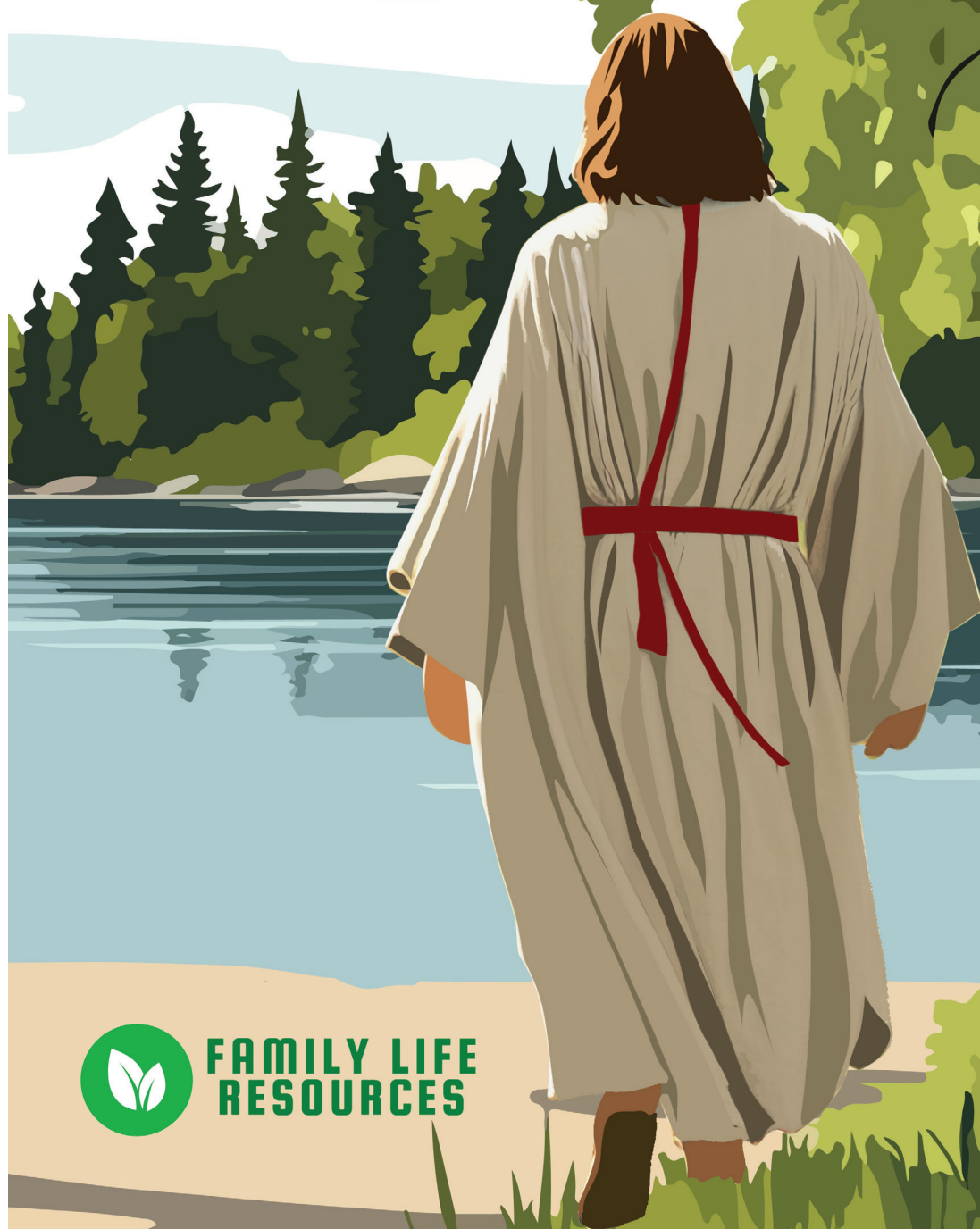


PSALM 23



**FAMILY LIFE
RESOURCES**



FAMILY LIFE RESOURCES

Growing Together, Rooted in Faith - Colossians 2:7

We understand the challenges of busy schedules at home, which is why we offer resources that support you and your family which are easy to use, relevant and most importantly honor God. We pray these resources for your home along with the classes and services at First Church make an eternal difference in the lives of families like yours.

