



The Journey and the Journey's End
A STUDY OF THE 23RD PSALM



Praying through Psalm 23

DIANE KANELL

I love you, O Lord, my Shepherd;
with you I lack nothing.
When I need rest, you make me lie down.
When I'm exhausted, you provide a quiet place for me.
You restore my soul.

You beckon me to the upright path for your name's sake.
Even when I walk through a dark valley and the shadows envelop me,
I will not fear; you are right there with me.
Your rod and your staff are my comfort.
You always go before me; my enemies might be present,
but you have prepared the way.

You pour oil on my head; my joy overflows.
Your goodness and your mercy pursue me moment by moment,
day after day all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell with you, Lord, in your house forever and ever.
AMEN

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, 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.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Psalm 23

JOURNEY 1

Great Shepherd of the Sheep

I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

II SAMUEL 7:8,16

Read Genesis 31:36-40.

List the responsibilities, requirements, and challenges of a shepherd.

Quiet your heart and ask the Lord to teach you about himself as your shepherd.

David's Shepherd Training

David, the great Old Testament prefigurer of Jesus, had been taken from the sheepfold as a boy (Psalm 78:70 - 72).

David convinces Saul that he was capable of taking on Goliath because his shepherd years had trained him specifically for this very battle and for his future calling as king (1 Samuel 17:36).

David's Shepherd and King

Not only was David trained to be a shepherd and king, but through his line would come a Shepherd King that would rule forever. That promised shepherd's name was Jesus (II Samuel 7:8,16).

Read John 10:11-15 and ponder the key qualities of any shepherd, and the qualities Jesus teaches particularly about Himself as a shepherd.

Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; . . . He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young (Isaiah 40:10-11).

You are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord God (Ezekiel 34:31).

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:24,25).

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant (Hebrews 13:20).

What qualifications does Jesus possess to be our Shepherd King on this journey?

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
Psalm 90:1

My Journey, My Shepherd

PAULA SMITH

Have you ever clung to a verse in Scripture so fiercely that it has been engraved on your soul? “The LORD is my Shepherd; I have everything I need” is such in my life.

My daddy was my hero. Larger than life, with a constant twinkle in his eye, Daddy laughed often, loved deeply and protected fiercely. Whenever I needed him, he was there ... even if it meant driving 12 hours through the night to reach me. Most tender of all, when I found refuge in his arms, nothing or no one could ever harm me. I was totally safe.

Daddy had a deep resonating voice that was the envy of every preacher and he was asked to record the prayer chain requests and a verse of Scripture once a week. On May 9, 1997, he read, “Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd. I have everything I need.” For most people who listened, it was simply a different translation of Ps 23:1, but for me, it was to become my lifeline because I knew my daddy had just been told he had inoperable terminal cancer. My Shepherd was about to lead me through the valley.

At first, I was overwhelmed with fear and grief, but as I meditated on this verse, peace began to seep through my soul. **“The LORD”:**

The Personal, Covenant Promise-Making, Covenant Promise-Keeping God
The Unchanging One
The God of the Eternal Presence and Present - I AM
The Redeemer/Savior God.

“This One is YOUR Shepherd, Paula. You will have all you need. Trust Him...even here,” and with trust, came peace.

For the next seven months as Daddy taught me how to die, my Shepherd taught me how to live, relying on Him more fully, seeing Him provide my every need ... even here.

Do you know my Shepherd?
There is None like Him...not even a precious daddy.

JOURNEY 2

What Must Be True

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
PSALM 23:1

“We cannot present a reason for Christ to finally close off his heart to his own sheep. No such reason exists. Every human friend has a limit. If we offend enough ... we are cast out. With Christ, our sins and weaknesses are the very resumé items that qualify us to approach him” (Gentle and Lowly by Dane Ortlund)

David writes from his unique position as Christ-figure, Shepherd-King. But like the Christ, David writes from human experience as well. In this poem we hear the sweet sounds of lapping water, wind in the grass, content baaing, a shepherd’s voice, a welcoming host, laughter and conversation at a family table, service and worship in the Lord’s house. We also hear the steps of Death ahead, of evil, of predators, of enemies’ battle cries, of wandering and being lost.

The Lord is Mine

When Moses asked God His name, God replied, ‘I AM’ (Exodus 3:13-15). If I am this certain that my own personal Shepherd is the I AM, then therefore this next must be true: I shall not want.

I Shall Not Want

Needs are God-given and good. In the garden, the serpent poisoned Adam and Eve’s understanding of their needs, inserting a desire –a want – to be god. They listened, confusing false wants with good needs, and we have been dealing with this poison ever since (Genesis 3).

My idea of my needs has been distorted by sin, but God’s promises of provision show me what I need. The Shepherd promises to supply all our Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual needs:

Physical Needs: Ezekiel 34:15 | **Emotional Needs:** Ezekiel 34:12 | **Spiritual Needs:** Isaiah 53:4-6

Do you believe that the things that cause others to turn from you are the very things that draw Jesus to you, and that He will NEVER cast you away?

Is He your Shepherd?

Have you come to the place where you can say, like David, “The Lord is Mine”? These promises are only for those who have placed their trust in the Lord. If not, then you still have a shepherd (Psalm 49:14).

And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken. I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep the woods.

Ezekiel 34:23-25

My Journey, My Shepherd

LAUREN BORDY

I was raised in a love-filled, mixed-faith household. God was a name frequently mentioned on Christmas, during prayers, and as we lit the Chanukah menorah. Growing up, I had a mind full of questions and a longing in my heart. As I spoke to God, gazing out of my bedroom window as a child, He seemed so far off, so ethereal. I didn't know the right name to even call Him. Could I even know Him as my God? Did he care about me, a little girl filled with innumerable questions and gripping fear?

In high school, my mom, a breast-cancer survivor at the time, passed away from Leukemia, and I couldn't shake those questions. In college, I found my answer. God shepherded me in His perfect timing, bringing me to a saving faith, through which I could tackle that daunting grief knowing I was not alone. Looking up "churches near me," I was connected to a small, community church and began attending Wednesday evening services. During worship, I felt a connection, comfort, and a peace that passed all understanding as tears fell down my face. One Sunday, with my heart pounding, I walked up to the front after an altar call and told the pastor "I want to be saved." The gates of heaven didn't visibly open, nor did I see a bright light or hear an angel's choir, but my world had changed forever.

