

He Makes Me Lie Down in Green Pastures

Our Shepherd Provides Rest

(Psalm 23:2a)

Introduction

We've been learning the 23rd Psalm. The past two weeks we've looked at the first verse: *The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.* Today we will look at the first half of verse 2: *"He makes me lie down in green pastures."*

This verse is not talking about letting us take nice long naps out on our front lawns! It's talking about the wonderful care Jesus takes to give us peace and joy in our lives. God wants us to rest in the knowledge of His love for us. If we trust that He'll take care of us, we can rest from worry and fear.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You for being our Good Shepherd. Thank You we are not in want of anything and that we can rest from all of our fears and worries, just knowing that we are loved by You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

"I will make a covenant of peace with My people and drive away the dangerous animals from the land. Then they will be able to camp safely in the wildest places and sleep in the woods without fear. (Ezekiel 34:25)

Lesson

[Teacher, before class put the following items in a box: 4 large cards that say: Fear, Friction, Pests (Bugs), and Hunger. Two sandpaper blocks (Friction), jar of plastic bugs (Pests), cooking oil, jar of honey, box of cookies (hunger), 3 rocks with the following written on them: "unbelief," "bitterness," and "pride".]

One of the greatest pleasures a shepherd receives from his flock is when he can see them contentedly resting. You see, sheep can't and won't rest if things around them aren't quite right. A sheep won't lie down unless four basic requirements are met:

- 1) freedom from fear
- 2) freedom from friction with others in the flock
- 3) freedom from torment by pests
- 4) freedom from hunger

When a shepherd sees his flock resting, he knows he's done his job. For thousands of years, shepherds have worked hard to remove these fears to allow their flocks to rest easy, so the food they've eaten can digest, making them thrive so they will be fat and fluffy.

Humans are a lot like sheep in this way. Nothing gives our Shepherd such joy as seeing us able to rest in His care, free from worries so that we might be able to feed upon His Word. Let's look at the things that will keep us from resting in our green pastures under His watch.

Fears

What are some things that cause you to have fear and worry? Storms may scare us. Hearing our parents argue concerns us. Knowing that your parents don't have enough money to pay for medical expenses, food, or the rent, can make us worry.

How many of you have been scared or worried by a "what-if?" Have you have ever had thoughts like these?

- "Oh, what if I don't do well on my test?"
- "What if I embarrass myself in front of all the other kids?"
- "What if they laugh at me?"

When I worry about how things are going to work out, I can't relax. I'm very tense and very worried. I can't sleep at night and I get bad headaches.

You know, when I let fear get the best of me, it's very hard for me to see the answer to my fears is Jesus—just waiting to help me and calm me down. But, when I do turn to Jesus and call out to Him as my Shepherd, He comes and removes the fears, giving me peace. He lets you know that He has it under His control.

Friction

Does anyone know what friction is? Friction is what you get when things aren't smooth. [Rub the blocks together.] Friction is what you get when there's a conflict.

Have you ever been to the zoo or seen on a nature program how the animals seem to have a system? You know, the big ones get the best of everything...the best shade, the best food, the best place to lie down...and the smaller ones get whatever is left?

Have you ever seen when one of the smaller animals is in the big animal's spot, or eating his food? The big animal comes up ready to stomp the other one until he moves! How easy do you think it is for the animals to rest after all that confrontation...all that friction?

That's a lot of friction, huh? [Rub the blocks together again.]

Not only do animals have conflict to deal with, sometimes it's very easy for there to be a lot of friction in our relationships with other people, too. There are times when things just don't go smoothly.

Have you ever had to go to school where there's a bully? Or, have you ever played a game with someone who is really aggressive and just has to be the winner? It's hard to have fun with people like that, isn't it? There is just so much tension. [Rub the blocks together again.]

During all of this friction, it is hard to remember that God wants us to live in harmony with all people. He wants us to be peacemakers. But as we remember His goodness, we will feel safe and loved and accepted by Him and all our worries will disappear. He wants us to love on other people the way He loves us and that is what will make

that friction disappears. Then we will be able to rest in the knowledge of His love and care for us. What a wonderful Shepherd!

