

# In the Presence of God

(Psalm 23:6b)

## Introduction

We've been learning the 23rd Psalm. So far, we've looked at the first five and ½ verses.

We have learned that this song David wrote isn't just talking about shepherds taking care of a flock of sheep. No, it's a beautiful picture of how well our Good Shepherd, Jesus, takes care of us.

Remember that this is David's little lamb that is speaking.

He says in Verse 1:

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (Psalm 23:1)*

He is bragging to all the poor sheep on the other side of the fence who don't have good shepherds. He's boasting that he is completely satisfied and contented because his shepherd supplies all his needs.

Next, he says in Verse 2:

*He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. (Psalm 23:2)*

David's little lamb is bragging that his shepherd completely satisfies his hunger and thirst, and this allows him to rest.

This reminds us that we are all born with a spiritual hunger and thirst to know God. We want to know what He looks like, what heaven is like, and most of all we want to know how to get there. Only our Good Shepherd can completely satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst and give us spiritual rest.

He says in Verse 3:

*He restores my soul. (Psalm 23:3a)*

David's little lamb is explaining how his shepherd tenderly and lovingly picks him up and gets him back on his feet if ever he gets cast down.

This is reassuring to us, too. When our relationship with our Good Shepherd is broken by our sin, He is always willing and able to pick us up and restore us to a right relationship with Him. (1 John 1:9)

In Verse 3, he goes on to say:

*He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Psm 23:3b)*

David's little lamb is instructing us that if we faithfully follow the Good Shepherd, He will guide us along the right paths in life so that our lives will bring honor to His name.

He says in Verse 4:

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; (Psalm 23:4a)*

David's sheep promises that when we walk through the dark valleys in our lives, we don't need to be afraid because our Good Shepherd is close by.

In Verse 4, he goes on to say:

*your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4b)*

David's little lamb is explaining that the Good Shepherd has given us the tools we need for life.

The "**rod**" is a picture of the Word of God which teaches us how to live a God-honoring life. Remember, the shepherd used his rod to herd the sheep to keep them from roaming out of the green pasture. He also used it like a wooden spoon to discipline the sheep when they were naughty.

And, the "**staff**" is a picture of the Holy Spirit, Who is our comforter. Remember how, when in a big herd of sheep, it brought them comfort to keep their eye on the shepherd. They knew that if they always followed him, he would take them to the place where the green grass grows and the quiet water runs.

He says in Verse 5:

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; (Psalm 23:5a)*

David's sheep is explaining that a good shepherd goes up to the mountain meadows to prepare them before he takes his flock up there. Remember, the shepherd made several trips up through the valley to the mountain meadows to scatter grass seed, pull out the poisonous weeds, and to destroy the predators like snakes in the grass, foxes, and wolves.

This reminds us of how our Good Shepherd, Jesus, has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us.

In Verse 5, he goes on to say:

*you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (Psalm 23:5b)*

This is a picture of being anointed with the Holy Spirit and filled with such blessing that it overflowed out of us onto others.

He says in Verse 6:

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, (Psalm 23:6a)*

David's little lamb is promising that when we follow our Good Shepherd and allow Him to take care of us, we will leave a trail of goodness and mercy behind us, like a jet leaves a vapor trail. Where ever we go and whoever we are with will be left with blessings.

Now in Verse 6 David comes to the last line of this beautiful song, he triumphantly shouts:

*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23:6b)*

Today as we close this lesson series, we will meditate on what it means to live in the presence of the Lord forever!

## Opening Prayer

Father, sow into our hearts this same kind of passion for Jesus that David had. Captivate our hearts with the knowledge of Your great love and care for us. Help us to really experience You, in all Your fullness and goodness, for Your name's sake. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*The one thing I ask of the Lord—the thing I seek most—is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in his Temple. (Psalm 27:4)*

## Lesson

David had truly experienced the fullness of God! And he was looking forward to spending all of eternity in the presence of the Almighty!

God has promised us a place in heaven for all eternity. Remember, Jesus said, *"I am going to prepare a place for you. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am."* (John 14:2-3 NLT) But, in order to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, we must be sure that we are one of Jesus' sheep. If you are not sure, you can be. All you must do is ask Jesus to be your Good Shepherd.

Romans 10:13

*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

God promises that whoever trusts and follows him will live with Him for all eternity.

When David says, *"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever,"* he is not only speaking of living in Heaven for all eternity after we die. He's also talking about life in the here and now on earth. He is saying, *"Through the rest of my days, I will live in the presence of the Lord."*

**Ask:** What do you think it means to live in the presence of the Lord?

We are to always be aware of God's presence—knowing that He is always with you and will never leave you. It's being content in the knowledge of His great love and care for you. Trusting that He has everything in your life under control.