I realize my journey with my Shepherd didn't start then. He has never left my side and has had His hand of provision upon me from day one. He knew me in my mother's womb; He knew my mom would have cancer and the exact time of her passing; He knew me as I spoke to Him from my bedroom window; He knew when I would call on Him for salvation, question that salvation, and walk through the darkest valley. Most importantly, He knows me now. He's shifted my perspective and opened my eyes to see that in Christ, "I lack nothing" (Psalm 23:1). He's refreshed my soul through years of Bible study. In His provision, he even blessed me with the perfect match for a husband, who isn't a stranger to grief, himself, and has been able to come alongside me. We remind one other that "surely [God's] goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm 23:6). Life isn't easy, but I know whether on a mountain, valley, or green pasture, I have a Good Shepherd of my soul who has shown Himself time and time again to be faithful and ever-present.

JOURNEY 3

More Joy in my Heart

He makes me lie down in green pastures.
PSALM 23:1

When he saw the crowds he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd,
Matthew 9:36.

“What are these “green pastures” but the Scriptures of truth always fresh, always rich, and never exhausted? There is no fear of biting the bare ground where the grass is long enough for the flock to lie down in it. Sweet and full are the doctrines of the gospel; fit food for souls, as tender grass is natural nutriment for sheep.”

Charles Spurgeon

We have to be made to lie down because deep down we don’t believe that the hard work Jesus did for us accomplished our righteousness and rest. When David says that his Shepherd makes him lie down, David means that the Lord deals with all these external and internal obstacles and makes it possible for us to lie down. The offer of rest and the power to rest are only made possible by the Shepherd (cf. John 19:30).

Sheep in the pasture cannot lie down and rest when they are **afraid, anxious, or empty.**

Afraid: Psalm 3:1-6 *A Psalm of David, when he fled Absalom his son*

Anxious: Psalm 37:7 *A Psalm of David*

Empty: Psalm 63:1 *A Psalm of David when he is in the wilderness*

In your current journey, are you experiencing fear, anxiety, or emptiness in your soul? Faith, peace, and satisfaction come from our Shepherd. **How does the finished work of Christ (His life, death, and resurrection) bring you rest?**

Green Pastures

‘Green pastures’ is a metaphor for all that makes life flourish. Jesus is the gate for the sheep. All who enter through Him will be saved, “and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9). He has come so that we may have life, “and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in the His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 John 5:11-12).

The Last Words of David

The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire (2 Samuel 23:3-5)?

What are some green pastures God has brought you to?

You have put more joy in my heart than when their grain and new wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 4:7, 8

My Journey, My Shepherd

SARAH HAJDUK

As the global impact of COVID set in, quarantines started, and just about every event on our calendars stopped. Much disappointment, was also accompanied by a strange sense of relief. I was coming out of an extremely busy season and felt depleted. We were all forced to take a time out and evaluate priorities. At that moment, I determined that I didn't want to just get through the pandemic, I wanted to grow through it.

A treasure of the pandemic was time at home with our families; however, I am also a person who reenergizes alone. So, I carved out time for walks in the evening, listening to a Christian podcast and worship music. In addition to my devotions, this was my time to fill myself with the truth of God's Word, which put me at peace, versus all the fearful, conflicting messages of the world. In Scripture, we see Jesus getting alone, spending time in prayer, and listening to His Father. He was intentional (doing what His Father told Him to do) and trusted the Father's timing (when to do it). No one has more to do than Jesus did, yet we never see Him rushing.

Lying down in green pastures is a picture of soul rest – letting go of control and clinging to our Shepherd. I love that Psalm 23 references nature, still waters and green pastures – a picture of contentment. Every year, our family looks forward to a trip to the mountains of North Carolina. There are few things that bring me more joy than sitting on the porch with a cup of coffee, my gratitude journal, and my Bible. While vacations are wonderful, we need soul rest with our Savior daily, prioritizing a time to refill our cup beside still waters. Then He orders our steps in a way that a calendar never could. While we can't always change what must get done, we can intentionally schedule margin to experience the divine appointments God has planned for our days – people He wants us to notice and love well, bearing His image on earth. God's got the whole world in His hands, so we can lie down.

JOURNEY 4

Sweetwater

He leads me beside still waters.
PSALM 23:2

Living Waters

In our fallenness, our thirst drives us to drink many substances other than the one that quenches. The Lord explains why our thirst-quenching communion with Him has been broken, and describes our resulting efforts to slake our thirst, saying, “*They have forsaken me, the fountain of **living waters**, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water,*” (Jeremiah 2:13).

*“The water
that I will give
him will
become in him
a spring of
water welling
up to eternal
life”,
John 4:13.*

Have you forsaken the Fountain of living waters and hewn out for yourself cisterns that prove to be broken and hold no water?

What are your ‘cisterns’? How have they not ‘held water’ for you?

What, then, does the Lord mean when He says He is the fountain of living waters?

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive,” (John 7:37-39).

How our Shepherd bring us to the living waters

David says that He *leads*. He doesn’t ‘drive,’ He goes ahead, gently, not just knowing where the waters are but having Himself gone before to hew and open the pure and gentle stream our hearts need.

We find this same word ‘rest’ in I Chronicles 22:9. The Lord said to David, “*Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies. For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days.*” A son will come who will establish rest from Israel’s surrounding enemies and cessation of war. Our hearts quicken with the foreshadowing of David’s Greater Son who would accomplish for us peace with God and rest from the enemy of our soul (cf. Matthew 11:28-30).

*They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*

Revelation 7:16-17

My Journey, My Shepherd

DONNA PEREZ

By God's grace there is no memory for me of not trusting Jesus. Born to believing parents, I accepted and believed. All the provisions for physical well-being were abundant in our family. God blessed our home pasture with abundant food and still waters - not raging torrents. He provided peace and comfort as He gently, subtly lead us along. We were never financially wealthy. We moved a lot, 13 times during my growing years, and I attended eight different schools. Our trials/hardships were few.

He Restores My Soul. Not even knowing or recognizing God's work in me, He, by His love and supernatural power, healed me spiritually. Better, His words "restored" me.

