

## Psalm 23

### L-4: Beside Still Waters

#### A. Outline of lesson:

1. Importance of good, clean, pure water, [Isa 55:1a](#)
2. The Shepherd leads; the sheep must follow, [Prov 3:5-6](#)
3. Grass and water = BD and HS
  - a. Dew, [John 13:26](#)
  - b. Deep well waters, [1 Cor 2:10](#)
  - c. Mountain streams and springs, [Eph 4:23](#)
4. We need all three systems of spiritual water
  - a. Dew = learning doctrine while filled with the Spirit, [John 4:24](#)
  - b. Deep waters = harder doctrine, mostly how the HS helps us apply doctrine we know, [John 16:13](#), [1 Cor 2:10](#)
  - c. Mountain streams = easy, fun, refreshing pleasures, [Jer 29:11](#); [Prov 3:7-8](#)

#### B. Bible verse: [Psalm 23:2b](#) “He leads me beside still waters”

The ‘memory requirement’ for a sticker this week is: “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures”

#### 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.
3. To lie down and rest means there is no fear, no infestation, no fighting, and no hunger.
4. Review the quiz page of last week’s booklet

#### D. The Lesson:

*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*

*He leads me to waters of refreshment ...*

*We have learned that the Lord is our Shepherd and He keeps shepherding us. This means that He never becomes tired of being our Shepherd. He never takes a day off; He never falls asleep on the job (Ps 121:4). Our Shepherd provides everything we need. He provides us with so much there is nothing left to want. He makes sure we get plenty of green grass to eat. And, He causes us to rest and relax. Today we are going to learn that our Shepherd does even more than this for us – He leads us to pure water.*

#### 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 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm (Spiritual Dynamics 232-251) and [A Shepherd Looks as Psalm 23](#) by Phillip Keller

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*There are two 'food types' that sheep need – grass and water. Both are absolutely necessary. Grass will sit in a sheep's tummy and make him sick if there isn't enough water to digest it, and if all a sheep does is drink water, then he is getting no nourishment, for the sustenance is in the grass. God designed the sheep's body to need both grass and water. When David describes himself as one of the Lord's sheep resting in green pastures he means that God has provided lots of Bible doctrine for him to 'eat'. He, the sheep, has eaten of God's Word and is enjoying that wonderful full feeling you have after a big meal. He is lying down in the green pastures of his soul and relaxing. The very next thought that comes to David's mind is the importance of the cool refreshing waters – he needs to drink from these also.*

*"Pay attention! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters," Isaiah 55:1a*

*A sheep's body is about 70% water. All this water keeps him healthy and feeling good. It helps him metabolize (digest) the green grass. It keeps his muscles strong and supple at the same time. When a sheep becomes dehydrated (loses too much water), his muscles stiffen up and he can't move or run easily. He becomes weak and vulnerable to predator animals. Water gives the sheep his energy and vitality. Being thirsty is the sheep's warning sign that his body has lost too much water and it is time to drink. When sheep are thirsty they become restless. But, they don't know how to find good water; in fact they don't know how to find water at all. A thirsty sheep will drink from any dirty pest-infested mud hole he sees. The sheep doesn't even know that this is bad water. The sheep thinks this is wonderful water and so he will drink water that is filled with parasites and worms. He will drink from muddy polluted ruts where other sheep have walked, and even from bathroom holes. The shepherd must watch closely and protect his sheep from such foolish behavior. While he is leading them to good waters, he makes sure that none of his sheep stop along the way and drink bad water. Often, the older ewes, who think they know best, will see a bug-ridden mud puddle and stop and drink. They teach their lambs the bad habits of not waiting for the good places provided by their shepherd. The shepherd must use his rod on the backsides of these implacable sheep. This startles them and hurts a bit, but it causes them to stop drinking from the bad waters and keep moving on to the clean, quiet streams that he knows are ahead. The sheep don't understand why the shepherd won't let them drink from the mud holes, which is why a sheep must really trust his shepherd. Only the shepherd knows where the best drinking places are. Very often, he himself has gone to great effort to provide these watering places. He leads his sheep and they must follow, even when they don't understand where they are going or why they are going there.*

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."  
Proverbs 3:5-6*

*As the grass of the green pastures represents the Word of God to the human-sheep, so the clean, pure, refreshing waters represent the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In fact, for human-sheep to be healthy and strong, we need to both 'eat'*

In truth, it is the Holy Spirit who 'leads' us, but this makes the analogy confusing to children who still function with concrete thinking. For this reason, everything has been simplified to the Shepherd being the one who leads and the water representing the Holy Spirit. In John 4 and Eph 5:25 water represents the Truth of God's Word. There is great overlap of analogies here, which are actually several ways of saying the same thing.

