

**January 3, 2021  
Overcoming Worry**

What are things you find yourself worrying about?

Family	Hearing the news about COVID-19
Friends	Waiting for news from the doctor
Health	Crime
Retirement	Economy
Driving in heavy traffic	Our nation

Today we look at Psalm 23. It is one of the most beloved passages in Scripture. It assures us of the rest and comfort we have in God. God cares and is greater than any issue that causes us to worry. Worry is not good for us. According to the National Institute of Health, chronic stress and worrying leads to a weak immune system, making us have colds or other infections. Worry can also cause high blood pressure, ulcers, acid reflux, cardio-vascular problems, irritable bowel, backaches, headaches, respiratory problems and even skin conditions.

The antidote for this is “trust in God.”

**Today’s Point: God’s presence provides a way out of worry.**

**Psalm 23:1-3** The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters, 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

David, the writer of Psalm 23, was a shepherd. He understood the responsibilities of taking care of the sheep, and he wrote a Psalm comparing a shepherd to the Lord who cares for us. David had plenty of time to observe the relationship between the sheep and a shepherd. People who read the psalm will understand the parallel of God caring for us.

What responsibilities did the shepherd have in caring for the sheep?

- feed the sheep                      keep them safe
- water the sheep                      keep them from straying away

What do we know about sheep?

They require food: Shepherds cleared the land and planted and watered the seeds to provide fodder or grass.
They require water: Sheep are afraid of running water. The shepherd would find the best watering places. Shepherds would sometimes dam up a rushing stream to provide peaceful waters.
They needed direction: Sheep do not have a sense of direction.
They refuse to lie down until they are free of fear. They will not lie down when they are hungry.
They will die if they get on their back and cannot get back up.

As our shepherd, God provides for us, guides us and renews us. Paul wrote, “And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). The shepherd would use his staff to guide his sheep. His hook could pull the sheep out of a hole or a ravine. God desires to guide us through life. His presence can guide us back on the right path. He can restore us, help us to feel joy in our life and renew us.

By God’s presence in our life, we experience renewal. Taking time to rest, study and reflect on God’s presence helps us to feel renewed. God will help us through our struggles and our worries. We need to trust Him.

**Psalm 23:4-5** Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

No matter what we are going through in life, we are not alone; God is with us. As our Shepherd, God protects us, gives comfort, gives courage and walks with us.

What might be the dark times David alluded to in verse 4?

- spiritual failure in his relationship with Bathsheba
- confronting wild animals while protecting his sheep
- confronting Goliath
- falling out with his son Absalom and his followers
- when Saul tried to kill him, chased him through the wilderness with a whole army
- when he faced the death of a child

Why was he convinced he had no cause to fear?

- God is with him
- God’s rod or club protects him
- God’s staff (shepherd’s crook) rescues him
- God provides food, nourishment right in the middle of a dangerous situation

What might the rod and staff represent?

- the rod was like a club to fight off dangerous animals
- the staff/shepherds crook was used to guide or to reach out and rescue sheep
- God can reach down wherever we are and pull us out of a bad situation
- God guides, directs, nudges us in the direction we should go
- God sends someone to help us at just the right time

How can we intentionally enjoy or practice being in God’s presence?

- daily reading of His Word                      praising Him often, thanksgiving
- meditation on those passages                worship Him in song
- memorizing scripture                            prayer

**Psalm 23:6** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

David recognizes the security that comes from being in a relationship with the Lord. He plans to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” By staying in God’s presence, he will trust in God’s love and power and authority in his life. God’s goodness and love will follow or *pursue* us.

What would be better about God pursuing us rather than us pursuing Him?

- we might give up, God does not
- God knows where to “find” us ... sometimes we might be confused or upset and think God has left us
- God’s pursuit is consistent, ours might be intermittent

God desires to be our Shepherd. We can trust His goodness and faithful love. God is our guide through whatever things we experience. We have assurance of the Lord’s presence with us throughout this life, and we anticipate eternity when we will be in His presence forever.

How can we help each other feel more confident in God’s love?

- remind one another of these Truths
- encourage one another
- pray for one another
- help each other in times of need
- allow God to use you as His “rod and staff”

## Application

### Identify

- Identify the things you worry about.
- Turn that list into a prayer list.
- Trust God to work in each situation.

### Study

- Philippians 4:6-7: “Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

### Encourage

- Pray for others.
- Help others to trust God in whatever situation they are facing.