

Abundant Grace Daily

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Abundant Grace Daily: Psalm 23 is one of a series of devotionals based on key passages of Scripture. These devotions encourage you to center on the inexhaustible ocean of God's grace, rather than life's inevitable challenges. God's grace is more than enough for anything you face. It is available wave after wave, daily.

Psalm 23, explores the question, "To what extent can I say that, with Christ as my Shepherd, I have everything I really need?"



This is a free resource. It may be copied or shared without charge. I count it an honour to give back a little from what God has given me.

As a courtesy, please email me (roform@gmail.com) if you plan to use this with groups or in a mentoring friendship. It would be motivational and spur me on to create more devotionals. I would also update you straight away if new resources become available.

Please don't translate this into another language without conferring with me first. For those who wish to access this devotional on WhatsApp, PDFs for each day will be available on rowlandforman.com

PSALM 23

Day 1: Life Without Lack

PSALM 23:1

The LORD is my Shepherd I shall not want.

Psalm 23, for many, is a Psalm for funerals and hospital visits, and that is entirely appropriate use of these timeless and comforting words. However, as we will see, it is mainly a psalm for living well by trusting God fully.

This psalm concludes with the metaphor of abundance where find ourselves at a banquet. The psalmist's cup is not just half full, it's overflowing! And it starts with the statement that with the LORD as my Shepherd, I'm not needy at all.

How needy are you? Right now, could you say like David, "I shall not want" which means, I'm not lacking in anything I really need. The psalmist clearly was needy. Sheep need food, guidance, rest, and protection (v.1-3). As a guest (v. 4-6) he needs provisions, and companionship. Yet he says he is without lack. Why?

It's because who his Shepherd is: Yahweh (the LORD)—who revealed himself to Moses as "I AM who I AM." Before anything existed, God always was. This Shepherd is never needy, endlessly sufficient, forever available, and always good.

... I shall not want

What a great first line! Life without lack. All because God is abundantly sufficient. It is this totally adequate God that allows us to say, because Yahweh is my shepherd I have everything I really need.

Are you weary, burdened, bowed down with needs today? Those feelings are real. But instead of focusing on those shortcomings, meditate on God's sufficient strength. Start each day with thoughts of God's abundance, not your inadequacies.

Maybe circle or highlight the word **my** in verse one. He's not just a Shepherd or *our* Shepherd but says David, he is mine and I am his. This is such a personal psalm.

My prayer is that as you soak in what we call Psalm 23, you will come to know this Shepherd more intimately, and joyfully be able to say, **my** Shepherd.

His abundant grace is available for you today.¹

Prayer:

Yahweh, my Shepherd, You are all I really need. I confess that I focus too often on things that I lack, like energy and recognition. Forgive me for running after things that leave me empty. You were a Shepherd to your people, and to individuals like David, but I know you as my Shepherd. You know me and love me and are so gentle and patient with me. Teach me to find contentment in you only. You are my all-sufficient Shepherd. Amen.

Reflection:

- To what extent are you experiencing “life without lack” at present? Why?
- One way to meditate on this very rich verse is to single out the main words and turn over in your mind what they mean, and mean to you. Maybe this week keep returning to this umbrella verse:
*The **LORD** is my shepherd, I shall not want.*
*The LORD **is** my shepherd, I shall not want.*
*The LORD is **my** shepherd, I shall not want.*
*The LORD is my **shepherd**, I shall not want.*
*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall **not want**.*

Action:

- Consider memorizing Psalm 23 (if you haven't already), and as you quote it, meditate on (turn over) every phrase, line by line.

¹ If, in any way, this devotional has blessed you, please consider reading and soaking in *The LORD of Psalm 23* by David Gibson. It will enrich your soul.

Other Scriptures to Meditate on:

- Isaiah 12:1-6
- Psalm 103:1-5
- 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
- Romans 11:33-36

Day 2: Satisfied and Still

Psalm 23:2

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

Psalm 23 is a God-saturated view of life. Verse one of this comforting psalm boldly states that, with Yahweh as our Shepherd, there is nothing else we really need.

The rest of the psalm answers the question: "How then does this Divine Shepherd satisfy all my deepest needs?"

The first answer is in verse two:

He makes me ... he leads me. In other words, God is active. He is intimately involved in my life. He takes the initiative. When I need food, he provides lush "green pastures". He provides the sustenance I really need. When I am thirsty and need refreshment, he leads me to still waters, literally "waters of rest". This implies a stillness, a resting place, where my parched soul is quenched. The LORD, my Shepherd, knows how and when to take me to a place of rest.

