

# Knowing the Shepherd (Answer Key)

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## Part 1

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” Psalm 1:1

Psalm 23 is David’s testimony of trust and confidence. Is it yours as well?

The Lord inhabits eternity and rules over heaven and earth. Yet, how else is He described in Isaiah 40:11?

How does Jesus describe himself, the believer’s Shepherd, in John 10?

- He is the door of the sheep, the entrance to the sheepfold (vv. 7, 9)
  - He is the good Shepherd (vv. 11, 14)
  - He gives his life for the sheep (vv. 11, 15)
  - He knows His sheep (v. 14)
  - He has one flock (v. 16)
  - His sheep hear his voice (v. 27)
  - His sheep are secure, because no one can snatch them from His hand (v. 28)
- Jesus is our Great Shepherd because: (Hebrews 13:20)

What does Isaiah 53:6 say about our tendency as sheep?

When we can’t see the Good Shepherd’s hand of direction, or when it seems He hasn’t provided, we can trust His heart. How did Paul trust God in prison, even though he might not have understood the circumstances of his life? (Philippians 4:11-13 and 18-20)

How did God meet Elijah’s need when there seemed to be no resources? (1 Kings 17:6-9)

Our natural tendency is to look to ourselves or other people to be our shepherd—to protect and provide for us and meet our needs—but they can fail, mislead, and disappoint us. Who do you tend to look to for “shepherding?”

In what area(s) of your life are you trying to shepherd or handle things on your own?

Are you resisting the Shepherd's will in any areas of your life by kicking or dragging your heels?

Sometimes we experience "lack" because we have wandered from our Shepherd, gone our own way, and disobeyed Him. Have you wandered from the Shepherd or ignored His voice (the Word of God)? What "wayward" choices are you making?

"I shall not want." Does this mean that you will have everything that you want in life? Can you think of any need you have that the Shepherd does not already know?

Your Shepherd takes full responsibility for meeting your needs. List your most pressing needs at this time.

How does the certainty of the Lord's responsibility for you and your needs remove your fears?

Because the Lord is our Shepherd, we can be content—but it is a choice. How do you struggle specifically with discontentment? Will you choose to be content in your Shepherd's care, and with His provision?

Consider your typical response to pressure. Does it cause others to think: "She has a Good Shepherd"? Why or why not?

Can your family, friends, and even strangers see that the Lord is your Great Shepherd?

## Part 2

"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."  
Psalm 23:2-3

Where do you feel the most pressure? In your job? Your family? Or elsewhere?

David says of his Shepherd, "He makes me lie down in green pastures." This speaks of places of rest and refreshment. How often do we need to come to these places of rest?

Why do you think it is necessary to lie down and be still? (Psalm 46:10a)

We tend to be impressed by busyness; it sounds lazy and unproductive to lie down. What are your thoughts about the importance of rest and relaxation, especially in ministry?

What is the enemy of spiritual intimacy with the Lord? Why is this so?

What did Jesus want His disciples to do before He sent them out to minister to others? (Mark 3:14)

After we've poured into others' lives (Mark 6:30), we must return to the Lord to get replenished.

What are some ways that you can invite more stillness and quietness into your life?

Do you sometimes feel like you are in a pressure cooker, ready to explode with stress? Does this bring glory to God? What can you do to relieve that pressure and honor God in your responses and activities?

What does Jesus promise those who are weary? (Matthew 11:28)

The word "restore" means to refresh and revive—to bring a person back to the place of blessing from which he or she departed. What area of your life needs "restoration" today?

Where does Jesus tell us to find "rivers of living water" (drink) and "fresh bread" (food) to nourish our souls? (John 6:51, 57-58; John 7:37-38)

How can our times in the Word and in prayer with Jesus, the living Word, restore us? (Psalm 19:7)

If you've ever wandered from your Shepherd, how did He draw you back and restore you to fellowship? Did He chasten you in some way? If so, how? (Hebrews 12:5-7)

## Part 3

"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."  
Psalm 23:4

Describe a time or situation when you needed clear guidance. If you chose to follow the Word and will of the Lord, did He lead you down the right path?

What helps illuminate our "path"? (2 Peter 1:19 and Psalm 119:105).

If the path God chooses for us is hard, how do we know that it is still a "right path"? What might be God's purpose(s) for taking us down a hard path?

