

Supplementary Facilitators Notes.

GETTING STARTED

To the facilitator: Use this section to introduce the topic. If possible, give a brief recap of the sermon.

Share a memorable point, a spiritual lesson, a personal application, a question, or something that challenged you from the sermon last Sunday.

Think back over your week. When did you feel most rested? What made that moment restful for you?

GROUP DISCUSSION

As a group, memorize Psalms 23:1-2.

1. Phillip Keller in his book notes that sheep needs four requirements for rest. They won't lie down if they are in (1) fear, have (2) relationship problems, (3) plagued by external parasites and (4) hungry. Which of the four do you struggle most these days? **Four group discussion.**

W. Phillip Keller, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23

Here's the exact quote from the book (page 33):

The strange thing about sheep is that because of their very makeup, it is almost impossible for them to be made to lie down unless four requirements are met.

Owing to their timidity they refuse to lie down unless they are free of all fear.

Because of the social behavior within a flock, sheep will not lie down unless they are free from friction with others of their kind.

If tormented by flies or parasites, sheep will not lie down. Only when free of these pests can they relax.

Lastly, sheep will not lie down as long as they feel in need of finding food. They must be free from hunger.

It is significant that to be at rest there must be a definite sense of freedom from fear, tension, aggravations, and hunger. The unique aspect of the picture is that it is only the sheepman himself who can provide release from these anxieties. It all depends upon the diligence of the owner whether or not his flock is free from disturbing influences.

2. What are some ways that you have sought rest outside of the Lord as a response to your exhaustion or frustration, either today or at some point in the past? **For group discussion.**

W. Phillip Keller, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23

But the irony of life, and tragic truth for most Christians, is that this is not so. They often try, instead, to satisfy their thirst by pursuing every other sort of substitute. For their minds and intellects they will pursue knowledge, science, academic careers, vociferous reading, or off-beat companions. But they are always left panting and dissatisfied.

Some of my friends have been among the most learned and highly respected scientists and professors in the country. Yet about them there is often a strange yearning, an unsatisfied thirst which all their learning, all their knowledge, all their achievements have not satisfied.

To appease the craving of their souls and emotions, men and women will turn to the arts, to culture, to music, to literary forms, trying to find fulfilment. ...

And amid all this chaos of a confused, sick society, Christ comes quietly as of old and invites us to come to him. He invites us to follow him. He invites us to put our confidence in him. For it is he who best knows how we can be satisfied. He knows that the human heart, the human personality, the human soul with its amazing capacity for God can never be satisfied with a substitute. Only the Spirit and life of Christ himself will satisfy the thirsting soul.

3. In what ways did the explanation of “green pastures” in the Negev help you better understand the biblical image of God being our Good Shepherd who can be trusted to provide and care for his sheep?

Ray Vander Laan, Prophets & Kings

The Myth of Green Pastures

Although we might think that the “green pastures” David mentioned in Psalm 23 refer to tall, lush grasslands like those in North America and other locations, the truth is that such grasslands don't exist in Israel. The regions in Israel where shepherds live have two seasons: the rainy season from November through March (when even the desert becomes green) and the dry season from April through October when the landscape is brown. Even during the rainy season, the grasses remain short. Sheep that graze in the marginal areas of the wilderness receive enough nourishment for the moment ... but no more. Day to day, the sheep depend on their shepherd to lead them to the food and water they need.

Max Lucado, Traveling Light

Green pastures were not the natural terrain of Judea. The hills around Bethlehem where David kept his flock were not lush and green. Even today they are white and parched. Any green pasture in Judea is the work of some shepherd. He has cleared the rough, rocky land. Stumps have been torn out, and brush has been burned. Irrigation. Cultivation. Such are the work of the shepherd.

Hence, when David says, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures,” he is saying, “My shepherd makes me lie down in his finished work.” With his own pierced hands, Jesus created a pasture for the soul. He tore out the thorny underbrush of condemnation. He pried loose the huge boulders of sin. In their place he planted seeds of grace and dug ponds of mercy.

And he invites us to rest there. Can you imagine the satisfaction in the heart of the shepherd, when, with work completed, he sees his sheep rest in the tender grass?

