



January 22, 2017

Psalm 23:1-2

"The Song of a Shepherd" Part 1

Pastor Gary Hamrick

The 23rd Psalm is probably the most familiar psalm in the Bible, and that's because most people have heard it read at a funeral. But Psalm 23 isn't about death; it's about life. It's about how we are like sheep and God is like a shepherd who lovingly, tenderly takes care of us. Today's message by Pastor Gary is the first in a three-part series on Psalm 23.

Historical Background

1. David wrote this psalm about the ways the Lord restores, guides, leads, and comforts.
2. Since David was a shepherd long before he was a king, he was well acquainted with what the relationship between a shepherd and the sheep under his care looked like.
3. There are quite a few biblical references to people being like sheep, including:
 - a. **Isaiah 53:6** - *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way..."*
 - b. **Psalm 79:13** - *"Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will praise you forever..."*
 - c. **1 Peter 2:25** - *"For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."*
 - d. **Hebrews 13:20-21** - *"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will..."*

- e. [John 10:14-15](#) - Jesus said: *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

Facts About Sheep

4. Sheep Are Senseless

- a. Sheep get lost very easily, and they are one of only a few animals that have no internal compass.
- b. Once lost, they have no clue as to where they are or how to find their way home.
- c. Sheep don't know how to find food and water on their own!
- d. Sheep travel in a group, and when one moves they all move, which can sometimes spell disaster.
 - i. Pastor Gary referred to an incident in Turkey in which 1,500 sheep went over a cliff! ¹

5. Sheep Are Defenseless

- a. Some creatures can change colors, go under water, run fast, growl, or bear their teeth in order to put up a defense, so to speak, but sheep can't do any of these things, which renders them completely defenseless.
- b. The only reaction sheep have to danger is to huddle together and bleat!
- c. Sheep are extremely vulnerable to predatory animals.

6. Sheep Are Fearful

- a. Sheep have exceptional hearing, so faint or loud noises of every description cause them to be jittery all the time.
- b. Sheep have remarkable peripheral vision, but they have poor depth perception, which makes them uncertain and fearful of what's in front of them.
- c. One visible sign of their fearfulness is that they never walk in a straight line; they walk in a zigzag pattern, because they are constantly looking back to see if they are in danger from predators.

7. Sheep Are Dirty

- a. Sheep naturally secrete lanolin, which causes their wool to be like a magnet for dirt, debris of all kinds, etc.

¹ http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/offbeat/2005-07-08-sheep-suicide_x.htm

The Song of a Shepherd

8. **Psalm 23:1a** - *"The Lord is my shepherd..."* NKJV (Emphasis added)
- The Lord is not just a shepherd or one of many shepherds; David wrote that the Lord was his shepherd.
 - David had a personal relationship with the Lord, his shepherd.
 - We understand from this verse that we belong to the Lord and he belongs to us.
 - Song of Songs 6:3a** - *"I am my beloved's, And my beloved is mine..."* NKJV
 - Luke 15:3** - *"Then Jesus told them this parable: 'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."*
 - Pastor Gary said: "If you've ever felt like you were just a number [to] God [or] if you've ever felt like you were lost among [7.5] billion people on this planet, and [you wonder] how could God possibly care about me? If you've ever thought [this way], I want you to hear what Jesus [was] saying in this parable in Luke 15... [What Jesus was] communicating to us is that God, like a shepherd, loves us so much, and [he's] so concerned about us individually [and] uniquely, that he will go to the ends of the earth, if necessary, to win us over... He loves us and he knows us, and he knit us together in our mother's womb... He knows us by name and [he knows] every hair on our head. He is infinitely and intimately acquainted with [us]. And because David [understood this] he could say, 'The Lord is my shepherd.' "
 - Psalm 100:3** - *"Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture."*
9. **Psalm 23:1b** - *"I shall not want."* NKJV
- Psalm 34:10** - *"The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing."*
 - Psalm 84:11** - *"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless."*
 - James 1:7** - *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."*

- d. **Philippians 4:19** - *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”*
 - e. Pastor Gary said: “We need to get off the ‘complain train’ and start praising God for all that we have!”
10. **Psalm 23:2** - *“He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters.”* NKJV
- a. Sheep don’t lie down of their own volition.
 - b. Hungry sheep will never lie down, which means their shepherd must provide food and water in order to make it so they will be content.
 - c. Fearful sheep will never lie down, which means their shepherd must bring them to a place of quiet, where the water is still, because running water makes sheep skittish.
 - d. Agitated and distressed sheep will never lie down, which means the shepherd must create an environment that helps his sheep understand that he will take care of every need.
11. **Psalm 23:3a** - *“He restores my soul...”* NKJV
- a. Pastor Gary said: “God is the restorer of our souls. He takes broken people, [who] are worn out from life, and he breathes new life in [them], and he gives [them] a new chance... If you know Christ as your Savior, then you know what I’m talking about, because, apart from Christ, you will never find a satisfaction for the deepest longings of your soul. People will go in search of all kinds of things trying to satisfy the deepest longings of [their] soul, [but] I’m here to tell you [that] those things will only temporarily satisfy, and then they will show themselves to be insufficient. The only true satisfaction to the deepest longings of the human soul is a relationship with [Jesus, the] good Shepherd.”

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 23** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Read and discuss the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared regarding people being compared to sheep. (See #3 above)

4. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had when they recognized how much like sheep they were regarding being directionless, defenseless, and fearful. (See #4 through #7 above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the way the Lord knows about and cares for every single person. (See #8e above)
6. What are some of the ways you've experienced the Lord's loving kindness and care, which demonstrate that he is your shepherd?
7. Read and discuss [James 1:7](#) and [Philippians 4:19](#).
8. Spend time talking about the remarks Pastor Gary made concerning a number interesting facts about sheep and their inability to *"lie down in green pastures... beside still waters."* (See #10 above)
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the Lord being the restorer of our souls. (See #11 above)
10. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).