

“The Only Sure Ground for Our Comfort and Contentment—One”

Psalm 23:1

The LORD is my shepherd, I do not want.

1. What comes to mind when you think of shepherds?
 - a. In what ways have you romanticized the job of a shepherd?

 - b. What would make the shepherd’s job distasteful or even repulsive?

2. Read through all of Psalm 23.
 - a. Who are all of the characters? In what role are you to be found in this poem?

 - b. What is the one word-picture or illustration throughout the Psalm?

 - c. Look at the way the pronouns (e.g. I, my, he, you, etc.) are used throughout the Psalm. Can you see the differing “movements” of the poem?

 - d. What has made this Psalm so appealing to believers and unbelievers alike over the ages?

3. Read and meditate upon verse one.
 - a. How does everything else in this poem support this one sentence?

 - b. The role that the LORD plays is that of **shepherd**. Discuss this concept.
 - i. According to Ezekiel 34:11-16, how does the Lord view the role of a shepherd?

 - ii. What does it say about the LORD that He would choose to take this role for His people?

- c. Considering this role, why is it so very comforting to know that **the LORD** is your shepherd?
 - i. What differences would a good or bad shepherd make to the sheep?

 - ii. What makes the LORD a good shepherd (cf. Exodus 34:6-7; John 10:11-13)?

- d. What do you make of David's statement, "The LORD is **MY** shepherd"?
 - i. Why might David have used "my" instead of "our"?

 - ii. Whose choice is a sheep's ownership? Why does this matter to us?

 - iii. What does this statement say about "belonging"? About identity?

 - iv. Can you say with confidence "the LORD is **my** shepherd? Why or why not?

- e. What did David mean when he said, "I do not want"?
 - i. What could a sheep lack or want? How are these things comparable to what you might think you lack or want?

 - ii. Had David ever found himself where food was lacking or safety a grave concern (cf. 1 Sam. 21:1f; 2 Sam. 21:16; Psalm 59)? Why could he still say "I do not want"?

 - iii. How does this statement "I do not want" most challenge your heart?

4. When do you most need comfort?
 - a. What are the circumstances or what is the situation?

 - b. What are you fearing or grieving or feeling?

 - c. How should the knowledge that the LORD is your shepherd give you the comfort you need?
 - i. Why is it so hard to receive this comfort?

 - ii. What steps might you take that could help you learn to entrust yourself to the LORD for comfort?

5. When do you most feel discontent?
 - a. What is it that you think you lack? What are you desiring?

 - b. How does the statement, "I do not want" strike your heart?
 - i. Can you say this? Why or why not?

 - ii. What steps might you take that could help you learn to find contentment in Christ and in what He has provided you?