Utterly good.⁴

God is totally good. There is nothing evil in Him at all. He does good and desires good for His children. He is benevolent and kind.

On Mt. Sinai, God proclaimed His name "Yahweh" to Moses and paired it with His attribute of goodness. Check out their interaction in Exodus 33:18–19: "Then Moses said, 'Please, let me see your glory.' He said, 'I will cause *all my goodness* to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim the name "the LORD" before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.'"

So many Scriptures define God as good. One of my favorites is Nahum 1:7, which says, “The LORD is good, a stronghold in a day of distress; he cares for those who take refuge in him.” But there are several other verses that declare His goodness and command our praise. Psalm 106:1 says, “Hallelujah! Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his faithful love endures forever.” This phrase is repeated in three other psalms as well (Pss. 107:1; 118:1; 136:1)! God is good and worthy of our praise.

At New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, we partner with a ministry for men and women struggling with addictions. It is a 6-month live-in drug and alcohol rehab center called Bethel Colony. Through the program they learn about who God is by studying the Bible, as well as learning basic life skills, including a hard work ethic. I love these men and women, and celebrate the hard life changes they are making. I visit them often in the four businesses they operate in our neighborhood: a coffee shop, a thrift store, a snowball stand, and a car wash. One of the phrases that is displayed on their walls—and repeated often by these precious men and women—is: “God is good, all the time. And all the time, God is good.” I find myself saying it often too. Yes, God is good.

Jesus is described not only as the good Shepherd throughout Scripture, but also as something more. Consider these passages, and see if you can spot what I mean:

John 10:11: “I am the *good shepherd*. The *good shepherd* lays down his life for the sheep.”

Hebrews 13:20: “Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the *great Shepherd* of the sheep—through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

1 Peter 5:4: “And when the *chief Shepherd* appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

As I studied these three verses, I noticed something that we often glance over in these Scriptures. Did you see it too? Look again at the italicized adjectives above, right before the word *shepherd* in each verse. Jesus has inherent attributes as our Shepherd. He is described as good, great, and chief. He is supreme in His benevolence and care for His sheep. Let’s unpack these verses and adjectives a little bit more together.

Jesus is good. John 10:11 defines Jesus as good because He “lays down his life for his sheep.” To guard against a predator, a shepherd would lay down and sleep in the gate, or door, of the sheepfold. Since his sheep are his livelihood, he must protect them and be awakened at even the slightest hint of threat to his sheep. And Jesus chose to lay down and die for us, since sin and death are our greatest enemy. He was willing to pay the price for our sins with His own death. His goodness

is displayed by His willingness to sacrifice Himself in death on our behalf.

Have you ever wondered why the Friday before Easter is called Good Friday? Our kids used to say, “There is nothing good about that day. Jesus died.” Oh, but friend, His death shows His goodness. He laid down His life for you and for me. I love the modern hymn by Brook Hills Worship, called “At the Glorious Cross,” which echoes these truths. Jesus hung on the cross, condemned for our sins. And what was the darkest day indeed became a good day. He gave up His life for us.⁵

Jesus truly is our Good Shepherd, because He willingly laid down His life, dying for us.

Jesus is great. Hebrews 13:20 defines Jesus as great because He was “brought up from the dead.” As the famous pastor Adrian Rogers once said, “The Good Shepherd not only died for you—He lives for you!”⁶ Christ’s greatness is displayed by His resurrection.

The apostle Paul describes the importance of the resurrection of our Great Shepherd in 1 Corinthians 15:14–17 (NIV):

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then

Christ has not been raised either. And if
Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile;
you are still in your sins.

You see, it is a wonderful thing when a shepherd willingly dies for his sheep. He gave up his life for them. But what good does that do for the sheep? They are now left without protection, provision, and care. But praise the Lord, our Good Shepherd became the Great Shepherd because He was raised from the dead! Our sins are paid for, and we have a Risen King, who is alive. Your Shepherd lives forever and is able to guide us from His throne (Heb. 7:24–25). Jesus truly is our Great Shepherd, because He was brought up from the dead and is alive!