The next lesson – He restores my soul – contains more details about the importance of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Drinking from muddy waters will represent sin and separation from the pure clean waters of the Holy Spirit.

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*God's Word and 'drink' from His Spirit. God made our souls to act just like a sheep's tummy. Without the watering help of the Holy Spirit the grass of God's Word isn't understood. Learning doctrine without the teaching help of the Holy Spirit causes our souls to have a tummy ache – we don't understand; we are confused and soon we will decide to stop eating spiritual grass. The problem is not that the green grass of God's Word is bad. The problem is that we are trying to digest it without any spiritual water – without the help of the Holy Spirit. This is why our Good Shepherd must lead us to the Holy Spirit – to clean water.*

*There are three main ways a shepherd provides pure water for his sheep. The first is the dew on the grass. The second is water from deep wells. And, the third is water from high mountain springs or streams that flow through the hillsides.*

*Very early in the morning, just before the sun begins to rise, something wonderful happens each day to the pasturelands – the cool night's air condenses and the grass is drenched with dew. This is the sheep's favorite time to eat – just as the sun begins to come up. The grass is delicious during this time, and it is covered with pure water, for dew is very clean and refreshing. A good shepherd makes sure his sheep are up and out in the fields early so they can take advantage of this wonderful combination – grass and water at the same time. The sheep's body digests the food very well when both grass and water are eaten together. The shepherd loves to watch his flocks eat and drink simultaneously. The morning air is gentle and still. A soft breeze rustles through the leaves while his sheep are knee deep in thick dew-laden grass. There they feed heavily and contentedly. As the sun rises and the dew is burned from the leaves, the flock, content and happy, meanders over to the shady areas to lie down and rest. They are fully satisfied and refreshed. They relax for the rest of the day. This is exactly how our Good Shepherd wants us to eat from His Word – with the water of the filling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, like water, mixes with the grass of God's Word that we 'eat and chew'. As we think about it and 'digest' it in our thinking, the Holy Spirit makes it clear and understandable. Water is that special power of God the Holy Spirit that makes His Words alive and powerful. Without this spiritual water, the words of the Bible are unimportant and meaningless. They are just another story we learn as kids, like Cinderella or the Three Little Pigs. But, with the power of God's Water mixed with the nourishment of God's Grass, our souls are filled with the understanding of God's thoughts; we are stuffed and completely satisfied. There is no longer a hunger or thirst for Truth in our thinking. This is why David, in Psalm 23, tells us that drinking spiritual water must go with eating spiritual grass.*

*["The Holy Spirit, the Helper, whom the Father will send to you in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your memory all that I have said to you."](#) John 14:26*

*Sometimes dew is not enough. When the weather in Bethlehem is very hot, the sheep need more water than the dew provides. This is when the shepherd takes his sheep to the 'deep wells'. Deep wells are often called cisterns. A cistern is a man-made hole in the ground edged with rock to keep the water clean and pure. It takes a lot of work for a shepherd to create a cistern for his sheep. Cisterns are made in two main ways. One is the shepherd digs a very deep hole in the ground, so deep that he eventually strikes water. Then he digs deeper and deeper until he has a nice deep well with clean cool water. He builds a large stone trough around the top of the well, and a support hoist over the opening to which he attaches a rope and a bucket, so that he can*

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*haul up the water. One bucket at a time, he hauls up water and pours it into the stone trough. It is very hard work, requiring a lot of sweat and toil on the part of the shepherd. Then, when there is plenty of water in the trough, he brings his sheep near to drink. The flock circles around the well, drinking from the water provided by the shepherd. It is his job to do all the hard work; it is their job to drink the water. There are several Old Testament Bible stories about deep waters from wells. When Jacob saw the shepherdess Rachel hauling all water for her father's flock, it was one of these deep water wells. He offered to do all the hard work for her and she was very grateful. Moses did the same thing for Zipporah when he saw her tending her father's sheep.*