Shadowy Valleys. A life sojourn includes all terrain: desert, forest, plains, mountains and green pastures. It also includes deep dark ravines/valleys with sheer cliffs and scary shadows where men experience trials, mortal anxiety and fear of evil. Knowing that God, the Vigilant, is always with me has been a comfort all my days. Married at 19, we both worked at low income jobs. So that Ger could get a college education, I worked and he studied. We served as youth sponsors in our church, just youths ourselves. After college, we prayed in earnest for a child. This is when I learned God's timing is different from ours. After 14 years of marriage, God said: "Yes, a baby", and Andrew was born. And six years later, in God's timing, another baby! We were satisfied with one child, but He gave more. But then, suddenly, Ger lost his job...a financial trial...We plunged immediately into joint prayer and devotions earnestly seeking God's help. Right away solution arrived: a better job. Another job loss and God provided a better job and a window to retirement. We give Him the praise and glory for His constant presence. Again, we know to wait on Him. About six years before Ger retired, at BSF the men wrote down specific prayer requests. Ger chose two items: one for salvation for a relative and second to be used to help the Cuban people. About eight years later both of these prayers were absolutely answered. All to His glory.

God, Himself, *prepares a table*, a banquet, for me: a banquet of living in joy with Him, a wonderful life in a world where non-believers gaze and wonder. He has anointed me with oil, His Holy Spirit. He chose me, cleansed me, blessed me, healed me, stabilized me, and consecrated me. For His glory. He overflows my cup. A part of my cup overflowing is the joy we experience knowing God has called and adopted the two children He gave to us. This is one of the greatest blessings he has poured out on us. He always gives me more.

Because all of God's promises in Psalm 23 are and have been true for me . . . I conclude that Goodness - God, for only God is good - and His grace, mercy, and love will continue with me in this earthly life and into the next forever home with Him.

JOURNEY 5

All I Have Needed Thy Hand Hath Provided

He restores my soul.
PSALM 23:3

Restore

Restore means “to turn,” or “return.” This same word appears in significant OT texts that speak about our heavenly Shepherd King searching for His lost sheep in order to bring them safely home (Jeremiah 50:6, 19; cf. Ezekiel 39:27; Luke 15:1-32).

In the Bible what is the first account of a soul needing restoration?

Adam and Eve were created to live in Eden, a “good” pasture with their Shepherd (Genesis 1). Convinced of “want,” they looked for provision outside of God (Genesis 3:6). Through their rebellion, the curse of sin affected everything—including the condition of our soul. God, like a good shepherd, drew Adam and Eve out of hiding by calling their name. He provided for their broken soul by covering their sin and shame with the garments of an innocent animal. This sacrifice was a type of atonement, reconciling their relationship with God. The good shepherd restores their souls. **How can you tell Adam and Eve needed their souls to be restored** (Genesis 3:1-15)?

*As a deer
pants for
water, so my
soul for you,
O God. My
soul thirsts for
the living
God, Psalm
42:1, 2.*

He restores my soul from judgement

In Psalm 22 David foretells Christ’s words on the cross. David feels forsaken and cries out “deliver my soul” (Psalm 22:1).

By faith David looks forward to the one that would come 1,000 years later and recite, in Matthew 27:46 “My God, my God, *why have you forsaken me?*”

Jesus’ soul was forsaken so our soul could be restored. *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities* (Isaiah 53:1).

He restores my soul to life

The restoration God brings through his Son and Spirit leads to a fullness of life both now and forever. This gives the child of God a genuine experience of the restoration of their soul, but not in its perfection. Every day we still struggle with and experience the brokenness of this world. There is a day coming when God will return to bring about the restoration of all things. He has promised to provide everything we need in this life and the life to come. **How has God drawn you to himself and restored your soul? Has he made your soul pant after him? Does his restorative work give you strength for today’s journey?**

*“It does not
take the Lord
long to make
summer out
of a wintry
heart. One
glance of his
love turns the
darkness of
the soul’s
night into the
brightest
day”.*
Charles
Spurgeon

*For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned
to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

1 Peter 2:25

My Journey, My Shepherd

BLAIR CRITCH

The Lord is my shepherd... I shall not want. Well let's be honest, we all want. We want bigger houses, more kids maybe, a husband, a new job, no illness, our kids to follow Jesus; there are a lot of things we want. When the Lord called me to Himself in December of 2000 I thought I had it all. An amazing boyfriend who made good money, a fun life, a great teaching job, great body (I mean I was 21), and I was having the time of my life. Then the Lord showed me who He was. I grew up Jewish, I had been battling for months with what Ryan (my boyfriend and now husband) had been sharing with me and reading through the books of John and Isaiah. I remember saying to God that I need a big sign to know this is true, to go against all my family taught me, to sacrifice my relationship with my parents, and to follow this new truth. Well, He showed up in His way, which made me realize it was true. Not a big elaborate sign, not a huge moment. I was sitting in my seat listening to some worship music at a church service with Ryan, not really into it, when God showed up. I heard Him clearly. I heard Him say "Follow me, you know the Truth. Will you listen or run?" That moment I stopped, I prayed and repented, and asked Jesus into my heart. I did not go up to the front of that church. It felt like God was calling me to my seat, to stop right there and talk to Him like my father, Abba. I cried, I read, I dedicated my life to Him there and then. I thought for sure life was only going to get better. Then I realized I wanted or yet expected my Christian journey to be one of only fun, goodness, and love, but that is not what God says in the Bible. He is clear in His word to us that He will carry us, He will lead us beside still waters, but we will be going through some trials here on earth. From my husband's addiction when my kids were young, to our bankruptcy, to my recent cancer journey, God has carried me. He has lead me beside still waters in ways that are hard to explain.

He had me memorize Psalm 23 when I was a young Christian, only a few months as a believer. That Psalm to this day has carried me through some of the hardest moments, but has also been what allows me to Praise HIM even in the fun moments, stand-still-amazing moments, and the hardest, darkest moments of my life. I have allowed this Psalm to play as a song in my head so many times. This last year I found out I had a rare form of ovarian cancer. I was rushed to a hysterectomy, then to 6 rounds of chemo, then to another surgery, all during Covid. As I sat in my chemo chair, sometimes alone due to Covid, I would recite this Psalm to myself as I started to get pricked and prodded by the nurses. I would recite it as I feel asleep from the Benadryl they give you before you begin. This is how GOD shows up if you stop to listen. He had our amazing women's ministry leadership reach out this summer to say, "Can you share your testimony to go along with our Psalm 23 study for the fall?" I would never have thought God would show me His love and tenderness this way, but He did. Through that trial, through my bankruptcy, through Ryan's darkest moments trying to get sober from pain pills and alcohol, through miscarriages, I have seen God at his clearest as I did the day HE called me to be his hands and feet on this earth and spend eternity with Him in heaven. You do not have to be going through a trial to feel God's presence, but you do have to slow down to listen. May you listen to Him through His word, through communion of your sisters in Christ, and allow Him to show you His plan for your life.

