

That The World May Know: Walking With God in the Desert – Session 6: Ears to Hear

The Way to Green Pastures

When people visit Bible lands for the first time, they discover that things are quite different from what they had imagined. Almost all first-time visitors are most surprised by the “green pastures,” the barren desert hills with sparse tufts of grass where shepherds live with their herds and flocks. In order for us to be sensitive to our Shepherd’s guiding presence and caring provision during our desert experiences, we must remain very close to him.

1. How does a person find “green pastures” and “quiet waters?”
Psalm 23:1 – 2

How would you fare if you walked into the Negev or Judea Wilderness on your own seeking green pastures and quiet waters?

2. Many of the psalms are personal expressions of one’s relationship with God. In what ways may a person stay close to God in the desert?
Psalm 31:1 – 3
Psalm 119:10 – 16
Psalm 143:8 – 10
3. The apostle Paul was intent on walking as Jesus did, living in close fellowship with God. How closely did Paul pursue God—his Shepherd?
Philippians 1:20 – 21
Philippians 3:12 – 14

The Desert: Land of God’s Word

Shepherds in the Middle East exercise total control over their sheep not by driving the sheep or using dogs to herd them, but by their voice. As Shepherd of his people today, God may lead us into the deserts of life. Although hearing God’s voice may come through struggle—like honey from a rock—hearing and following it leads us to the green pastures of his daily care and provision.

1. After Moses completed writing the law and the priests put it into the Ark of the Covenant, what command did God give concerning what all of Israel must do with his words?
Deuteronomy 31:9 – 13

When was the last time you *heard* all of God’s words?

2. What does the Bible tell us about the words of God our Shepherd?
Psalm 18:30
Psalm 33:4
Psalm 119:89 – 105

How would such words, if we listen to them and obey them, help us to stay on the right path in the desert?

3. Jesus identified Himself as a shepherd on several occasions. What did Jesus say about how His sheep would know him and respond to His leading?
John 10:1 – 16

God Our Shepherd Provides

In deserts of the Middle East, sheep are helpless to find food, water, and shelter. Without a shepherd, they do not survive for long. In this context, the Bible portrays the shepherd as a caring, compassionate provider who chooses safe paths. Scripture especially uses the shepherd metaphor to describe the character and work of the Messiah who would come to seek and to save God’s flock.

1. Those who follow Jesus, walking as He walked, become part of God’s flock and receive the Shepherd’s loving, compassionate care. What is significant about what Jesus said to His disciples?
Matthew 6:31 – 34
Matthew 28:19 – 20

Does any sheep under the Shepherd’s care need to worry about what to eat or drink?

How does a sheep seek the Shepherd’s kingdom and righteous?

Does a sheep have to worry about being abandoned by the Shepherd?

2. In what ways is Jesus the Messiah connected to the shepherd figure of the Hebrew Bible?
Micah 5:1 – 5
Matthew 9:35 – 36
Matthew 25:31 – 32
Luke 2:8 – 20
Luke 15:1 – 7
John 10:1 – 16
Hebrews 13:20 – 21

Jesus the Messiah: Our Shepherd King

Many people recognize the familiar phrase, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1) as a metaphor for God’s compassionate care and provision for his people. Yet we must not overlook another meaning of *shepherd* that also describes God. The sheep, figuratively speaking, were completely in the shepherd’s hands and under his authority. If Jesus Christ is indeed your Shepherd, he has absolute power and authority over your life.

1. The Bible especially uses the shepherd metaphor to describe the character and work of the Messiah who would come to seek and save God’s flock. What are the links that present Jesus as the Messiah-King who has been given divine authority over God’s flock?

Isaiah 9:1 – 7
Jeremiah 23:1 – 6
Daniel 7:13 – 14
Micah 5:1 – 4
Matthew 2:1 – 2

What new understanding do you gain from the above passages about the divine authority of Jesus the Messiah to rule over His followers?

2. God chose David from among his flock (Israel) to shepherd his people. What kind of shepherd was David?
Psalm 78:70 – 72

What kind of a “sheep” was David? How did that influence how he led God’s flock?
Psalm 25:4 – 5
Psalm 86:11
Psalm 119:33 – 37
Psalm 139:23 - 24

Walking in Paths of Righteousness

Walking in the deserts of Israel is never easy. The heat and steep, rocky terrain of mountains that never seem to end are exhausting. Consider how the Good Shepherd calls out to us to take the straight path that leads to him and the provision we need.

1. Why do the sheep need a shepherd?
Psalm 119: 174 – 176
Jeremiah 50:6 – 7
Ezekiel 34:4 – 6
Luke 15:3 – 6
1 Peter 2:25

What are some of the reasons why we, like sheep, lose our way?

How do we find our way back to the shepherd?

2. Which path does the shepherd call his sheep to follow? Where does it lead?
Psalm 23:3
Psalm 27:11
Proverbs 3:5 – 6
Proverbs 4:10 – 13

How do we learn to follow the path of our Shepherd?

Why do we have to submit to the Shepherd’s will in order to walk the paths of righteousness with Him?

3. What concern does God have for sheep who have lost their way? What does he long for them to do?
Jeremiah 6:16
Jeremiah 50:4 - 7

References

Genesis 13	Genesis 48
Exodus 3	Exodus 13
Exodus 14	Exodus 15
Exodus 16	Exodus 17
Exodus 23	Deuteronomy 2
Deuteronomy 4	Deuteronomy 5
Deuteronomy 6	Deuteronomy 8
Deuteronomy 31	1 Samuel 15
1 Samuel 25	Jeremiah 23
Psalm 18	Psalm 23
Psalm 25	Psalm 27
Psalm 31	Psalm 33
Psalm 73	Psalm 78
Psalm 86	Psalm 95
Psalm 119	Psalm 139
Psalm 143	Proverbs 3
Proverbs 4	Isaiah 9
Isaiah 40	Isaiah 49
Jeremiah 6	Jeremiah 23
Jeremiah 50	Ezekiel 34
Daniel 7	Micah 5
Haggai 1	Zechariah 9
Matthew 2	Matthew 6
Matthew 9	Matthew 21
Matthew 22	Matthew 25
Matthew 28	Luke 2
Luke 12	Luke 15
Luke 19	John 1
John 10	John 14
2 Corinthians 11	Philippians 1
Philippians 3	Philippians 4
2 Timothy 3	Hebrews 10
Hebrews 13	1 Peter 2
1 John 1	1 John 2
Revelation 7	