Blessings,
First Church of the Open Bible

Colossians 2:6,7

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.



Meeting Jesus in the Old Testament

MARCH **Our Passover** (Exodus 12:24-25)

- God Reveals His Plan
- The Plan for Freedom
- The Exodus
- Remember What He Has Done

APRIL **Holy Week with Our Messiah** (Zechariah 9:9)

- Celebrating Jesus
- Praying with Jesus
- Remembering Jesus
- Jesus Lives!

MAY **Our Good Shepherd** (Psalm 23)

- Green Pastures/Quiet Waters
- He Guides Me
- You Prepare a Table
- The Loving Kindness of Our Lord.

Our Good Shepherd

David as a shepherd himself spent much time alone, with his sheep as his companions. He knew of the importance of his relationship with them, to care for them, protect them, lead and guide them, and to provide for them.

In Psalm 23 he describes the Lord as his own Shepherd:

*"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters ..."*

This is a prophetic picture of Jesus as our Shepherd. Let's spend time thinking of all his provisions for us.

LESSON 1

Green Pastures/Quiet Waters

Parent's Passage: Matthew 6:25-26

Family Reading: Psalm 23

Key Verse: Psalm 23:1-2

*"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me
beside quiet waters ..."*

Earlier this year, we had a lesson about what it meant to be a shepherd in Jesus's time. To the sheep, the shepherd was the most important person. The sheep were even drawn to the shepherd's voice because they had learned that He could be completely relied upon to meet their needs and keep them safe.

As in this passage, it was the shepherd's responsibility to find the best pastures to keep the sheep healthy. It was up to the shepherd to find calm waters for his sheep so they would not be swept away by the current while they drank.

Jesus is our supplier

Psalm 23:1 doesn't mean that we will never experience "wants." Instead, this passage points to our needs and the One who supplies them. It's important to recognize that the Lord is our creator - He knows our wants and needs, and He is the source of our fulfillment.

Sometimes, we may feel disappointed by how Jesus provides for our "wants." In Matthew 26:11, Mark 14:7, and John 12:8, Jesus Himself acknowledged that poverty and "want" will always exist in our fallen world.

(Continued next page)

Digging a little deeper into history, it's helpful to understand what the Psalmist might have meant when he wrote about green pastures.

The region where Jesus lived was not (and still is not) a vast, green pasture as we picture pastures in the United States. In fact, much of the land available to the shepherds in Jesus's day was desert-like with very little precipitation. Amazingly, the small amount of moisture that did fall would often collect around the rocks, where small tufts of grass would sprout. These small tufts of grass likely sustained the flocks.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

- Matthew 6:25-26

Even in the harshest desert - which can represent our hardest times - Jesus, our Good Shepherd, provides just enough. Like sheep, we must continually rely on Him and follow Him to remain spiritually fed.

Jesus is our guide and our safety

I'm reminded of a book by Dr. Seuss titled, ***"Oh, the Places You'll Go!"*** It's a fun rhyming book, but it's also an example of how there is so much in life that can steer us away from our Lord. ***"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose."*** (Dr. Seuss)

But Psalm 23 reminds us ***"The LORD is my shepherd."***

Our brains, our feet, our shoes, and even our choices don't always lead us in the right direction. It is our Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ who understands us best and knows what we need and where we should go to be safe.