Can you imagine the satisfaction in the heart of God when we do the same? His pasture is his gift to us. This is not a pasture that you have made. Nor is it a pasture that you deserve. It is a gift of God. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8 NIV)

In a world rocky with human failure, there is a land lush with divine mercy. Your Shepherd invites you there. He wants you to lie down. Nestle deeply until you are hidden, buried, in the tall shoots of his love, and there you will find rest.

4. Read Exodus 16:13-20. [Error note: I wrote Exodus 17 in YouVersion] If you had been an Israelite, how much manna would you have gathered? In our culture, do you think it is possible to live “one day at a time” and trust God to lead and provide?

Ray Vander Laan, Prophets & Kings

In Exodus 16:4-5,13-26, we read that God – the Good Shepherd – provided bread and quail from heaven so that his people had food to eat everyday. The Israelites were to take what they needed for that day ... and no more. When some of the people took more than they needed – just to make sure they'd have enough for the next day – the food they tried to store became full of maggots and smelled awful. For forty years God, the Shepherd of Israel, provided manna to nourish his people.

Knowing that our human tendency is to worry about the future, Jesus also reminded his followers of how important it is to trust God to meet our daily needs. He taught that it is more important to seek God and his righteousness than to worry about our future needs. Because God is our Shepherd, he knows exactly what we need. We can trust him to meet our needs today ... and tomorrow. "Therefore," Jesus said, "do not worry about tomorrow" (Matthew 6:34).

5. From a practical standpoint, how is it possible to plan ahead and set goals while following the Shepherd of your life? For group discussion.
6. What lesson did you learn about the "quiet waters"? Read John 14:27. How would you differentiate the peace that Jesus offers and the peace that the world offers? How can you tell if you are walking in the peace of Christ? (Can you share an experience?)

David Palmer, Beside Still Waters

Shepherds know that when it comes to drinking water, sheep very much prefer still waters. They do not like rushing streams at all, because the turbulent water makes them fear that they might be swept away. For centuries, shepherds in the Middle East, if they needed to water their sheep at a fast-flowing stream, have responded to that situation by putting rocks or sod in the water to make a little dam in order to create a quiet pool along the edge of the stream. I wonder if David had this practice in mind when he spoke of God leading to still waters. The waters may be turbulent, but the shepherd can still the waters. Indeed the Hebrew translated "still waters" could also be translated "stilled waters"—rough waters that have been quieted. The Lord our shepherd is who can quiet the threatening turbulence of life.

Dr. Steven Lawson, Our Great Shepherd: Feeding and Leading

In the second line, David says, "He leads me beside quiet waters" (verse 2). As country streams flow through pastures, there are narrow places where the rocks cause the flow of water to back up—and be still and "quiet." That is where the shepherd would lead His flock. He does not guide them where the swift currents make the sheep to be fearful. They will not drink or be able to rest there. Instead, he ushers his flock to places where the waters are peaceful and calming.

By this analogy, David states that God is leading him into His perfect peace. Even when the circumstances around him were raging, he possessed a God-given tranquility of heart that only He can give. Jesus promises, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27). Jesus, our good shepherd, leads us to experience His supernatural peace, something this world cannot give.

Allan Luciano, The Shepherd and His Sheep

The gentle care of the Lord is also echoed by the second half of verse two, "He leads me beside still waters." Unlike other animals, sheep cannot find water on their own. This further highlights the helplessness and utter dependence of sheep upon their shepherd. Like all living creatures, they need water, but they can't get water on their own. So the good shepherd leads them to "still waters." Sheep don't swim and are naturally afraid of running streams or rivers. To "still" the water, some shepherds would actually create a small dam upstream from where the sheep are, slowing the flow of the stream so that the sheep may safely drink.

The picture painted of God in verse two shows that he is lavish in his care, patience, and attentiveness to his sheep. He provides everything they need to live, and his provision is done with much care and affection. This is how God is to his people. This is how God is to followers of Jesus Christ. Is this your experience with the Lord? If not, I ask again, are you his sheep?

7. Discuss. "Fear determines and drives much of what we do or don't do. Fear stops us from living fully, from living fruitfully, from living faithfully." For group discussion.

8. **[NEXT STEPS]**

All promises of rest apart from Christ are ultimately empty.

- I will seek to listen to the voice of my Shepherd.
- I will learn contentment from my Shepherd.
- I will surrender my fears to my Shepherd.
- I will find my rest only in my Shepherd.

Don't forget to:

- Go through the devotionals everyday this week.
- Have a regular daily time of prayer and reading of God's Word.
- Commit 30 minutes a day for God's intervention in this fight against the COVID virus.