*There is another way that a shepherd makes a cistern and provides 'deep waters' for his sheep. He finds a nice flowing river, one with enough deep fast moving water that the river doesn't go dry during the summer months. Then he finds a rocky wall along the edge of the river and starts chiseling out a cavern. He must dig into the rock like a miner creates a cave. He hollows into the rock until he has a big open room down under the edge of the bank of the river. Then, he levels out pathways and ramps that lead down into and around the watering pools he has just made. When everything is ready he unstops the dam and lets in the cool water from the river. The result is calm, still, quiet waters from which the sheep can drink. Sometimes the sheep are scared to follow the shepherd down the path into the scary depths. They are afraid of the dark, but the shepherd knows that deep inside the cave are waters of refreshment, waiting for them. A sheep must have total confidence in his shepherd when he is being led into the scary times of life.*

*Deep waters for human-sheep are times to learn the harder things of God's Word. Our shepherd knows that this is important although it is not always the most fun. Sometimes drinking from deep water is sitting in Bible class learning more advanced information about God. But, sometimes deep waters refers to hard difficult times of life – dark times when you are to use the Bible information you have already learned. There is something special that happens to human-sheep only during deep dark times, times when you feel like you are inside a gloomy, scary cave. Do you know what that special thing is? This is when a sheep focuses all his attention on his shepherd. It is as if only two people exist in the entire world – the shepherd and his sheep. This is when the human-sheep begins to understand just how much special care and attention his shepherd pays to him. This is when you find out that He is very much at work in every detail of your situation. This is when you learn that He loves you so very much and that He is right there by your side. Learning this, you discover how special you are to the Shepherd. All around, life seems deep and dark and dangerous and disagreeable, but there at your side is Your Shepherd. It is dark but there is a beam of light on His face, and He is smiling at you. You are refreshed, because you are 'the only sheep' to Him. During 'deep water' times, the Holy Spirit causes you to remember the wonderful principles you have already learned. He searches deep into your soul and brings up refreshing principles from God's Word. These memories are how He provides the fresh clean waters that help you through dark scary times. How sad it is for the other sheep who won't follow their shepherd down the paths to the waters of the 'deep wells'. How sad it is for sheep who insist on finding their own path, who want to walk in their own ways, and drink from any old source that they fancy will satisfy them. These dark places are times of 'prepared waters' for prepared is another meaning of the word 'still' as in still waters. Our Shepherd has specifically prepared times of deep waters for us. They are the special times when each sheep gets time alone with his Shepherd.*

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*“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:10*

*The third system of watering the sheep are the springs and streams that are in the hills and mountains. These are refreshing waters, quiet, calming, resting places along life’s journey. Mountain brooks flow in the crevices and valleys between the jagged rocks, creating streams of sheer pleasure. When a shepherd leads his sheep to such a stream he walks on the outside edge of the path, making sure that his sheep don’t lose their footing and slip down a steep hill or over the edge of a precipice (cliff). The waters in such a stream are magnificent. They are snow-fed, pure, clear, crystal clean, between lovely banks of trees and bushes. It is on such a path as this that stubborn ewes and their lambs will become impatient, stopping to drink from muddy pot holes in the way. If the shepherd doesn’t stop them, they will get sick from the filthy water and later they won’t know why they feel so bad. A good shepherd protects his sheep from bad waters. He patiently teaches them to wait for the good water that is just up ahead. When they get to the stream, the shepherd builds a dam of rocks creating a pool of still, calm water from which the sheep can drink safely. These are the easy waters. The sheep are surrounded by lovely trees and bushes and the view is beautiful. They can safely walk right down to the waters edge and drink. The path is not steep and is not dark. It is most enjoyable and refreshing. A sheep hardly needs to trust his shepherd to drink this kind of water, for there is nothing that is dangerous or scary. It is wonderful and fun. Our Good Shepherd leads us to these kinds of waters, also. It is here that we can thoroughly enjoy both God’s Word – green grass, and His Spirit – easy refreshing waters. This is when the still, calm waters of the Holy Spirit renew us, refresh us, and comfort us. Just as our Good Shepherd provides deep places for us, his sheep – so we can understand His great love for us, so He also likes to provide easy fun times for us as well. This is grace!*

