

Psalm 23

L-3: Green Pastures

A. Outline of lesson:

1. Sheep cannot lie down and rest unless:
 - a. They are not afraid in the night
 - b. They are not infested with bugs
 - c. They are not fighting among themselves
 - d. They are not hungry
2. God solves each of these problems for us
 - a. Safety at night, Ps 4:8
 - b. Cares about our 'bugs', 1 Pet 5:7
 - c. Disciplines the arrogant; gives grace to the humble, 1 Pet 5:5b
 - d. God's Word is our green grass, Isa 55:2b

B. Bible verse: [Psalm 23:2a He makes me to lie down in green pastures](#)"

The 'memory requirement' for a sticker this week is: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

C. Review:

1. Why do sheep need a shepherd? How do we become a sheep belonging to the Good Shepherd?
2. Contentment, logistical grace, the desires of your heart.

D. The Lesson:

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures ..." One of the things our Lord, the Good Shepherd, does for us is He gives us green pastures so we can 'lie down' and rest. It is very important that a shepherd do this for his sheep because sheep have many fears. When a sheep is worried or afraid, he can't lie down. A fearful sheep or a worried sheep can't get any rest. A good shepherd knows all about his sheep. He knows they can't protect themselves, and that scares them. He knows they worry when they are hungry because they don't know how to find their own food. He knows that they don't know what to do when flies crawl up their noses. Their tails are not long enough to swat the flies away, so they fret and become upset without being able to solve their own problem. A good shepherd also knows that sometimes an older sheep get bossy and disturbs a younger sheep. This bothers the younger sheep because he doesn't know what to do. Whenever a sheep is worried because he is hungry, or scared at night, or has bugs in his wool, or is upset because another sheep is picking on him, he can't lie down in the green grass. A troubled sheep cannot rest in green pastures, so a good shepherd must solve each of these problems. Then, and only then, will his sheep lie down in green pastures ... and rest.

Sheep are easily scared of the dark. 'Monsters' come in the night and frighten the sheep. These monsters may be a cougar or a lion after a tasty new baby lamb, or a bear that wants a big meal, like an adult ewe. But, even the smallest noise will frighten a sheep. A little jackrabbit

To the teacher:

Present the gospel and information about salvation as often as the Holy Spirit prompts you. Those who have never believed will have the opportunity and those who have will learn a little bit more about their so great salvation.

Begin every lesson with confession – the naming of sins to God. This insures the filling of the Holy Spirit for the teaching of God's Word. It may be necessary to repeat this process throughout the lesson so learning will be maximized.

These lessons are consecutive and build on the previous lessons. It will be helpful for you to look over the previous lesson, so you can see their continuity.

One of our objectives is to have the children memorize the entire Psalm, which has only 6 verses. To help encourage this we have a "Psalm 23 chart" with each phrase and a place for a 'lambie sticker' when each part is memorized. With each consecutive week, the child needs to say everything so far and the newest part learned in the previous lesson. Then, a sticker can be put in the corresponding box.

Doctrinal materials for this series were taken from R.B.Thieme's study of the 23rd Psalm (Spiritual Dynamics 232-251) and [A Shepherd Looks as Psalm 23](#) by Phillip Keller

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can jump into a pasture and startle a sheep. He will immediately start running and before you know it, the whole flock is trying to get away from the fearsome jackrabbit. Because sheep are frightened so easily, a good shepherd sleeps outside with the sheep, watching over his flock by night. He is always alert, even while he sleeps, for any sound or danger that may cause his sheep to panic. With the shepherd there, the sheep can relax knowing they are protected, because he is close by. They are no longer worried by the scary sounds of the night. They hear his soothing voice telling them that he is near and now they lie down in the green pastures and sleep. A sheep loves the sound of his own shepherd's voice singing in the night. A baby lamb lying in the shepherd's arms snuggles down and falls asleep. The momma sheep doses off also, knowing her baby is safe in the shepherd's arms. We have a Good Shepherd who also takes care of us. He has promised to keep us safe from danger. In God's Word, our Good Shepherd tells us that we can lie down and go to sleep at night, not worrying about frightening sounds or the unknown things of the dark. When we, as human-sheep, learn His words, we can hear Him singing softly to us in the night, too. The sound of 'His Voice' comforts us. And, just like the baby lamb, we can fall asleep, knowing that we are perfectly safe in His arms.

"In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

Sheep can't lie down and rest when there are flies swarming in their faces or crawling up their noses. Ticks bite and hurt. When this happens the only thing a sheep can do is twitch and try to find a rough thorn bush on which to scratch. This only rips up the skin beneath their wool coats, making them hurt even more. Sheep cannot relax when they have problems that are irritating and bugging them. A good shepherd is constantly checking his sheep for parasites and insects that are biting and eating his sheep. He rubs oil or insecticide on them. This protects them from the little itchy problems in their lives. Our Good Shepherd cares very much about all our problems in life, whether they be a little thing that is bugging us, or whether it be a big lion trying to devour us. He tells us to trust Him with the problem and let Him take care of it. He wants us to lie down and relax in the soft green grass.