JOURNEY 6

A Forged Pathway

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
PSALM 23:3

Why: For His Name's Sake

The Shepherd leads me to certain places and not others for His name's sake. For the glory, the honor, the praise of His name. For His reputation. He took upon Himself the name Good Shepherd. He will vindicate that name. David expresses the truth that God proves His own name true before a skeptical, critical, trap-setting world by His governance of our lives. The very fact that He leads His sheep, that those sheep have mercifully been given eyes to see Him and ears to hear His voice, is to the praise of His glorious name. His name becomes a hymn of mercy and grace. *For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me* (Psalm 31:3).

"His name is Jesus, 'He shall save,' His name is Emmanuel, 'God with us,' His name is the Prophet who warns me, the Priest who atones for me, the King who rules me. As He leads me in paths of righteousness, so He pledges to me the assurance of His holy name."
Newbolt

Has He lead you on some challenging roads? Does this promise that He has lead you on your particular path for His name's sake give you a fresh strength to walk another day?

Where: On A Right Path

As in English, the Hebrew word for **paths** can mean a literal trail or a metaphorical way of life. The path is the way, the route, the means to, the means *from*, the means *through*.

Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me... He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant (Psalm 25:4, 9, 10).

How: Paved with Righteousness

For the honor of His name, and to love us unto thriving, **He goes before and opens the way.** And the way - the path - is the good news that Jesus laid down His life on the cross and was raised from the dead. He leads by laying down His life. The gospel makes a right path for those who believe, and gives believers the power to follow Him and obey His ways (Romans 8:1-4).

Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension qualify and enables us to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord. Thank Him for going before you to prepare the path of your life. Ask Him for strength to trust Him, to obey Him, to follow Him.

*Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.
Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.
Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*

Proverbs 4:25 - 27

My Journey, My Shepherd

ELYSE MILLER

It was if I was harshly dropped at the edge of the path. I sat for many days and cried, alone with people, alone without. The hollow quiet settled in and around, so quiet that His voice became especially clear: My Word is the path. So in the darkest part of the night, I finally stood and took a small step toward the spacious place. The moment I took that step, the Shepherd picked me up and carried me miles and miles.

As day broke, He walked strong over green grass. He laid me down to rest, pointing out the still waters, so different than the storm of the ocean that had spit me out on shore, whipping me with punishing lashes. After rest, we moved again, I walked, slowly.

This next part will be hard, He said. I pulled close on His arm, as the path ahead grew narrow before it looked like it might open wide in the distance.

I fell down. I tried not to, but was hit with grief and fear and endless questions that had no answer and the haunting memories that would not stop their piercing reel. We were close, only steps away from that place in the middle where the grand table stood. Intuitively, I knew I wanted to get there, that something significant would happen. It was closer, yet still so far, and reaching the destination started to feel unattainable. He lifted me up again.

Finally there, the Shepherd moved and prepared the table as though the enemies were dead, but I could see their shadows, living and breathing. The audacity of His action seemed to infuriate them, more so because they were held off.

For some reason, I thought this would all be different—better maybe, even perfect. And yet, it was different in one undeniable way. I knew now that I was no longer alone with my enemies; He was with me, the Great Difference.

The enemies continued to laugh and mock. When I looked at them, I doubted again, the sadness pulling me down. He came to me and put His hands over my ears, clutched my face, whispered words that did not settle then, but one day would: my child, my child. I searched His face. He was not worried, but beaming as if He had been waiting for that moment—the one He knew would occur, had foreseen. He anointed my head with oil. The voices and the sounds started to fade, and then were gone, and there was Peace.

JOURNEY 7

Cross Carriers

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me.*
PSALM 23:4

It is probably easy to recall a time you were in a valley, but can you recall the ways God sustained you with His grace?

Do you
imagine and
dread what
might be on
the path
ahead? Tell
the Lord, I
can go there
because You
are with me.

Death of Death

Your Bible might have a footnote that the word for ‘shadow of death’ can also be translated ‘deep darkness’ or ‘thick darkness.’ The following verses use this word in a variety of ways, but all convey the **heaviness** of death (Job 10:21, 22, Psalm 107:10, 14, Jeremiah 2: 6, Isaiah 9:2, Job 16:16).

Jesus knows our frame; He remembers we are dust. Our dust-made bones are not strong enough to carry the weight of death “*For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me*” (Psalm 38:4). Even the man Jesus was crushed under the weight of death.

Jesus’ death was an act of deliverance for us. He tasted its dregs so that we won’t ever have to (cf. Heb. 2:9; John 8:52). His death signaled the defeat of death, and it also defeated the one who wielded its power, that is, the devil (cf. Rom. 6:10-11; Heb. 2:14-15). Why? Because death had no claim on our sinless Savior (cf. Acts 2:24; Psalm 16:8-11).

When you
consider the
lengths God
has gone
through to
be with you
in the valley,
does it lead
you to say “I
can go there
because You
are with
me”?

Even though we still experience physical death, we will never have to taste the death of death, which is eternal damnation. For all who belong to Jesus, death will be like passing through a veil into the immediate presence of our Lord (cf. Acts 7:54-60; Phil. 1:23). And when we all experience our glorious resurrection bodies at Jesus’ Second Coming, “then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:54-58).

I Will Not Fear

We have no need to fear because He is with us, He who through death conquered death by the power of the cross and resurrection. **When you consider that Jesus tasted death so that you and I would never have to what fears does this relieve for you?**

*In the world you will have tribulation; but take heart,
I have overcome the world.*

John 16:33

My Journey, My Shepherd

HEATHER CLARK

Although I have experienced pain, heartbreak, and loss, none have compared to the unimaginably dark valleys I travel alongside my brave counseling clients. Ordinary people who are tormented by indescribable traumas, overwhelming conditions, and relentless pain seek comfort and deliverance. In the midst of their desperation, I often feel the Lord come alongside me as my Shepherd. He gently reassures me that I am not alone as I care for people, rather He is the Shepherd. Reliance on Him is the ultimate encouragement I can offer to another.