(Continued next page)

"Oh, the places you'll go! There is fun to be done! There are points to be scored. There are games to be won. And the magical things you can do with that ball will make you the winning-est winner of all." (Dr. Seuss)

Again, like this fun poem, the world tells us that we are the answer and that we win by our abilities and talents. But the Bible teaches us that our abilities and talents come from the Lord, and that we are to use them to help others win:

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." 1 Peter 4:10

"You will come to a place where the streets are not marked. Some windows are lighted, but mostly they're darked. A place you could sprain both your elbow and chin! Do you dare to stay out? Do you dare to go in?" (Dr. Seuss)

This is why Jesus leads us "beside quiet waters." He understands the dangers that can sweep us away when we stray. But if we stay close and follow Him, He will guide us and keep us safe.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer . . . with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

- Philippians 4:6-7

FAMILY PRAYER

Father, only You are worthy of all my praise. You are my perfect supplier, and in You, my needs are met whatever my circumstances. Please help me to follow You more closely. May I look to You in both good times and hard times. I pray for Your peace, and I thank You for all the ways You bless me each day. Amen.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Read Psalm 23 together as a family. Write down how God has taken care of your family in ways that reflect each verse. (Don't worry if you can't fill in each one - What matters most is recognizing how God provides for your family's needs.) Remind your family that God's Word is always true.

*The Lord is my shepherd,
I lack nothing.*

*He makes me lie down in green
pastures, he leads me beside quiet
waters, he refreshes my soul.*

*He guides me along the right
paths for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the
darkest valley, 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 your goodness and love
will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the
Lord forever.*

LESSON 2

He Guides Me

Parent's Passage: John 21:15-19

Family Reading: Psalm 23

Key Verse: Psalm 23:3-4

"He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

If it isn't already familiar, you'll often hear this verse during a funeral. I'd like to focus our attention, though, toward how these verses point to LIFE.

We learned over Easter that Jesus, who is without sin, died on the cross to suffer the punishment we deserve because of our sin. Thank you, Jesus! (I just can't let that statement go by without thanking Him!)

However, if that was it - we're just saved from punishment - then the story is incomplete. We can't continue to sin and expect to be saved from punishment without realizing that something more is needed and that change must happen.

Thankfully, God doesn't only save us, He restores us so that we can move forward in a right relationship with Him and grow into the person He calls each one of us to be! Like in Psalm 42:1:

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God."

Even though God guides us, all of us will find ourselves in a "valley" from time to time. Valleys are times when you feel sad, alone, maybe even forgotten.

(Continued next page)

Isn't it interesting, though, that these tough, sad, horrible times are depicted as a "valley?" Take note, it doesn't say we're in a pit or some other place where there is no way out. A valley, instead, is a place we walk through.

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

(Isaiah 41:10)

And even in those toughest of times, we can feel God's love for us, because God has said,

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

(Hebrews 13:5)

So take heart, dear child of God! Isaiah 40:31 reminds us: ***"those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint."***

PSALM 23 WORD SEARCH - Family Activity

Y J S M M V V H O U S E J R C
W E V I L U F A H F N K G L K
R O D R T N H W L E U X O V P
G G U I D E W R E L D U O N A
T A B L E K A R S S E A D G S
P C H W L E G M M S Z Y N D T
R C O A F C Y X E T Z S E G U
R O W M P A O T R A N H S D R
E W U S F R C K C F B A S L E
S A P I D O E S Y F K D U W S
T T U P Q K R P W C I O C Y L
O E T C A U B T A P S W L L L
R R F V S T I F O R E V E R Y
E S D E A T H E U Y E W G Z Z
S E N E M I E S T A D J A E T

Find these words from Psalms 23 in the grid:

GREEN,	SOUL,	SHADOW,
FEAR,	PASTURES,	GUIDE,
DEATH,	COMFORT,	MERCY,
QUIET,	PATHS,	PREPARE,
DWELL,	WATERS,	WALK,
TABLE,	HOUSE,	ENEMIES,
RESTORES,	FOREVER,	VALLEY,
EVIL,	STAFF,	ROD,
GOODNESS.		

LESSON 3

You prepare a table before me.

Parent's Passage: 1 Samuel chapter 19

Family Reading: Psalm 23

Key Verse: Psalm 23:5

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

Part One -

In Psalm 23, David describes God's provision in many ways. We come to verse five and David describes the Lord preparing a table for him.

We can imagine a lavish table full of beautiful fruits that God created for us to enjoy. He invites us to sit and join the feast.

But suddenly, you notice enemies standing around you. What a strange site! A feast in the presence of enemies. How can this be?