He makes me lie down ... The Shepherd of my soul knows what is best for me. When I'm scurrying around, trying to achieve more than God designed for me, he often slows me down through wise counsel (preferable), or sickness (less desirable). I can personally attest to the latter experience. During one particularly severe episode of lower back pain, I was confined to bed for weeks. I'd been running too fast. My Shepherd made me rest. Initially I resented it, but came to realise that this was God's megaphone to get my attention.

In green pastures ... There are plenty of lush pastures available, if only I'll notice them and feed on them. Primarily, this has been the result of my habit of daily meditating on Holy Scripture.

He leads me beside still waters ... In the arid landscape in which David spent his days, finding water for parched sheep was essential. He knew, as an experienced shepherd, that turbulent streams wouldn't work, so he

took his flock to quiet pools. Have there been times in your life when you have responded to God's call to be still? What did you do?

How did this work out in David's life? Maybe these statements are retrospective? Is he thinking back over his life, recalling times when God provided abundant food and refreshment precisely when he needed it? Or maybe this was his daily or weekly review, as he reminded himself that God is the all-sufficient provider?

How does Yahweh, our ever caring Shepherd, *make us lie down in green pastures and lead us to a place of still waters*? In my own life I have found that YouVersion plans provide food for my hungry soul, or books expound Scripture in a life-transforming way, or biblically grounded sermons nourish and refresh me.

Often, it's not so much my finding a book as a book finding me. Not my hunting out a good YouVersion devotional. Rather, a devotional landing in my lap at precisely the right moment. Not my choosing lush pasture, but the Shepherd choosing it for me. Not my hunting for a refreshing stream, but an oasis suddenly appearing when my soul is bone dry.

Prayer:

Loving Shepherd, thank you for dealing with me so gently. I confess that I sometimes stray to pastures that leave me hungry and more needy than ever.

Thank You for providing lush pastures through Your Word. As I think back over my life, I'm so grateful for the times you've made me lie down when I've been running too fast and leading on empty.

Lead me to waters of quietness, where I'll experience the soul-rest you promised. In the Name that is above every other name. Amen

Reflection:

- How have you been nourished by green pastures to which the Good Shepherd has led you in the last month?
- In what ways lately have you experienced the LORD your Shepherd slowing you down and leading you to places of stillness?

Action: Ask God to lead you to a book, online sermon, or devotional that will guide you to green pastures and still waters.

Other Scriptures to Meditate on:

- John 6:1-14
- Psalm 63:1-8
- Psalm 103:1-5

Day 3: Soul Rest

Psalm 23:3

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

What happens when the LORD my Shepherd provides more than enough green grass and a place of stillness? Our souls are restored.

He restores my soul.

This soothing sentence may refer to what takes place at a soul level when, as needy “sheep”, we receive more than adequate food and refreshment (v.2) or when we walk in right pathways (v.3). The outcome is the same: soul restoration. David’s soul is restored. Sheep are sometimes “cast,” which means they tumble over, end up on their backs, and are unable to get up. This Shepherd lifts them up.

It's one thing to have plenty of food and drink and be walking on safe pathways, and another to have a restored soul. That's what the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus referred to when he addressed his disciples with these words:

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30).

All we need to do is admit our weariness and weakness and come to Jesus, the gentle and lowly one, and we will experience soul rest. There is deep soul rest when we take his yoke and learn from him.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

Now that David is back on his feet again, the Shepherd takes the initiative and redirects him. He sets him on paths that are right and safe.

Have you been straying on unholy paths lately? Have you been flirting with danger? It just takes a wrong step here, and another unwise path there.

“Psalm 23 is clear: there is no soul restoration in walking paths in life that your Shepherd is not walking with you. There is no greener grass anywhere

else than with Jesus and with the words he speaks, with his righteous law and his righteous-giving gospel.”

for his name's sake

Walking on right paths is the best thing possible for sheep that are prone to wander. But the main reason for which the Shepherd directs us to right and holy pathways is for the honor of his name. John Piper expresses it this way: “The deepest reason given for God’s commitment to his people is his prior commitment to his own name.”

The sheep of Psalm 23 are satisfied because their shepherd has provided for them in every conceivable way. They are well fed, watered, restored, and guided. He does all this in order to uphold the reputation of his holy name.

