



Psalm 23 Meaning: Shepherd's Guidance Hand Now

Psalm 23 Meaning: Shepherd's Guidance Hand Now. To reflect upon the *Psalm 23 meaning* is like trying to do a critical review of the Sermon on the Mount! Many writers have written extensively about this beautiful work, requiring caution to avoid sounding trite or shallow. For millions of people, this psalm of David has been, and will be, the pearl of the Psalms.

One of the amazing things about Psalm 23 is that it only contains six verses. Yet, the effect of those six short verses has been felt throughout the world. The 23rd Psalm has brought rest to weary souls for many centuries, and it has presented a message of hope that no writings of man have been able to match.

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Jesus Christ has been called the Good Shepherd. He used the analogy Himself in several of His parables. In [John 10:11](#) Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Jesus also said in [John 10:14](#), "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." For Christians, Jesus Christ is the good shepherd. He knows those who are joined to Him, because there is a relationship that exists. That relationship is based upon love. The love of God opened the way of salvation for all people.

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Psalm 23 points to Jesus Christ as the *Good Shepherd*, and it also describes the work He does for His disciples. The shepherd protects and nurtures His flock. That is what happens to those who are joined to Jesus Christ through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. Of course, foremost of those is love. The emphasis in the Old Testament scriptures was on obedience and judgment. The New Testament scriptures also contain the principles of obedience and judgment; but with those are joined the great love of God through Jesus Christ, and the blessings that those in Christ can enjoy.

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Paul wrote that Christians receive every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Those that are outside Christ Jesus are lost. Nothing is more helpless than a sheep with no shepherd or protection. Lost sheep are easy prey for wolves and other animals. They can become easily trapped, and they cannot care for themselves. Sheep without a shepherd will perish, and people without Jesus Christ will likewise perish.

But for those in Christ, there is the Good Shepherd. Because of Him, there is the promise of rest, nourishment, and guidance. When a Christian faces the dangers of life, he, or she, can say, "I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

In verse 4, the "valley of the shadow of death" does not directly refer to the time of physical death. Verse 4 has a more direct bearing



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upon life today. The “valley of the shadow of death”, or “The darkest valley” is the time when the experiences of this life result in intense sorrow, distress, and pain. The anguish of the soul can make the heart break under the load.

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The imagery is so vivid! A person is walking along a path that leads into a dark and dangerous place. In the dark, you can't see an enemy approaching. In the shadow, you can't know if there is an ambush prepared just around the next turn. What a scary place for a person who is alone. But in Christ, a person is not alone! Each step of the way, a Child of God is protected from evil. When problems loom up, when there seems to be no solution, when we tremble on the edge of despair, we need to remember these words! We are never alone! Trust in the Lord!

The inspired Word of God always states the truth that there will be trials in life. But verse 5 emphasizes again that God will take care of His people - His children. “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.”



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Children look to their parents to meet their physical needs. Loving parents will try to provide shelter, food, and safety for their children. In the same way, God will, not just try, but will, provide for His children. Sometimes physically, but always spiritually, the Lord will give us comfort, nourishment, and protection from our enemies.

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The **last verse** of this psalm reveals its **crowning jewel**: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." This powerful declaration encapsulates both **present assistance** and **hope for eternity**—a profound combination that fulfills our deepest needs. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift - Jesus Christ our Lord!

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