CLOSING THE SESSION.

Close the session by taking the time to pray for one another. Consider the following as you pray:

- Pray for a heart of contentment and freedom from fear as you rest in the Shepherd.
- Take the time to pray for our nation, for peace and for the gospel to prosper during this time of the pandemic.
- Pray for those who are hurting, going through fear, worry and anxiety in the group.
- Pray for your unsaved family, friends and loved ones.



PSALM 23:1-6 ESV

¹ A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

PSALM 23:1-6 ESV

² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

PSALM 23:1-6 ESV

⁴ 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 23:1-6 ESV

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

PSALM 23:1-6 ESV

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



The clock is my dictator; I shall not rest.
It makes me lie down only when exhausted;
It leads me to deep depression,
It hounds my soul;

It leads me in circles of frenzy for activity sake;
Even though I run frantically from task to task, I will never get it all done,
For my "ideal" is with me;
Deadlines and my need for approval, they drive me.

They demand performance from me, beyond the limits of my schedule;

They anoint my head with migraines;

My messenger and email inbox overflows;

Surely fatigue and time pressure shall follow me all the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the bonds of frustration forever.

(Author Unknown)

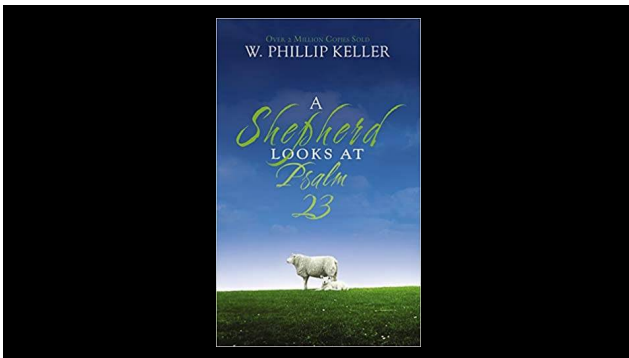
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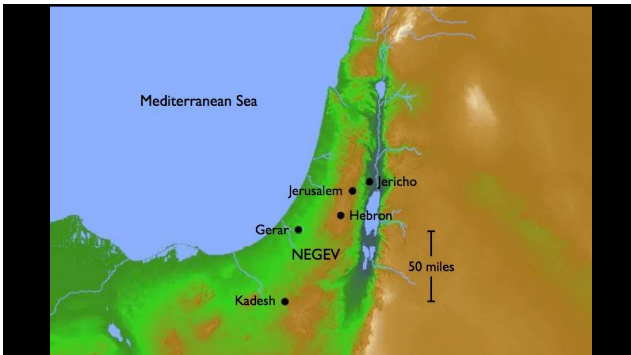




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PSALM 23:2 ESV

² He **makes** me lie down in green pastures. He **leads** me beside still waters.

JOHN 10:3 ESV

³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The **sheep hear his voice**, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

JOHN 10:27 ESV

²⁷ My **sheep hear my voice**, and I know them, and they follow me.

PSALM 8:3-4 ESV

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

PSALM 8:3-4 ESV

⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

God's call to rest is neither duty nor discipline but a response.

MATTHEW 11:28-30 ESV

²⁸ "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

MATTHEW 11:28-30 ESV

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."



PSALM 23:2 ESV

² He makes me lie down in **green pastures**. He leads me beside still waters.









PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13 NIV

¹⁰ I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13 NIV

¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13 NIV

¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13 NIV

¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.



PSALM 23:2 ESV

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PSALM 23:2 ESV

² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

PSALM 4:8 ESV

⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

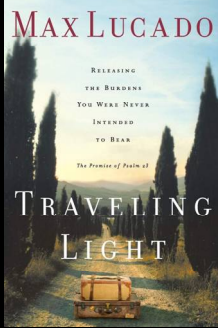
"An uncertain future leaves us stranded in an unhappy present with nothing to do but wait." (Daniel Gilbert)

DEUTERONOMY 31:8 ESV

⁸ It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

"Only he who can say, 'The Lord is the strength of my life,' can say, 'Of whom shall I be afraid?'"

(Alexander MacLaren)



"What you have in your Shepherd is greater than what you don't have in life."

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

For the week of May 16-22, 2021

"GREEN PASTURES & QUIET WATERS"

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