Prayer:

Gracious Shepherd, You are the soul-restorer and I’m asking you to revive and restore me today. Thank-you for being so gentle and patient with me. I confess I’m prone to wander from paths of righteousness. Lead me to walk in step with your Spirit, all for the honor of your name. Amen.

Reflection:

- To what extent is your soul at rest at present? Why or why not?

Action:

- Memorize Matthew 11:28-30. Meditate on each phrase, turning it into a spoken or written prayer.
- Examine your heart and behaviour for any evidence that you have been straying into paths of unrighteousness.
- Share what you have learned from
- Psalm 23:1-3 with a trusted friend and pray that these things will be true of you.

Other Scriptures to Meditate on:

- Exodus 15:13
- Psalm 42:1-6
- Psalm 62:5-8

Day 4: Darkest Valley

Psalm 23:4

***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.***

"Except there were some light, there could be no shadow." John Donne

If the care of Yahweh the Shepherd is so comprehensive and his provisions so appropriate and abundant, does that mean that I'm always going to be in perfect health and dodge a painful, drawn out death? This verse dispels that notion.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death ...

Even though prepares us for a surprise. We might have expected the *paths of righteousness* to lead us to flower-festooned lanes. "Not so", says the psalmist. When the sky is dark and the way is tortuous, it's human to conclude we have wandered from the Shepherd's care. That's not true either.

Valleys of death's shadow are one of life's certainties. It may be a brush with death, of which I have had several, or the word "terminal" after a visit to a doctor, or years of chronic pain. This valley is a reminder, as we age, that we are flowers quickly fading.

... the valley of the shadow of death ...

This phrase could be translated as "the place of deep darkness." Death's shadow is lurking. It is nearer than we think. Just a month ago my seventy-nine year old brother died, after a routine hip replacement. I experienced the shadow. When life is sweet and the sun is shining, death's shadow feels remote. When a loved one passes, we realize that death is lurking.

Maybe David is referring here to the agony of being pursued by King Saul and later by his own son Absalom? In both cases, the shadow of death was a reality. Being hunted by the king and then his own son would have felt like endless valleys of deep darkness.

Have you ever been in this valley of deep darkness? Have you been touched by death's shadow? Maybe you are aware of it right now? If so, then meditate on these incredibly reassuring words.

... I will fear no evil for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me ...

This is the second confession of faith in this priceless psalm.

I shall not want v. 1

I will fear no evil v. 4.

Evil is palpably present, but David chooses to not be traumatized by it. It's the reason for his lack of fear that makes the difference.

... you are with me ...

This is the ultimate comfort. God is always our safe place and source of strength, but especially so when we're in deep trouble (Psalm 46:1). I've proved that over and over. When our third child, Craig, died from pneumococcal meningitis at the age of five-and-a-half months, my wife and I experienced the closeness of our tender Shepherd like never before.

The ultimate comfort is that the Shepherd has led us into this dark valley and he is present with us every step of the way. He's at the ready. He holds a rod, which is a weapon to protect the sheep, and a staff to round them up and direct them if they stray.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, my ever present Shepherd, with your companionship in the loneliest valley, I am never alone. Protect me with your rod, direct me with your staff. I pause to pray for friends that are in places of deep darkness right now. Draw near to them. Comfort them I ask. I'm pouring out my thanks and praise that you are ever present, but especially near in valleys when I need you most. Amen.

Reflection: To what extent have you been aware of your Shepherd right there with you when death casts its shadow or at times of deep darkness?

Action:

- Take each phrase in Psalm 23:4 and turn it into a spoken or written prayer.
- Maybe share this devotional with someone who is experiencing the valley of the shadow of death. Pray for them.

Other Scriptures to Meditate on:

- Psalm 42:1-11
- Psalm 46
- Isaiah 43:1-5
- Haggai 2:3-5

Day 5: Lavish Table

Psalm 23:5

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

From green paddocks, still ponds, and dangerous ravines (v.1-4), we find ourselves seated at a laden table (v.5). The word picture moves from that of Yahweh as a caring Shepherd to that of a competent Host; from a pasture to a table. Just as we, as sheep, have to walk through dark valleys, so too we, as guests, have to keep in mind that we are constantly surrounded by enemies.

Verse 5 amplifies Yahweh's abundant provision. This is no poorly planned and disorganized table. A great deal of thought has gone into this meal. The table is groaning with good food.