Pests

Another thing that plagues the sheep and keeps them from resting is all the bugs and pests that bother them. Little gnats love to hover near their eyes and nostrils; and, sheep can't swat them away.

Can you imagine trying to lie down to rest if you were covered by little bugs that are trying to bite you? Ticks, flies, mites and all these pests are all over you! [Pour out the jar of fake bugs.] That would keep me up!

How many of you have been bitten all over by mosquitoes? It's really bothersome, isn't it? Swatting, hearing their buzzing, and the bites! Oh, the bites! Those pests are really annoying! You can't rest!

Just like mosquitoes, we often have pesky problems that just "bug" us. Do you ever have things that annoy you and give you trouble? It's impossible to rest with pesky problems on your mind.

You know what the shepherd does for the sheep to keep these pests away from bothering them? They dip their sheep in bug repellent to protect them and soothe them. They call it *Sheep Dip* and it helps to keep the bugs away from the sheep. It's like when we put Mosquito repellent on – it keeps those pesky mosquitoes away!

In the same way, your Shepherd, Jesus, sees and knows these pesky problems you have running through your mind – those situations you just don't know what to do with. He sees all of this and how much it bothers you, and how it keeps you from the wonderful rest He wants for you. In His care, He carefully applies the pest repellent of the Holy Spirit to you.

Shepherds in Bible times would use oil as a repellent. Now, the oil they used wasn't some thin, runny kind of stuff like your mom cooks

with. [Pull out the cooking oil.] It was a thick, oozy, covering oil, like honey. [Pull out the honey.]

In the Bible, oil is often used as a symbol for the Holy Spirit. When the Good Shepherd, Jesus, applies the wonderfully thick covering of the oil of the Holy Spirit to our hearts, all those problems and situations seem to go away. The knowledge that Jesus has the situation under control is a great calmer, allowing us to rest in His care.

Hunger

Finally, sheep won't lay down to rest if they are hungry. They will constantly be up on their feet searching for something to tame their growling stomachs.

We're just like sheep. If we're hungry, we've only got one thing on our minds – getting food! [Pull out the box of cookies.]

Good shepherds lead their flock to “green pastures” of good grass where they can to eat their fill. They take care to prepare the area by pulling out the poisonous plants and rocks so there are no hidden dangers.

It is the same way in our lives: Jesus goes through our lives and removes things that might keep us from feeding upon His word. [Pull out the three rocks.]

Jesus goes through our hearts and removes the

- **Rocks of unbelief** so we can trust that He is who He says He is.
- **Rocks of bitterness** we have toward others that keep us from receiving His best.
- **Rocks of pride** that keep our hearts hard.

[Toss the rocks into a garbage can.]

You know how you get sleepy after you eat a big meal, like at Thanksgiving? The Good Shepherd wants us to feed upon His word until we are completely satisfied. Then, we will rest in peace. **Peace** is the quietness that Jesus gives you deep in your heart even when you're in the middle of a trial. Peace is being calm, relaxed or unruffled no matter what happens. When you put your trust in God to help you with a problem, you will have peace in your heart.

Once the shepherd removes *fear, friction, pests, and hunger* (pull out sandpaper blocks, the jar of Bugs, and the box of cookies as you say each one), the sheep can lay peacefully in the shepherd's care. However, for the sheep, if they are experiencing any of those four things, just to know the shepherd is there, just to see the shepherd and know He's handling the situation is enough to allow them to lay peacefully in His care. The shepherd is doing His job.

Jesus is our Good Shepherd; He takes wonderful care of us. As you feed upon His word, you will trust Him. That will give you rest from all your fears and worries and give you peace and joy in your life.

Bible Story Center

Let's read about a time that Jesus gave his disciples rest.

Jesus and His disciples had just finished collecting all the extra food left over from a miraculous feeding He did for thousands of people.