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death”

This poetic line of Psalm 23 is often seen as foreboding; yet my clients and I find bright hope in magnifying the following words:

- WALK – Because He is with us, we walk rather than run even in the direst of circumstances.
- THROUGH – We will get through rather than lost or stuck in the difficult season. Trusting Jesus is an active endeavor in every situation.
- VALLEY – The valley is dark and deep, and Jesus does not discount the significance of our suffering. Being honest about the depth of the valleys means we can also more accurately praise the One who brings us through.
- SHADOW – A shadow cannot harm us. We may inaccurately perceive that evil or circumstances will overtake us, but we are ultimately untouchable by a shadow (i.e., the world). No matter what we face, Jesus has already secured our eternity. Our God is light; He is bigger than the shadows; and He will never leave us.

My Shepherd story is ongoing as He guides me through the mountain range comprised of many mountain tops and many valleys. Each time I’m alongside someone in their valley, or find myself in my own valley, it is in His demonstrated steadfastness that He is my shepherd.

JOURNEY 8

What Have I to Dread?

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
PSALM 23:4

Our sheep is still in the valley, but he is not alone; his shepherd is beside him. And his shepherd is carrying something, his rod and staff. We have only to look at the Shepherd and see them in His hands and our fear, worry, and confusion evaporate. Might we say to ourselves when we are gripped with worry: *'His rod and staff, His rod and staff. Remember His rod and staff.'*

What are His rod and staff that I should be comforted by them?

The Rod and Staff

What have I
to dread;
what have I
to fear,
Leaning on
the everlast-
ing arms?
I have blessed
peace with
my Lord so
near,
Leaning on
the everlast-
ing arms.

When David used the word *shebet*, translated here as 'rod,' he no doubt had in mind the kind of rod a shepherd used in his daily work. The rods used by Middle Eastern and African shepherds are heavy clubs carved specifically for each shepherd and thrown with laser-like precision. In the hands of a skilled shepherd, a rod is excellent protection from predators and for sheep wandering into danger. David was also a poet, and as a wordsmith he relished all the rich nuances of the word 'rod' when he listed his Shepherd's rod and staff as a source of comfort. 'Rod' can also be translated *scepter, staff, spear or javelin, and even tribe or offshoot*.

David's shepherd's rod became a king's scepter pointing us to our great Shepherd-King Jesus. The following verses illustrate:
Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 11:1-5; Jeremiah 23:1-5; Psalm 2:1-12

How can seeing Jesus crucified risen exalted King give you comfort during these times of uncertainty or pain?

What is your only comfort in life and death?

I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.
The Heidelberg Catechism

What supports have you been leaning on to bring you comfort?

*Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield (King) of your help, and the sword of your triumph!
Your enemies shall come fawning to you,
and you shall tread upon their backs.*

Deuteronomy 33:29

My Journey, My Shepherd

CAROL SATTERLY

Growing up during the Brady Bunch era, it was hard for a school-age child to make sense of the events in the world like protests and political scandals. I remember looking forward to Sunday School with the Bible Stories and flannel board figures depicting heroes and shepherds and sheep. I loved the sheep. Sheep were pursued when they wandered and carried home in the arms of the shepherd.

Psalm 23 was one of the first Bible passages I memorized from my red-letter edition King James Bible. I had a pretty strict mom, so the passage “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures” made sense to me - I understood authority.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

And the part about death, though scary, was also encouraging because it talked about the Shepherd who made me feel safe, being with me even in the valley. Little did I know as a seven year old, how these passages would minister to me during my life.

Living in central Florida years later, we received a call that my mother in Kentucky had died unexpectedly of a heart attack during the night. Oh Lord, I cried to myself, how can it be? One year ago to the day, my husband’s brother had died in a military air crash. His extended family were in our home and we were all headed to Disney World - choosing a fun way to remember. Lives changed in a matter of minutes, new plans were set in motion, and three of the seven cousins there would be heading north to a funeral instead of to Orlando.

The Shepherd protected us as we drove long hours to Kentucky. He provided words as we talked to our 3, 6, and 8-year-old children about death and heaven and funerals - for the second year in a row. Because of the already-familiar heartache, this valley was particularly dark for me and often in the weeks and months ahead, my Shepherd carried me.

The year prior to my mother’s death, I gave my parents a watercolor I had painted of sheep wandering in the woods and inscribed a John passage about sheep knowing their shepherd’s voice on the frame back. My mother’s remembrance folder with Psalms 23 printed beside her photo, is tucked away in my Bible, but the words are forever written on my heart

JOURNEY 9

The Prepared Table

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
PSALM 23:5

The table represents the heavenly Shepherd King receiving his vassal, David at his prepared table. This is a covenant meal, as suggested by the anointing that follows. But the big idea here is that the heavenly Shepherd King is bringing David under his protective care, specifically in regards to protection from David's enemies. It is difficult to ascertain what particular enemies David had in view here, since his whole life seemed to be lived under the shadow of the valley. Many of his Psalms reflect this. In light of Yahweh's protective care, this is why David doesn't fear evil, because the heavenly Shepherd King is with him (Psalm 23:4).

David describes in Psalm 18 God's care and protection in his life. Psalm 18 illustrates everything that Psalm 23 celebrates.

Great
salvation he
brings to his
king, and
shows
steadfast love
to his
anointed, to
David and his
offspring
forever, Psalm
18:50.

In the Presence of My Enemies

David could celebrate the Lord's protective care because he knew his Shepherd King well. He could sit down and enjoy a meal even in the midst of enemies (Psalm 23:5). Here we are reminded of one greater than David, who, just days before he approached the valley of deepest darkness would also sit down at a table prepared for him in the midst of enemies (Matthew 26:1-7). Like David, he too would be anointed with oil, a common custom in the ancient world, but here, a very significant sign, pointing to things to come (Matthew 26:8-13).

What other parallels come to mind as you reflect on Psalm 23:5 in light of Matthew 26:1-13?

Now my soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour?' But for this purpose I came to this hour.

Father, glorify your name.'