The guests are well cared for as well. As they arrive, their heads are anointed with the finest oil. And in contrast to the wedding Jesus attended in Cana (John 2:1-11), there are drinks aplenty. As soon as the glasses are half full, they are filled to overflowing. I've attended wedding breakfasts where the food and beverages ran out. Not here! Here there is an abundance of both.

And that is so true of God's grace.

Note how Paul describes it in Ephesians 1:6-7; "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight." It is sumptuous grace, lavish grace.

Here's what John says about the grace of the Lord Jesus our Good Shepherd: "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace (John 1:16)." In other words, his grace, like wave after wave on the seashore, just keeps rolling in. It never stops.

This verse reminds me of King David's kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, who was crippled when he was five. David graciously arranged for Mephibosheth to have a permanent seat at his well-stocked

table. 2 Samuel 9:11 records: “So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table like one of the King’s sons.” Abundant grace daily!

What does this mean for you and me on a day by day basis? Perpetual wellbeing? Unending prosperity? Unlimited wisdom? Does it make us perpetually healthy, wealthy and wise?

No. The biblical stories of Job, Jeremiah, and Paul dispel that very attractive notion. Job wrestled with God over ill-health. Jeremiah was overwhelmed with sorrow, and Paul had an unrelenting thorn in his flesh. However, all three of them drank from God’s unfathomable well of grace, despite life’s challenges.

It means that there is more than adequate and undeserved strength from God available whether we have plenty or not enough. Paul’s testimony was that, whether he were poor or had plenty, he had learned to be content.

This month, my wife and I are celebrating 50 years of fulltime Christian ministry. We have experienced times of adequate financial support, and seasons of great financial need. We have had extended seasons of really good health, and, in my case, a disease that took me to the edge of the “valley of the shadow.” Through it all, our testimony is captured in the first line of Psalm 23—Because the LORD is our Shepherd, we have had everything we *really* needed.

The challenge of Psalm 23:5 is to live with an abundant mindset in a fallen world where scarcity is prevalent. The abundant mindset is focused, not on our adequacy, but on God’s sufficiency. There are times of inadequacy, when we are surrounded by enemies and difficulties, but we keep leaning into the ever-sufficient One.

“My grace,” our ever compassionate, always available God whispers, “is more than adequate. It’s abundant.”

Prayer:

Ever-generous Host, please open my eyes to see your lavish table when I am feeling inadequate. Teach me to rest in your sufficiency when the Enemy encircles me. I lift my cup to you again, that you would fill it to overflowing. Lord Jesus, I’ve proved over and over that, without you, I can achieve nothing. But with you all things are possible. Amen

Reflection:

To what extent can you say with the Psalmist, *Return, O my soul, to your rest: for the LORD has dealt bountifully with me* (Psalm 16:7)? Why or why not?

Action: Write out or say a prayer of thanksgiving for God's abundant, ever-sufficient grace.

Other Scriptures to Meditate on:

- 2 Samuel 9:1-11
- Psalm 16:1-6
- Psalm 145:15-19
- 2 Corinthians 8:6-11

Day 6: Relentless Grace

Psalm 23:6

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 tender care of this Shepherd (v. 1-3) and Host (v.4-6) is unbelievably comprehensive. No stone is unturned. Is there grace to help us live well every single day? As we have learned, it's not just a trickle of grace. It's abundant!

Do you need food and drink?

There are lush pastures and still waters to satisfy you.

Do you long for renewal? Yahweh, your Shepherd, will bless you with soul rest.

Do you need a companion when the skies are dark and death's shadow encroaches? This shepherd will be right alongside you.

Do you lack confidence or feel intimidated by people who oppose you? You need not fear because the LORD, your host, has spread out an abundant table.

Your past and present needs are all more than catered for.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me ...

God's grace, his goodness and mercy, will follow you. What's more, it will pursue you (ESV margin), every day of your life. The word **surely** implies certainty - it is a gilt-edged guarantee based on the character of God who cannot lie. This will definitely happen.

David can testify to this; God's unfailing kindness and steadfast love has pursued me and will pursue me every single day.

But David, what about the future? He concludes:

... I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

In other words, I will be home. Home in the presence of God forever. That's what Jesus promised his disciples: *Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms ... I go to prepare a place for you* (John 14:1-2).