God led the Jews into the wilderness (Exodus 13:17-18), and led Jesus into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1). What was the purpose and/or result of these “hard paths”?

David said God led him in paths of righteousness “for His name’s sake.” What does this mean?

The valley of the shadow of death is also called “the valley of deep darkness.” What is your valley of deep darkness?

Going through a valley does not mean you are an immature Christian. Jesus experienced 40 days of loneliness and temptation—His own valley of deep darkness. How does this help you walk through your own valley?

Sometimes a sense of God’s presence is nonexistent as we walk through our valley of darkness. Why do you think God allows this to happen?

We learned that the Shepherd leads us in “right paths,” and the valley of deep darkness is one of those paths. How does an understanding of the love and character of God—the truth that God is good—help you during valley days?

How did Job feel in the valley? (Job 23:8-9)

How did Job’s perspective help him in the valley? (Job 23:10)

It’s more important that God knows where you are than that you know where He is.

Remember that you are walking through the valley of deep darkness. God didn’t lead you there to leave you there!

Is there ever cause to fear evil? (Psalm 23:4)

The Psalmist says of his Shepherd, “You are with me.” How does this truth comfort you when you think of your own dark valleys?

David expresses faith in what he knows to be true—that God is with him—even when everything around him seems to scream otherwise. Read Isaiah 43:1-2 and write your own testimony of faith concerning God’s presence in the good times and the bad times.

In the valley, the Shepherd is our companion, guide, protector, and comforter. How has God shown His faithfulness to you in one of these areas when you needed Him most?

We tend to look for ways of escape from our valleys, instead of looking to the Shepherd for comfort and strength to go through the valleys. What have you used in the past to escape from or dull the pain of your valleys?

Our Heavenly Shepherd comforts us with a rod and staff. “Com-fort” means “with strength.” God strengthens us in our greatest times of need.

How is God’s shepherding better than these other resources?

A rod is a symbol of the shepherd’s power to protect against enemies, and is a symbol of security to the sheep. A hooked staff is used to restrain the sheep from wandering , or to pull them out of places where they shouldn’t be. It is used to prod and guide the sheep. What are some examples of our Shepherd’s rod and staff in our lives today?

Paul received comfort in his afflictions from the “God of all comfort.” What is one reason God comforts us in our valleys of deep darkness? (2 Corinthians 1:3-6)

## Part 4

“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 23:5-6

God is not only a Good Shepherd, He is also a Gracious Host, welcoming us to His home and preparing a table for us. This table is prepared in the presence of our enemies . God brings us to His table, a place of abundance. (Psalm 66:11-12)

The Old Testament patriarch Joseph understood the truth of God’s care in the midst of his enemies. He named his second son Ephraim, symbolic of God’s place of abundance. What does Ephraim mean? (Genesis 41:52)

We have many “enemies” in our journey with the Lord. Our enemies might include death, old age, sickness, certain people who set themselves against God (like an unsaved spouse), Satan, the flesh, and things in our past that haunt us. How can focusing on our enemies blind us to what God might be doing in our lives?

We must be careful to let God prepare our table, and not try to come up with our own “feast.”

What are some of the “benefits” the Lord has given to you? (Psalm 103:2-18)

Where there is overflowing sin, problems, or afflictions, God gives overflowing grace . (Romans 5:20-21 and 2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

As our problems increase, we can still be filled with joy. (2 Corinthians 7:4) What is the source of this joy? (Psalm 16:11)

David had no doubt about God's Providence in his life. He says, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Goodness and mercy act as two bodyguards in our lives to stand alongside us and help us overcome evil.

God's goodness and mercy are His steadfast covenant love and kindness toward us. David says they actively follow or pursues us all the days of our lives.

God wants us to leave a "trail" of goodness and mercy behind to bless others. Examine your heart, then circle what you feel others experience when you are around:

worry, fear, bitterness peace, trust, forgiveness

David was assured of his future. He said, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." To be in the house of the Lord is to dwell forever in the presence of the Lord. Read and personalize Psalm 27:4 as a prayer to the Lord!

Heaven gives us perspective about our suffering. The ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 23 is in the book of Revelation (7:13-17). How does the promise and reality of heaven give you comfort and hope to face your current troubles?