John 12:27-28

My Journey, My Shepherd

ALLEGRA MEACHAM

“God is great, God is Good. Let us thank him for our food. By His hands, we all are fed. Give us Lord our daily bread.” You may have recited this in your early childhood or with your children at the dinner table. In its simplicity, it rings true every day of our lives! God is good. He’s great! He is the daily bread that gives life and nourishment to each of us. His daily bread is also what I like to call bread-crumbs, the spiritual nourishment that He leaves behind to guide us to Him. If you’re not looking for His breadcrumbs, you’ll miss God’s direction. However, He will never leave us nor forsake us, especially in the deepest, darkest valleys. Because God is great. God is Good. When asked to write about my Shepherd story, I immediately thought of a specific valley in my life in 2017 when I realized that our experience with God can never be vital until it’s personal. Psalm 23 became personal that year. Since then, I’ve been able to look back on this valley and thank God for his breadcrumbs and three important messages.

First, God wants to guide me as a Shepherd guides his sheep, giving leadership and protection. I’ve often felt like a sheep more often than not - led astray sinfully from God, depending on my strength, and acting on my own selfish desires. In 2017, I found out I was unexpectedly pregnant during the second year of my pediatric residency - a job with long hours, demanding expectations, difficult patients, etc. Having a child would certainly throw off MY plans, and disrupt MY goals I had for myself. My son Maverick Sloan Meacham, meaning “strong, independent warrior,” was born that year with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. God had placed me specifically in a pediatric residency program at that time in my life so that high quality care, with neonatologists, plastic surgeons, and speech therapists, could be arranged seamlessly for this precious baby boy. God was leading me, and protecting my son all at the same time, teaching me to depend on Him, rather than myself. During that time, God was great, and God was good.

Second, God wants us to enjoy His presence forever. He “*prepares a table*” for us. That same year, 2017, three days after I found out I was pregnant, the Lord called my sister in law, Laurie Meacham King, unexpectedly to her heavenly home. Although not unexpected for the Lord, He had already prepared a seat at the table for her, and healed her from her earthly, physical, and aching body. My son was named in her memory. God wept with us that year more days than not, knowing full well that one day He would get to laugh with us, and Laurie, at one big heavenly table. God desires that we have that kind of fellowship with Him. He may have been a jealous God that year, but even in that dark valley, God was great, and God was good.

Third, God wants to bless you. The psalm ends in a grand crescendo when it’s declared “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*” (v. 6). These words teach us about the blessings of God. In the Hebrew language the word for blessing is plural. Therefore, God never gives a single blessing. He showers us with blessings. I’m biased, but I have a son with the most beautiful “forever smile,” named after his Aunt Laurie, so her legacy will live forever. Most importantly, God has given me an opportunity to share our collective story in order to glorify Him. The valley isn’t always good, but the Shepherd is. He leaves us his breadcrumbs as He knows the way.

JOURNEY 10

The Anointing at the Prepared Table

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

PSALM 23:5

In our last lesson we saw David enjoying fellowship at the table prepared by his heavenly Shepherd King, Psalm 23:5. We now see him being anointed with oil and with cup overflowing.

In the biblical world, anointing signified many things. For example, priests and kings were anointed as a symbol of consecration for special service to God (Exodus 30:30, 1 Samuel 16:13). In addition, it was customary to anoint the head of an honored guest at a dinner table (Both ideas may be present in Psalm 23:5 and Matthew 26:6-13).

God has gone to great lengths to provide a way for his children to come and feast at His table. Our host has become the servant by sending Jesus as a sacrifice for our sin. We receive a chair at His table through faith.

Perhaps David is recalling the day that Samuel anointed him to be king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:13) even though there would be many dark valleys to travel through before he actually ascended the throne (2 Samuel 5:1-5). Perhaps the reference to the overflowing cup recalls the day when God made that eternal covenant with David concerning a future Son (2 Samuel 7:8-16) a Son who now finds himself enjoying fellowship at the table prepared by his own Father just days before his crucifixion and death (Matthew 16:2, 6).

At that prepared table, Jesus is also anointed with oil—not by the host, but by an unnamed woman (Matthew 26:6-7). It's astonishing that the disciples quibble over this, thereby missing the entire point, (Matthew 26:8-9). Is he not the honored guest? Yes. But there's more to the anointing. Jesus is being consecrated for special service to God, (Matthew 26:10-13).

What is this special service? Do other Scriptures come to mind?

The Lord's Prepared Table

After being anointed, Jesus prepares his own table in the midst of his enemies at the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:20-29). As the gracious host, he now invites us to take a seat at his prepared table, which he established through the new covenant of his blood (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Every time you celebrate the Lord's Supper, you are reminded of the great sacrifice and substitutionary atonement. It is the gospel on display and a means of grace to spiritually nourish your weary soul. This is simply a foretaste of the festive table that awaits all those who have been invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-8).

How does the reality of the Shepherd-King preparing a place for you at his table bring you comfort?

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

My Journey, My Shepherd

TRICIA TURNER

During my childhood, a small framed picture of “Jesus – The Good Shepherd” hung on my bedroom wall. I often asked my mother to take it off the wall so I could examine it closely. I saw a very traditional Jesus, with downcast eyes, holding a lamb in his arms as He guided a flock of grown sheep through green pastures to a rocky path. I looked at this Good Shepherd every day and memorized the 23rd Psalm in Sunday School. Decades later, however, I would walk a rocky path that led me closer to “Jesus – My Good Shepherd”

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me...”

“Dear Jesus, Hold him tight.” I heard the words but wasn’t quite conscious that they were coming from my lips. In a hospital NICU, my husband and I were told that we were losing Matthew, our three-week-old son. Matthew and the miracle that we had hoped for were crashing. The nurses wrapped Matthew’s fragile form in a blanket and placed him in my arms for the first and final time. All we could see was his little face and one hand peeking out of the blanket. My husband and I cried and prayed over our son, thanking Jesus for his short life and asking Him to hold him tight.

The next few days were a blur as we grieved, tried to parent our toddler son, and planned a funeral for our baby son. We chose tiny doll clothes to take to the funeral director. We searched for Scripture and songs for Matthew’s service that would bring comfort and make sense of what had happened. I wandered into the Bible bookstore and saw a print that I immediately bought. The simple pencil sketch showed Jesus holding a baby lamb wrapped in his cloak, so similar to how I had last seen my son. Far different than the picture from my childhood, this sketch depicted a Good Shepherd with his face buried in the lamb’s wooly head, like a parent breathing in the aroma of his baby. This Jesus appeared to be praying over his gathered up lamb. Providentially as our rocky road of grief continued, this simple sketch caused the verses of the 23rd Psalm, long hidden in my heart, to pulse with hope. Hope for our son, held by Jesus, and for us. As our grief challenged us, I began to deeply understand that I too was the loved lamb cradled in the leading, sustaining and healing arms of the Good Shepherd.