On Day One of this devotional, I asked whether you are able to say with assurance, *The LORD is my Shepherd*. On Day Six my question is, "Can you say with certainty that, after I die, I will be with God forever?" My prayer is that you will be able to say, "My Shepherd's unfailing goodness and love has been with me every single day, and after I die I will be in God's presence forever."

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, my always faithful Shepherd, your abundant goodness and endless love is the story of my life. It's not so much my following You, as Your following me. I'm amazed by your grace. You are everything I really need now and forever. Amen.

Reflection:

Think back over the last few years. What are some ways that God's goodness and mercy have been pursuing you?

Action: Compose a prayer that celebrates God's goodness and abundant mercy.

Other Scriptures to Meditate on:

- Job 19:23-27
- Psalm 16:7-11
- John 14:1-7
- Revelation 21:1-4

Day 7: Living Psalm 23 Daily

How do you cash in on all these abundant provisions about which we've been reading over the last six days? By accessing God's unlimited grace daily. One day at a time.

There's a story in Exodus 16 that holds the key. God's people were grumbling about lack of food, which underlines how undeserving and in need of grace they were. God supplied manna every morning. Manna was a bread-like food that tasted like wafers with honey. Daily bread.

There was more than enough food for each family. Exodus 16:35 describes the extent of God's provision: *The sons of Israel ate the manna for forty years until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.* That's more than a truckload, an abundance. Every single day, with a double portion on the Sabbath.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray: *Give us this day our daily bread.* He possibly had the Exodus 16 passage in mind. Notice the phrase *this day*.

We can enter into all of the abundant grace of Psalm 23 one day at a time—by asking for it, phrase by phrase.

The LORD is my Shepherd, I lack nothing.

As you wake up each morning - even before your feet hit the floor - say to yourself, "I have everything I really need today because Yahweh is my faithful Shepherd." Your soul will be focused on the Shepherd, rather than on the things he provides.

Remind yourself that Christ is all you *need*, despite the fact that all your *wants* may not be satisfied.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters.

Each day, accept his invitation to be still. Your Shepherd knows your tendency to rush here and there. Notice he *makes* you lie down. Be alert to any opportunities to ease back. Carve out Sabbath moments, where you cease from striving. Sit in his presence, meditate on his Word, pour out expressions of gratitude.

Remind yourself today to allow the Lord Jesus to slow you down and infuse you with his peace.

He restores my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Every day, allow Yahweh the healer to refresh and recalibrate your soul. Ask the Holy Spirit to breathe new life into you.. He knows that you need this. Look for ways your soul-Shepherd is guiding you. Ask for his leading. Pause to pray before, during and after every appointment.

Remind yourself that Christ is your healer and your guide.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me.

Today may have shadows, difficulties, pains, or unexpected challenges. Tell yourself, “The LORD, my shepherd, is right here with me.” Instead of worrying about what tomorrow may bring, meditate on the phrase *I will fear no evil for you are with me*. Claim the promise of your Shepherd’s presence and watch fear loosen its grip. Apply this verse in prayer for any of your friends who are in the darkest valley right now.

Remind yourself today to take an “Emmaus” walk with your risen, living Savior, who has conquered death and brought life to light through the gospel.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

Living into the truth of these words daily means that, even when people oppose you, or circumstances transpire against you, you will look out for a “table” God has prepared for you. Be open to unexpected blessings he drops onto your lap.

Remind yourself this day that Jesus overcame the Enemy of our souls by his death, and delights to spread out a lavish table for you.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Living today with these inspiring words in mind is a reminder that God’s grace is abundant. He pours out his fragrant oil on your head. My cup is not just full; it is overflowing.

Remind yourself today that Christ came to give life in all its fullness.

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

What a blessed state of mind in which you can rest your head on your pillow at the end of each day! Pause to reflect on all the ways that your loving Shepherd has pursued you with touches of goodness and mercy. Expect that he will do so, not just this day but every day, until you are eternally in his presence.

Remind yourself as this day closes, that Jesus is the first and the last, the ever-living one. That he died, is alive and holds the keys of death and Hades.

Christ is all, and more than all you will ever need. With him you can live out your whole life lacking nothing.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I'm in awe of you. I worship you today. You are all I really need. I'm pouring out my thanks for every phrase in this timeless psalm. You are so gracious to me. Lead me, restore me, and satisfy me with your love daily. In your name I ask this. Amen.

Other Scriptures to Meditate on:

- Exodus 16:4-5

- Psalm 90:12

- Matthew 6:7-15



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