Living the Christian life is not a list of *do's* and *don'ts*. It is not about hoping you won't get caught in a sin. It's about trusting that He will always care for you and provide for you, like a Good Shepherd. It's about knowing your Shepherd's voice, and joyfully desiring to live every day of your life in a way that pleases Him.

It's important to know that not everyone is going to live with God forever in Heaven.

Matthew 7:21-23

*"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. (22) On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from Me, you who break God's laws.'*

On the final day, when the Lord returns, everyone will stand before Jesus and give an account of his or her life. There is only one way to be sure you will go to be with Him forever—He must be your Lord, the Master of your life.

**Ask:** Have you come to Him in the quietness of your heart and asked Him to be the "boss" of your life?

When the Lord is your Shepherd, it should transform everything in your life—everything that you think, everything that you say, and everything that you do—the way you dress, the way you talk, and the choices you make, the friends you make, the things you like to do.

Jesus said that at the end of the age, He will come down and separate the true believers from the unbelievers, or *make believers*.

Matthew 25:31-34

*"But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. (32) All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. (34) "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.*

The "goats" will go away into eternal punishment, but the "sheep" will go into eternal life. Only the true sheep of the Lord will enter into heaven, but the others will be sent into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Ask:** Are you a true sheep of the Lord? Have you told Him you want to follow Him all the days of your life?

If you are truly one of His sheep, you will be living every day of your life in the presence of God. He wants you to know that He is with you every minute. He knows your every thought. He knows the motives of your heart. He's sharing in the joy of your victories; He's cheering for you when you need encouragement.

Living in the presence of God takes practice.

**Ask:** Do you have a best friend? What do you like best about your best friend? What do you like to do with your friend? [Discuss.]

Your best friend is the one that you want to share life with. It's your best friend that you want to spend time with and to talk to. Friendships take time to develop. You must spend time doing things together to make a lasting friendship. Well, Jesus wants to be your best friend.

Get in the habit of talking to Him all day long. Start before you get out of bed in the morning. You can talk to Him while you're taking a

shower or while you're on your way to school. God loves you and longs for your friendship. Fill your hearts and minds with thoughts of God. Remember all the wonderful ways that He has cared for you. Soon you will want to burst into song, like David, singing the song of the contented sheep. Let's all say it together...

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I 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 have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23)*

Wow! With a shepherd as good as all this, no wonder David ends this song with such passion! He is in awe of his wonderful Shepherd! He's a truly satisfied sheep!

## Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that You promise to never desert us or give up on us. Help us to practice living in Your presence every day of our life. We pray that many will come to know You as they observe us living in full assurance of Your provision in our life. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Game Center

#### "Sheep & Goats"

**Set Up:** Establish a large playing area. On one side of the playing area establish a "sheep fold" for the sheep. On the other side of the playing area establish a "pen" for the goats.

Appoint one child to be a "shepherd" and another child to be a "goat herdsman".

**How to Play:** The children begin at the center of the playing area with the "shepherd" and the "herdsman" standing to the sides. At "Go", teacher yells, "*Divide the sheep and goats!*" At which point the "shepherd" and the "herdsman" attempt to tag the "sheep" and "goats" by sticking them with a color-coded piece of tape. If a shepherd tags a "sheep," that child goes to the sheep fold. If the herdsman tags a "goat", that child goes to the goat pen as designated before the game began.

Once all the children are in their respective "pens", count to see which team has the most children.

Let the children take turns being the "shepherd" and the "herdsman".

**After the Game:** Ask the players, "When the end of the age comes, what do you want to be, a *sheep* or a *goat*? Obviously, we all want to be *sheep*. How can we be sure we are one of God's sheep? Ask Jesus to be your Good Shepherd."

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

1. What do you think David meant when he said, "*I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*"? (David is not only speaking of living in Heaven after you die. He's also talking about life in the here and now. He's saying that I will live in the presence of the Lord all the rest of my life on earth.)
2. In order to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, what must you be sure of? (That you are one of the Lord's sheep.)
3. How do you become one of the Lords' sheep? (By asking Him to be your Lord and Savior.)

4. What does it mean to believe on Jesus? (To trust that when He was crucified on the cross, He took the full punishment for your sins.)
5. What does it mean to live in the presence of God? (Living every moment of every day knowing that He is with you and will never leave you. It's being content in the knowledge of His great love and care for you.)
6. How can you practice the presence of God? (Get into the habit of talking to Him all day long.)
7. What part of Psalm 23 is your favorite?

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