

# Daily Devotions



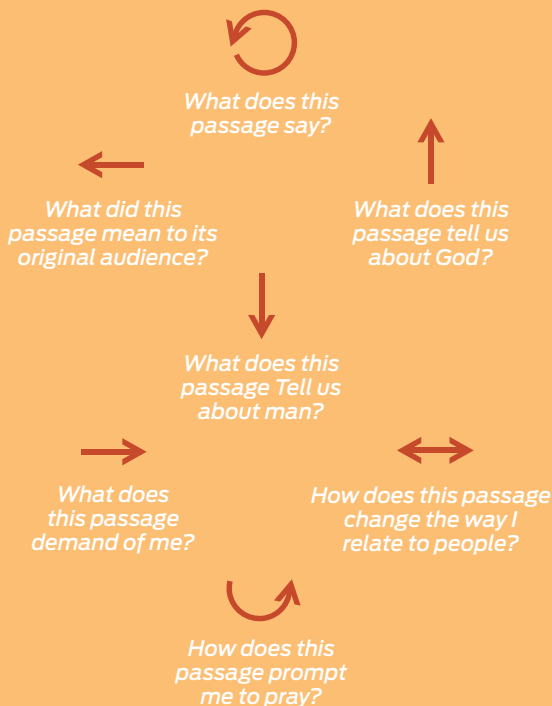
Day 1

## Psalm 23:1-2

In this psalm, David writes that he has all he needs (v. 1). It is a startling statement when we think of the likely context of the writing of this psalm. David was on the run from his son, Absalom. One of the last things we would expect to hear him say was that all of his needs were met. Instead we would expect a psalm seeking to understand where God was during this time and when he would step in and provide David with a need that he lacked: peace with his own family.

But in this, we see the importance of distinguishing our needs from our desires. God has promised to supply all our needs (Phil. 4:19), but not all our desires. Peace with family was one of David's desires—a noble one even—but it was not a need. And sometimes God will not give us our desires even if they seem to be good desires and even if we have the best intentions for wanting them. The reason is simple: because our desires don't always align with God's will. Our desires, as good as they may seem, will not always bring God glory, and they will not always bring us good. And so God, our loving Father, supplies what He knows we need.

### The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



**What are some of the desires of your heart? Are they in line with seeking God's will and bringing Him glory?**

# Psalm 23:3-4

Sometimes we tend to look past the smaller words when we read. Our attention focuses on the larger words, the words that seem more significant such as nouns and the stars of sentences, verbs. But this is a mistake because often those small words have quite a bit to say. Such as verse 4. Notice that David wrote “when” he goes through the darkest valley, not “if” he would. That’s not an unimportant difference. “When” implies that he will indeed go through this valley. “If” leaves that wide open. Perhaps he will; perhaps he won’t.

David, or more precisely God through him, is teaching us something quite important in this seemingly insignificant four-letter word. Trusting in Christ does not shield us from danger, pain, and adversity. In fact, the Bible says these things will increase, not decrease, because of our faith. We need to understand this. We need to accept this. We need to embrace this. God uses our difficulties for His glory and our good because in these dark times we can find ourselves more desperate for God and more aware of His presence. Yes, the valleys are dark. Yes, there is danger. But God is with us, carrying His rod and staff. And in His presence and power, we find peace.

**What has God taught you through your experience in adversity?**

# Psalm 23:5-6

Our God is a pursuant God. We run; He chases. Over and over again. Perhaps we see this most clearly in the Book of Jonah. The account opens with God commanding His prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh to share a message of repentance. Jonah, however, has other plans—he ran the opposite direction God had ordered him to go. So what did God do? He chased Jonah down and brought him to repentance so that he might be used in God’s plan to bring others to repentance as well.

What was it that led God to chase Jonah down? What is it that leads Him to chase us too? David answers that here in Psalm 23. It is God’s goodness and faithful love, often translated as “mercy.” It was love that chased him down. So the storm God threw at the boat was good. And the fish he sent to swallow Jonah was good. Because they were each used by God to bring Jonah back to where he needed to be.

That is what God does for us too. He chases us when we run. He throws storms our way. And He delivers us in ways that might seem like anything but kind acts of His love. But whether we see it or not, God’s goodness and faithful love always run beside us.

**How have you experienced God chasing after you?**

# Isaiah

## 40:1-11

There are times when we are keenly aware of our need for the almighty strength of God's arms. We need His power to sustain us. Perhaps we are facing a situation that overwhelms us. Perhaps we are facing down an adversary that we know we cannot beat. In these times, we scan the horizon for our Rescuer to step in and bring His full strength to bear. This is what verse 10 calls to mind.

But there are also times when we need God's strong arms not for their strength, but for their comfort. We need His love to uplift us. Perhaps we feel alone. Perhaps we have failed—yet again. In these times, we fall to our knees and long to feel the embrace of our loving Father. This is what verse 11 calls to mind.

In this coupling, we are reminded of the great character of our God. Our powerful Creator is also our gentle Father. He is always there for us, always aware of what we need, and always ready to provide for that moment.

**How have you experienced God's power and love when you needed each?**

# John

## 10:1-21

In describing Himself as the Good Shepherd, Jesus made an interesting contrast between Himself and a hired hand (v. 12-13). A hired hand, Jesus contended, was not reliable because he didn't care about the sheep. And why should he? They wouldn't be his sheep. So, if a wolf comes along to snatch a sheep, the hired hand will not risk his own life to save that sheep. Instead, he will run off and likely later plead his case of how much danger he had been in to the owner of the sheep.

But Jesus is no hired hand. He is the Good Shepherd because the sheep are His. He owns them. He loves them. And that is why He sacrificed His life for them.

We need to see Jesus for who He truly is, but it cannot stop there. We also need to see ourselves for who we truly are. Do you see yourself as the beloved sheep you are? Do you understand that Christ's love for you is fixed because you are His and He is yours? Jesus is no hired hand who will run off and abandon you. And neither are you a random sheep.

**How can you tend to see yourself incorrectly at times? Why?**