“...He gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” Isaiah 40:11

JOURNEY 11

You Hem Me In

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

PSALM 23:6

God's
goodness and
mercy drew
you to your
Savior,
sustain you
through your
journey, and
will forever be
experienced
in glory.

Goodness and Mercy

Whenever we read goodness and mercy together in the Bible it is talking about God's covenant steadfast love.

God's *goodness* is His provision of all that is necessary for our thriving, our prosperity, our welfare, chiefly His provision of life when we were dead. Ephesians 2:4 expresses God's goodness this way: "*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved.*"

His mercy is His love, His kindness, His favor, His abundance, again in the provision of life out of death. Micah 7:18, "*Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.*"

David didn't say that fear and doubt followed him. Or shame and guilt. The Bible records David committing murder and adultery, but by grace alone David could say that Goodness and Mercy follow him, like two personified beings.

Have you received the grace of God that enables you to say that goodness and mercy now follow you instead of all that used to follow you, and to believe it?

Shall Follow Me

Goodness and mercy shall follow me. David the poet gives goodness and mercy legs. They 'attend closely upon me' like a servant, a watchdog, a body guard. They chase me, pursue me.

David had many pursuers in his lifetime - enemies of Israel, enemies within Israel, enemies within his own family. But David saw that the sheep of the Good Shepherd are *led* by Him and *followed* by Him. The Shepherd goes before and behind, and this image of the 'follower' shows the eagerness with which He pursues us to bless and protect. *He follows us!*

Do goodness and mercy follow us in the sense that they remain when we leave a place? Do I leave behind me a place that is fertile, flourishing, peaceful, pure? Do people catch the aroma of Christ from me and seek Him?

You hem me in behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Psalm 139:5

My Journey, My Shepherd

CHERYL JACQUES

I grew up Catholic. Everything I learned about God and Jesus was from memorizing the catechism lessons during my first Communion process. Psalm 23 was a requirement to pass. I memorized it well. It wasn't until I met The Lord Jesus that I understood Psalm 23's message through Bible study.

As I meditate on my "shepherd story," I weep, thinking of the many times The Shepherd led me to still waters, restored my soul, led me in paths of righteousness, and was with me in the valley of the shadow of death.

In July of 2018, I was in the valley of the shadow of death, when I visited Haiti with my family. On day 2 of our vacation, civil and political unrest and violent protests erupted throughout the entire country. We were 5 families, 26 people total. We were headed back towards our hotel when we got stuck in the middle of the road with no way to turn. The roads were blocked, barricaded in every corner, and men with guns were walking around. We were stuck in the middle of a war zone for 3 days, with bullets flying around us, sleeping in our cars on the side of the road, prisoners around us, and no bathrooms. This was our kids' first experience in my country of birth. We called everyone we knew to help get us out of there. We panicked more than we prayed. The fear, desperation, anxiety, insomnia was unreal.

We called one more friend, who called someone else who had a contact with the Miami Herald, who had a contact with the Haitian chief of police who sent the Haitian SWAT team to rescue us. As they were taking us to "safety," we drove through burning tires, burning trucks, rocks being thrown, bullets being fired around us, buildings burning, etc. To keep it short, we were shocked to see the danger we were actually in.

As I meditate on the goodness of God, His presence, his protection, his provision, and how he delivered us from the snare of death, I weep again. I reflect on how he yanked a 9-year-old girl from Haiti, brought her to Canada, and blessed her with a life here in America. I cannot help but sing praises to my good, good father. Glory be to God Almighty!

Psalm 23 is a constant companion for me, my very help in times of need. Therefore, I rest for I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that The Lord is my Shepherd, and in His presence alone we find everlasting peace.

JOURNEY 12

You Have Been Our Dwelling Place

And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

PSALM 23:6

The House of the Lord

David longed to build the temple, which would be the house of the Lord, but it was built by his son Solomon (I Chronicles 28:2,3,6). Solomon knew that the temple he built could not contain the God who dwelled in heaven (cf. I Kings 8:27). But at the heart of the temple was the ark of the covenant, which David called 'the footstool of our God.' The ark was to be the space where heaven met earth.

Tabernacle

Before the temple, God tabernacled with His people in the wilderness in this tent of meeting (Exodus 25:8, 9).

Creation

In Genesis 3, in the sanctuary of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve walked with God. As important as the buildings and locations were, they were merely locales for a transcendent, sovereign God to touch His feet down and dwell among men, to be Emmanuel.

Emmanuel

Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God,
Revelation 21:3.

Jesus is God in the flesh dwelling with His people. And the Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us, and we have seen his glory (John 1:14). Jesus Himself is the House of the Lord. He told those who questioned his cleansing of the temple, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up . . . he was speaking about the temple of his body*" (John 2:19, 21). They did destroy the temple of His body, on the cross. And He did indeed raise it up in three days. Jesus came in the flesh to be God with us and to make a way for us to dwell in the House of the Lord forever. He said, "*I am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*" (John 14:6).

The Temple Now

Through the finished work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are able to dwell with God once again. As living stones engrafted into the Chief Cornerstone, we have also become part of the new creation, which the temple represents (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:19; 22; 1 Pet. 2:6-8).

The Temple Perfected

The new creation has no need for a physical temple, because the new creation is the temple with God and the Lamb dwelling in our midst (cf. Rev. 21:22-27). We have traced God's dwelling place from the Garden to His forever-home. He is the journey and the journey's end.