*“Become reinvigorated [renewed, refreshed] by agency of the Holy Spirit by means of your way of thinking.” Ephesians 4:23(BP)*

*Animal sheep will thrive from any one of the three ways to get water, whether dew or deep waters or gently flowing mountain streams. But, human-sheep need all three kinds. The water represents the Holy Spirit. The three ways that a shepherd provides water for his sheep represent three of the things the Holy Spirit does for us, and we must take advantage of all three. First, the Holy Spirit acts like dew. This teaches us how we are to eat our grass – wet with dew! Our Good Shepherd wants spiritual dew on our spiritual grass every time we eat it. This means that we should always be filled with the Holy Spirit while learning God’s Word in Bible class. To try to learn spiritual information without the dew of the Holy Spirit’s teaching is like a sheep who tries to digest grass without any water in his system. It doesn’t work.*

*“God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit [spiritual water] and truth [spiritual grass].” John 4:24*

*Secondly, our Good Shepherd knows that for his human-sheep to become strong they must drink from ‘deep waters’. Therefore, He takes us to places that are dark and scary in our lives, so we will learn to focus all our attention on Him. When a sheep willingly follows his Shepherd into the dark places of deep waters (problems in life) he discovers how intensely his Shepherd*

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loves and cares for him. He discovers that every single detail of his life is being managed and is controlled by the Shepherd who loves him so much. There is an intimacy between shepherd and sheep that only occurs in the deep places. Our Good Shepherd will take us to these places so we can enjoy this wonderful closeness with Him. The Holy Spirit brings the deep waters of doctrine already learned to our memory and we have absolute confidence in our Good Shepherd. It is sad when a sheep refuses to use the deep waters of the Holy Spirit. He refuses to drink in the dark place. He does not believe that his shepherd will take care of him. When this occurs, the sheep never enjoys the deep friendship with his shepherd.

*“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” John 16:13*

*“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:10*

And third, our Good Shepherd wants to give us wonderful easy times of refreshment and fun. These are the high mountain springs. He leads us to mountain streams because they are so enjoyable and the scenery is so beautiful. This is where the Holy Spirit wholly refreshes our souls with the presence of His living water. Life is wonderfully fun and absolutely enjoyable. On the way to these places, many sheep become anxious. They want to ‘drink and play’ even before they get there. These are the impatient ones who drink from the filthy mud puddles, which they mistakenly think are more fun than the pure, clean streams. Very often we are like these foolish sheep. We think that playing with and getting new toys is better than being filled with the Spirit. We exchange pure water for parasite infested filth. Human-sheep do this every time they decide that some other activity will be more fun than going to Bible class. Every ‘fun’ thing this world has to offer is filthy mud. Our Good Shepherd has a much better plan.

*“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope [absolute confidence]’” Jeremiah 29:11*

*“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.” Proverbs 3:7-8*

There is one thing our Shepherd does for us that a regular shepherd doesn’t do for animal sheep. Our Shepherd has given us free will and He lets us choose for ourselves. A human shepherd will decide for his sheep whether they will drink from good water or not. Our Shepherd lets us decide. He will warn us about bad filthy water. He will teach us what the parasites will do to us. Drinking the bad water is like believing all the lies Satan, our enemy, has to offer. Many times we are foolish sheep, like the old stubborn ewes. We think we know best and we choose Satan’s muddy false waters. However, our Good Shepherd is always there to help. He will even swat us on the rump to get our attention, but in the end – you get to choose. Do you want to eat green grass covered with dew or not? Do you want to experience the wonderful loving friendship with your Shepherd that is only found in the deep waters? Do you want to follow Him to streams of pure delight? Or, are you willing to settle for the muddy infested bathroom waters that your

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*enemy, Satan, has placed along the way? From where do you want to drink? Are you even thirsty?*

*“Pay attention! Every one who is thirsty, come to the waters;.” Isaiah 55:1a*

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Craft: Add the still quiet waters to the “23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm Play-box”

Coloring Picture: Sheep drinking still waters 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 for the answers to 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*

*He leads me to waters of refreshment ...*