Jesus is chief. Lastly, 1 Peter 5:4 defines Jesus as our chief Shepherd because one day He will “appear,” returning for His children. This sets Him above all other shepherds. His chiefness is described by His glorification and glorious return! No one knows when He will return for His sheep, but the Bible is clear that He will come back. I love the verses from 1 Thessalonians 4:14–18 that describe what that day will be like:

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. . . . For the Lord himself will descend

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from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are still alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

It is encouraging to be assured that Christ will appear one day, isn't it? The longer we live in this broken world, and see the headlines on the news daily, the more we long for the day when He will come back and make all things right. Whether we experience our own resurrections, or meet Him in the clouds, it will be a glorious day! And I love that Jesus's return is the ultimate proof of His role as our Chief Shepherd!

Peace in Our Good Shepherd

My friend, as we consider the first part of the first verse of Psalm 23, may it create a sense of wonder in our hearts: "The LORD is my Shepherd." Yes, the Lord is the almighty Yahweh, the Creator of heaven and earth. But He is also your personal Shepherd, who created you and knows every hair on your head, thought of your mind, and longing of your heart. He is your Good Shepherd. He laid down His life for you and took away the penalty of your sin! Jesus is also your

Great Shepherd because He rose from the dead and dealt with the power of sin over life and death. Finally, He will come back for you one day, freeing you from the presence of sin forever! This makes Jesus your Chief Shepherd of all. He is victorious over sin and death, and that reality should allow your heart to be at peace.

Because of God's goodness, and because we get to know the risen "LORD" as "*my*" Shepherd, we can have a life of overflowing peace! We can live with such a genuine, spilling-over peace, despite what our circumstances look like. This is what the end of Psalm 23 describes in verses 5 and 6, "My cup overflows. Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life." We will talk about these verses more in later chapters, but it is important to connect the dots now. Because your Shepherd is so good, you can have a life of goodness, faithful love, and peace too! I love the hymn "He Lives" (also known as "I Serve a Risen Savior") and how it paints such a bright picture of our resurrection tomorrow and our hope for the struggles we have today. No matter what storms in this life you may have, we can rejoice because He is alive!⁷

He desires for you to live a life of abundant peace because of who He is. Jesus is your Good Shepherd and He promises: "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your hearts be troubled or fearful" (John 14:27). Knowing He is your Shepherd—and

you are His sheep—is just one way to experience a life of overflowing peace.

Questions to Consider

1. When you hear “The Twenty-Third Psalm,” what memories come to your mind? When did you first hear or learn this psalm? Do you associate it more with funerals or the everyday aspects of your life?
2. How does knowing the meaning of “I AM” and “LORD” (Yahweh) bring you comfort and peace? How have you seen these attributes of God in your life?
3. Does knowing that you are *His* sheep and that Yahweh is *your* Shepherd (with His personal attributes) lead you to a life of overflowing peace? Why?
4. Fill in the blanks to make your own Angel Martinez’s poetry line:

The Lord, the same God who _____,
is *my* Shepherd.

PEACE IN THE SHEPHERD: OUR GOOD

5. Which title for Jesus as your Shepherd impacted you the most: the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, or the Chief Shepherd? Why?

6. Why can a life of overflowing peace come from the knowledge of Jesus's goodness as our Shepherd? In other words, how does His nature provide you with peace?

Verses for Reflection

ISAIAH 26:4

“Trust in the LORD forever, because in the LORD, the LORD himself, is an everlasting rock!”

REVELATION 1:8

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

JOHN 10:27–28

“My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.”

JEREMIAH 12:3

As for you, LORD, you know me; you see me.

1 CORINTHIANS 8:3

But if anyone loves God, he is known
by him.

PSALM 34:8

Taste and see that the LORD is good.
How happy is the person who takes
refuge in him!

PSALM 84:11

For the LORD God is a sun and shield.
The LORD grants favor and honor;
he does not withhold the good
from those who live with integrity.



The LORD is my shepherd;
I have what I need.

He lets me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside quiet waters.

He renews my life;
he leads me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Even when I go through the darkest valley,
I fear no danger,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
as long as I live.

Psalm 23