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

Psalm 27:4

My Journey, My Shepherd

RITA CEFALU

I received an urgent call from my mother, saying, “I have all these bills on my bed and I think I owe a lot of money. Will you take me to the bank so that I can get a loan?” Immediately I knew something was wrong. Although living on a meager income, mom had always been scrupulous about managing money. This incident would begin our eight-year long journey, walking with the Shepherd through the debilitating disease called “Alzheimer’s.” And who would have known that the Lord would use this disease to bring healing to our family? You see, for many years our family relationship had been strained. I sometimes kept my distance because it was difficult for me to be with mom. There was this undercurrent of expectation, the expectation that she wanted more from me. I was often conflicted with the responsibilities that attended my own life and how best to meet her needs. I made mistakes. But thankfully, I’ve confessed my sins and failures and Jesus has forgiven me. He’s forgiven her too. And we’ve forgiven each other. It’s been a hard road, but through it all, I had the wonderful privilege of watching mom grow closer to the Lord. I witnessed His grace in her life. One of the central things she desired most—to have more time with her children—her grown children close at hand, lovingly caring for her, restored, and functioning in a fairly orderly fashion—had come to pass—ironically, through Alzheimer’s. But more than this, I observed the tender mercies of our Great Shepherd, as I watched him sustain her—sustain us—in our sojourn through the valley of darkness. And in 2017, Jesus brought her safely through to the other side—with no fear. Because He has already overcome the darkness. Jesus has made the journey through the darkest of valleys, thereby making it safe for all who come to Him in faith. And He is with us today through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, gently guiding us home. In closing, I’m reminded of Francis Schaeffer’s dying words to his wife, Edith, “We go from strength to strength, until we all arrive in Zion.”¹

Note the emphasis on Lamb. After Rev. 5, he is no longer called the Lion. He is only called the Lamb—the Lamb who was led to the slaughter so that He might justify the many (Isa. 53:7, 11)—that we may be qualified to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

In the new creation, he will lead us to the waters of life and trees which are for the healing of the nations. There will be no more curse or night or anything that offends. And there we shall serve the triune God forever (Rev. 22:1-5; 20:4-6).

1. This is a reference to Psalm 84:7. Zion is a type of the New Jerusalem, which is ultimately the new creation, wherein we shall enjoy resurrected bodies—and minds—in the new heavens and earth!

Her Journey, Her Shepherd

Amy Carmichael (1867 - 1951) - missionary to India, author, poet

Fanny Crosby (1820 - 1915) - poet and hymn writer

Elisabeth Elliott (1926 - 2015) - missionary to Ecuador, inspirational writer, speaker

Nancy Guthrie - Nashville-based writer, teacher, conference speaker

Jackie Hill-Perry - author, teacher, poet, hip-hop artist

Kay Coles James - leader in government, academia, and the conservative movement

Catherine Marshall (1914 - 1983) - editor, biographer, fiction author

Sandra McCracken - singer, songwriter, record producer

Elizabeth Prentiss (1818 - 1878) - author, hymn writer

Mary Slessor (1848 - 1915) - Scottish missionary to Nigeria

Joni Eareckson Tada - author, radio host, founder of Joni and Friends

Corrie Ten Boom (1892 - 1983) watchmaker and rescuer of Jews during WWII

Lilleas Trotter (1853 - 1928) English artist, missionary to Algiers

Your Journey, Your Shepherd

Take some time to ponder God's grace along your journey.

Write your own story with your Shepherd.

[illegible]

Contributors

David the Psalmist

*A smelly, scrawny shepherd who walked by faith; A herdsman-wanderer-poet who sang God's grace;
A husband, father, and king aware of his sin; A hungerer for righteousness, and a soul made clean;
A family line for the Eternal King*

Lauren Bordy

*Aspiring gardener (missing a green thumb), dog mom; devoted wife to Ben Bordy, hosts of Young Adults Ministry,
University of Florida alum., and Pediatric nurse*

Dr. Rita Cefalu

*Husband Richard, the love of her life; PhD Biblical Theology; professor and published author; new members of
CRPC (2021); time with family, walks on the beach, and bike rides*

Dr. Heather Clark

Wife and mom, Christian clinical psychologist; seminary professor; speaker; lover of adventure

Blair Critch

*Wife and mom of two teenage boys; runs her own vitamin supplement business; coach for Christian business
women; loves to lead Bible studies; time in the mountains*

Sarah Hadjuk

*Married to Mike and mother of Kate and Macy; Director of Development at Westminster Academy; Loves
teaching God's Word; Mountains, reading, and iced lattes*

Cheryl Jacques

*Born and raised in Haiti; Moved to Canada at the age of 9; Married college sweetheart, Jeffrey Jacques; Met the
Lord through her boyfriend, now husband; Mother of 4*

Diane Kanell

*Married to Dan her high school sweetheart; four children and 15 grandchildren; loves the Lord and His Word;
eager to grow in her knowledge of the Him*

Dr. Allegra Meacham

*The CEOs of her house are ages 1 and 3; heavily caffeinated; Pediatrician; Loves Gator football; lover of
sunshine, boating, and bringing people together*

Elyse Miller

*Married to Trey with four children; majored in creative writing/minor real estate; Juris Doctor from University of
Miami School of Law; Real Estate Broker and Attorney with Law offices Miller and Miller; Reading*

Jen Pacienza

*Family portrait: four on earth and one in heaven; Master of Arts in Religion; National Parks and Historic Cities;
Theology and Children's Literature; Time with my pastor and Sunday afternoons*

Donna Perez

*Daughter, wife, and mother; gardening and embroidery; reading and traveling; learning about family history;
dog lover*

Carol Satterly

*Married to Joel, Westminster Academy Headmaster; Three adult children and two grandsons; Career nurse
practitioner and educator serving on faculty with an online university; self-taught artist*

Allison Siegenthaler

*Wife to Andrew and mother to Adrienne, Eliza, Will and sons-in-law Eliot and Colin; Grandmother to Zion- 7
months old and absolutely perfect; Became a Christian at 8 yrs old at Awana Club; Writer, poet, and quilter*

Paula Smith

*Wife and Mother; Grandmother of 5; Delights in studying and sharing God's Word; Loves crocheting and
counted cross stitch; Cooking and travel*

Tricia Turner

*Married to JT for 34 years; Mom of four (and more in Heaven); homeschool mom for 20 plus years; brand new
grandmother to Emery (want to see photos?); enjoys the arts and a good thrift shop*

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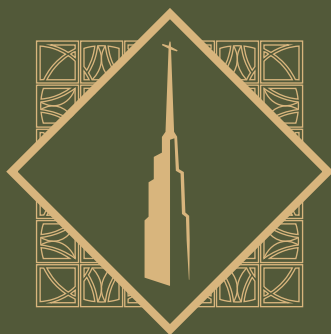
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To see You is the end and the beginning,
You carry us, and You go before,
You are the journey, and the journey's end. Amen.
- BOETHIUS



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