The miracle of feeding of the 5,000 happened on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and all the people were caught up in the excitement. Afterwards, Jesus strongly urged his disciples to go across the lake to a quiet place where they could rest.

Matthew 14:22

Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that His disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while He sent the people home.

He told His disciples to get in the boat and row to the other side of the lake while He dismissed all the people.

Matthew 14:23

After sending them home, He went up into the hills by Himself to pray. Night fell while He was there alone

Jesus went up on the mountain to pray. But, when the disciples were about four miles out to sea, a fierce storm arose.

Matthew 14:24

Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves.

The Sea of Galilee is actually a very large lake. It is surrounded by hills and storms blow into the lake almost without warning. Many of Jesus' disciples were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. Some of them had probably experienced getting caught in a storm. Because a small fishing boat could easily sink in the wild waves, no one wanted to be out on the Sea of Galilee during a storm. And, as they were crossing the Sea of Galilee a sudden storm came up.

The storm was so violent, that in spite of their experience, these skilled fishermen were in danger of going under in their small boat.

Matthew 14:25

About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water.

Although praying on a mountain several miles away, Jesus saw the disciples struggling against the storm and He knew their fear.

How amazing that Jesus could walk on water! Can you imagine Him coming toward the boat on top of the waves as they rolled and tossed in the fierce wind? Jesus is God and has power to do anything. He could even walk on top of a raging, stormy sea. He even has power to forgive your sins!

Matthew 14:26

When the disciples saw Him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"

The disciples were by now so tired and so scared, they thought they saw a ghost, and began to scream.

Matthew 14:27

But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," He said. "Take courage. I am here! "

But Jesus walked over to them and spoke peace to their hearts, calming their fears. The Good Shepherd's presence was calming His sheep. The waves were still raging, but the disciples had peace in their hearts because Jesus was there.

Then Peter did an interesting thing...

Matthew 14:28

Then Peter called to Him, "Lord, if it's really You, tell me to come to You, walking on the water."

Peter reacted to Jesus in total faith; he saw Jesus walking on the water and asked Jesus to let him walk on the water, too.

Matthew 14:29

"Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus.

Jesus told him to come. As Peter got out of the boat, he began to walk on the storming sea.

Matthew 14:30

But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

When Peter looked away from the Shepherd and focused on the waves crashing all about him, he became afraid and began to sink. If Peter had kept looking to the Lord Jesus for help, the crashing waves would not have started to pull him under!

There's an important lesson here for us. When you find yourself facing trouble, talk to the Lord Jesus about it. Ask God to help you think about Him instead of the problem.

When Peter took his eyes off of the Lord, he began to sink. And he cried out to the Lord for help. He said, "*Lord, save me!*"

Matthew 14:31

Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt Me?"

Jesus grabbed Peter and took him to the boat.

Jesus didn't make the storm stop; He simply reached out and caught hold of Peter and calmed his fears. God may not make your problem go away, either. There may be things He wants you to learn from your difficulty. But He promises to be with you and to help you go through the problem. He can help you not to be worried. The Lord heard Peter's cry for help and saved him from drowning.

Matthew 14:32-33

When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. (33) Then the disciples worshiped Him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

Once he looked to Jesus, Peter found himself safe again in the boat and then the wind stopped.

The Bible says we can expect to have troubles in our lives (John 16:33). At times those problems may seem to crash all around you, like waves in a storm. If you keep your mind focused on the difficulty, you become discouraged and want to give up. It's not easy to keep going through the hard times in your life. If Jesus could calm the

waves of a raging storm, what do you think He can do with the problems that are not allowing you to rest in your life?