David was anointed as King (1 Samuel 16:13). But he did not take the throne right away. Saul was King and he was in disobedience to God. Saul was an enemy of David. David hid from Saul in caves, in the wilderness and in foreign lands.

The story is recorded in 1 Samuel chapters 19-31. God protected David during this difficult time. For many years, God provided safety and provisions for David, even when his enemies were around him.

Life Lesson:

God is always our provider. We must learn to keep our eyes on him and remember the goodness he brings into our lives.

(Continued next page)

Even when we feel our enemy, who is Satan, encroaching into our space, we are always safe at the Lord's table.

Part Two -

"You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows."
(Psalm 23:5b)

In 1 Samuel 16, when David was a young man, the prophet Samuel came to David's home. David was called in from the field. At God's direction Samuel anointed David as a future king of Israel.

1 Samuel 16:12b & 13a describes it this way:

"Then the Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; this is the one.'"
"So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David."

The anointing was a sacred act of consecrating or setting apart for the Lord. A similar act is described in Leviticus 8:10-12 where Moses consecrates the tabernacle, the altar, Aaron and the priest with oil to set them apart for the service of the Lord.

In the New Testament, John and Paul describe how as believers we are anointed in a spiritual sense.

"You have an anointing from the holy one, and all of you know the truth." (1 John 2:20)

Also, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 says:

"Now it is God who makes both us and you to stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership upon us, and put his spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

We are anointed and set apart unto the Lord. As His Spirit fills our lives, we will truly understand the meaning of "my cup overflows".

LESSON 4

The Loving Kindness of Our Lord

Parent's Passage: Ephesians 3:14-20

Family Reading: Psalm 23

Key Verse: Psalm 23:6

*"Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever."*

Radaph (Hebrew)



- to pursue, chase after, hunt down with relentless pursuit. Staying hot on our heels. i.e. - *"May the divine love and grace of our Shepherd pursue [radaph] us all the way to heaven's gate."*

Psalm 23 ends with this description of the loving kindness of our Good Shepherd in relentless pursuit of us.

Our response is described in Ephesians chapter 3:14-20. Paul is praying earnestly for the church at Ephesus. He prays for the Spirit to strengthen them and for Christ to dwell in them through faith.

Then Paul's prayer becomes more specific. He asks for God to help them grow by putting their roots down deep in his love, and that they can comprehend how wide and long and high and deep is that love of Christ for us.

"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ ..." (Ephesians 17b-18)

(Continued next page)

As His loving kindness chases after us, we must turn and receive the fullness of Christ's love towards us. His mercy is far more than we can comprehend.

Yet this is the way to truly enter into and experience his divine presence.

We cannot hope to accomplish this on our own, but Paul encourages us that our Heavenly Father works on our behalf to accomplish this in us:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!
(Ephesians 20-21)

As we call on him, worship him, and fellowship in the body of Christ, which is the church, we come to better understand His great love towards us.

CONCLUSION

Psalm 23 is a song of David. Leanne Crawford has written a song entitled ***"Stillwaters"***, based on Psalm 23.

It is comforting and edifying. We encourage each family to spend time in Psalm 23. Read it over and over. Write it out verse by verse. Listen to the lyrics put to music.

At the very heart of Psalm 23 is this phrase, ***"you are with me."*** Right in the middle of the Psalm, these words communicate David's relationship with His Lord. He was certain of the Lord's presence with him at all times.

During Jesus last meal with his disciples, he said something very similar: ***"I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me."*** John 14:3.

THE BEST MOM EVER!

Happy Mother's Day





THIS IS A RESOURCE PRODUCED BY FIRST CHURCH OF THE OPEN BIBLE IN DES MOINES, IOWA.
ALL MATERIALS AND CONTENT ARE INTENDED FOR INFORMATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.
THEY ARE DESIGNED TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE YOUR FAITH JOURNEY.
PLEASE USE THEM RESPECTFULLY AND ACKNOWLEDGE FIRST CHURCH OF THE OPEN BIBLE, DES MOINES, IOWA
WHEN SHARING OR REFERENCING THESE RESOURCES.