"Cast all your anxieties [worries, cares (bugs)] upon Him, for He has an intense concern for all of you." 1 Peter 5:7

Sometimes the sheep can't lie down and rest because they are fighting among themselves. In a flock of sheep, very often one old ewe (girl sheep) thinks she's the boss and starts 'butting the other sheep around'. She may see a younger sheep grazing and decide that she wants that patch of grass, so she'll tilt her head, dilate her eyes, walk very stiffly, and say in her sheep way, "Move over! I want this grass!" Then, if the other sheep doesn't move, she will actually butt her with her head until she moves out of the way and gives her what she wants. When this happens the other sheep doesn't know what to do. She becomes restless and irritable. If the bossy sheep is allowed to continue, the other sheep stop eating and lose weight. The funny thing is that even sheep know this is wrong, for when the shepherd comes into view, the bossy sheep stops butting the others and the other sheep begin to relax again. The presence of the shepherd stops the fighting. People are just like sheep. We want

In Ezekiel 34:15-24 God describes His people as doing this among themselves, just as sheep fight over who is 'top sheep' in the flock. *"Because you push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad," Ezekiel 34:21*

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our own way and are determined to stand up for our rights. But the Bible tells us that God wants His sheep to lie down and rest, trusting that He will defend us. God never tells us to stand up for our rights or fight to get our own way. Do you know what a good shepherd does when a bossy sheep won't stop pushing the other sheep around? He smacks the sheep with his rod of discipline. This teaches the sheep not to be arrogant. This teaches the sheep to stop taking the best for himself or demanding his own way. It is the humble sheep that can relax and enjoy the green grass, not the arrogant sheep. Our Good Shepherd teaches us to be humble, too. In fact, the Bible says that God makes war against the arrogant, bossy sheep, but He gives grace to the humble, obedient sheep.

“...for God makes war against the arrogant, but He gives grace to the humble.”

1 Peter 5:5b

However, the main reason sheep can't lie down and rest occurs when they are hungry. When a sheep is hungry, he is constantly foraging for something to eat. His tummy is growling. He is not satisfied or content. He must keep searching for something to eat. In Bible lands, especially in areas like Bethlehem, where David was a shepherd, the ground is scorched and dry. Very little grass grows and green pastures are rare. About the only way a shepherd can provide luscious green pastures for his sheep is to grow them himself. This means that often he must search out a large piece of land that he can use for his sheep. Then he must haul off all the big rocks. He must pull up the dead trees and stumps and the sticker bushes. He must plow the soil and plant the kinds of grasses that are good for sheep. He has to dig water trenches and pray for rain so the plants will grow. It takes a lot of work to provide green pastures for sheep. Sometimes the shepherd will search through hills and mountains just to find a good valley, one with a spring and naturally growing grass. Then, he will take his sheep on the long journey to the good pasture. He will need to find lots of grazing places along the way, so the sheep won't be hungry as they travel to the good places.

*It is only in the green pastures that a sheep can eat, be filled, and actually lie down and rest. For a sheep's body to grow and become fat and healthy, it must be able to eat quite a bit all at once. Then, the sheep needs to lie down and let the food digest. This is how a sheep's body best uses its food. This is how he becomes healthy and strong. But mostly, this is how a sheep becomes content and happy. The sheep that never gets enough to eat never gets to lie down and rest, for he is always looking for more; he is always hungry. This is what the 'lie down and rest' part of this psalm means. God knows that human-sheep need to eat spiritual food, and lots of it. Spiritual food is the information in God's Word, the Bible. It is the words that teach us God's thoughts. When a human-sheep eats a good meal of thick green grass from the Bible, just like you are doing right now in Bible class, the human-sheep's tummy (his heart-thinking) becomes full and very satisfied. Then, the human-sheep can lie down and rest. This is when we 'digest' the food. Digesting the 'green grass' of God's Word means that we, the Lord's sheep, think about and remember all the thoughts and words He has just taught us. As we rest and digest our spiritual food, we learn to trust our Shepherd. We practice believing that His word – our luscious green grass – is true. We depend on it. We have confidence that all He says will come true. We have faith in our Good Shepherd and we have faith in His Words. We **eat**; we have **faith**; we **rest**. This is the Good Shepherd's plan for us, His human-sheep. **“He makes me to lie down in green pastures”** actually has three steps. First, He feeds us His Words. Second, we*

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believe His Words. And, third, we rest in His words. **Learning** God's promises, such as how to sleep in the night, or how to give Him your troubles, or that God gives grace to the humble is eating green grass. **Believing** that the promises are true is digesting the food. And, **lying down to rest** is trusting in Him – all worry is gone, all fear is gone, all fighting is gone, and you are no longer hungry for Truth.

“Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance.” Isaiah 55:2b

The green grass of God's Word also does a few other things for us, as human-sheep. It clears out all the stones of unbelief that are scattered in our mental fields. It digs up the roots of bitterness and anger. It breaks up the stubborn hard soil of bad attitudes that live in our thinking. God's Word tills and waters the dry desert soil of a hard heart. Then, God's Word plants new seeds of good words about Him, so we can eat and grow strong and be happy. The Good Shepherd actually plants the wonderful green pastures into your own soul – in your thinking. With God's Word growing in your thinking you have lovely green pastures everywhere you go, for they are in your thoughts and in your heart and mind. Not only does our Shepherd make us lie down in green pastures, but He actually turns our thinking into those green pastures. No matter what happens, no matter what fearsome enemies attack in the night, or how the bugs of life bite, or why other people are mean and cruel – you will always have plenty of green grass to eat. You will always be able to lie down and rest, knowing that the Good Shepherd will take care of all your needs – and you shall never be in want!

“Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” Psalm 100:3

Craft: Begin making the “23rd Psalm Play-box”

Coloring Picture: Sheep lying in green pastures coloring picture

Take-home pamphlet:

This little pamphlet is a short version of this lesson, a picture to color, a puzzle to do, and a question and answer section at the end. It is designed to be given to the children at the end of class. However, if you need to fill time, you can give it out early. A child can read the story and all the children can work together to answer the questions on the back.

Psalm 23, literal translation from the original Hebrew

A song of David

The Lord is the One shepherding me

I cannot and do not lack for anything.

He causes me to lie down in pastures of choice grass