Summary

We talked about four things today that sheep need to allow them to rest. They need freedom from **fear**, freedom from **fiction**, freedom from **pests**, and freedom from **hunger**. If the sheep could provide the things they need, would they need a shepherd? No! In the same way, we need our Good Shepherd to take away our fears, remove frictions in our relationships, get rid of the pesky problems in our lives, and prepare our hearts so that we can feed upon His Word. Just as a good shepherd makes his sheep lie down in green pastures, God wants you to rest in the knowledge of His love and His care. The long, lush green pastures that nourish us is His word. As we feed upon God's Word, as we read it and chew it over in our minds and meditate upon it, we grow spiritually in our love for our Good Shepherd so that we can say, like David said, *Because the Lord is MY Shepherd, I have everything I need. I don't have to fear, I have no reason for conflict, and no pesky problems. I am free to gorge my inner self on His Word. I can feed my soul with the knowledge of God's love and care for me.*

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that we have peace with You because of what Jesus did for us. We are no longer enemies, but now I can call you Abba Father, my Good Shepherd. Thank you for providing spiritual rest. That gives us great joy deep down in our hearts. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Comfort in the Word

Children will look up scriptures showing how God gave freedom from *fear, friction, pests, and hunger*.

Give each child or group of children one scripture and allow them time to determine and discuss what God delivered the people from. Direct the children to summarize the scripture to the rest of the class and discuss how God provides freedom.

| Scripture | What God Delivered them From |
|-----------------|--|
| Judges 6:33-40 | (Gideon lays a fleece before God) Fear |
| 1 Kings 17:1-7 | (Elijah Fed by Ravens) Hunger |
| 2 Kings 4:38-41 | (Death in the Pot) Fear |
| 2 Kings 4:42-44 | (Feeding of a Hundred) Hunger |
| 2 Kings 5:1-14 | (Naaman Healed of Leprosy) Problematic Situation (Pest) |

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| 2 Kings 6:1-7 | (An Ax head Floats) Problematic Situation (Pest) |
| John 8:1-11 | (Jesus Forgives an Adulterous) Friction |

Stuff It!

Before class set up large fans, several large green garbage bags and many balloons. Blow the balloons up with air before class and label some of them with slogans like, *Rebellious, Unruly, Stubborn, Lazy, Fearful, or Unwilling*.

Tell the children that it's their job as the *shepherd* to gather the sheep (the balloons) and have them lie down in green pastures (the garbage bags). Start the fans and angle them so that the balloons are blown around the room and up in the air.

As an alternative, you can have them work in pairs and whichever team bags the most *sheep* wins! In addition, you can appoint one or two *wolfs* to attack the herd.

Or, use the following review questions in a time of discussion or a game of your choice:

1. What is one of the greatest pleasures a shepherd gets from his flock? (Seeing them contentedly resting.)
2. What four things keep sheep from resting? (Fear, friction with others in the flock, pests, and hunger.)
3. What are the some of the fears you face? (Worry about the "What-If's")
4. What kind of friction do you experience in your home or at school? (There's a bully, someone has to always be the winner.)

5. What helps you feel and know the comfort of the Lord?
(Remembering His goodness.)
6. What are some pesky problems you have that keep you from experiencing true rest in Jesus?
7. What are three things that keep us from feeding on God's word?
(Unbelief, bitterness, and pride.)
8. How does *unbelief* keep you from hungering for Jesus? (Not trusting that He will always be there for us)
9. How does *bitterness* keep you from hungering for Jesus? (Being angry with God for a disappointment in our life)
10. How does *pride* keep you from hungering for Jesus? (Thinking more of yourself than of God)
11. What was Jesus doing while the disciples were going out on the sea? (He went up on a mountain to pray.)
12. Why weren't the disciples getting very far in their rowing? (Storm)
13. What would it be like to be out in a bad storm in a rowboat? Would you be scared?
14. Who came walking out on the water? (Jesus)
15. What did the disciples think Jesus was when He came walking out on the water? (A ghost)
16. How did the Shepherd calm the disciples' fears when he came walking out on the water? (He said, "Don't be afraid. Take courage. I am here!")
17. If Jesus can calm the waves of a raging storm, what do you think He can do with any problems that keep you from trusting Him?

[For more lessons for children, visit
<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com.>]

