

A Study on Psalm 23:

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

Lesson 1

(written by King David)

(Finish the lesson 5 minutes before time so that you can give them the home work assignment. Remind them there will be a quiz the next time).

The Lord is my shepherd.....read the full psalm. We will focus today on the first 5 words.

- David grew up as the youngest of 8 brothers and worked as a shepherd (1 Sam 16:10-11). Over months and years, he grew in his knowledge and understanding about sheep and shepherding.
- Maybe he got bullied by his 7 brothers...he was given the job that the others didn't want to do – take the sheep out for the day and come back in the evening, a lonely, boring job - his brothers probably wanted to join the army and they, maybe, spent their time practicing fighting or training (1 Sam 17:12-15).

David was alone, looking after the flock, away from his home. Day after day.

How did he spend his time?.....probably

- Practicing with his sling shot (shooting at targets over and over again). He became very good.
- Singing songs to God or playing an instrument – the harp. He became good at this (1 Sam 16:23)
- Admiring the valleys and plains, the mountains. Looking for green pastures and water. Maybe he started writing his psalms at this time.
- Returning home at night, alone....many many times. Maybe at first he was afraid, but he definitely got over it and became very confident (Ps 23:4)
- He killed a lion and a bear (1 Sam 17:34-37) an amazing achievement for a “boy” (1 Sam 17:33)
- Out there, in the open land, it was just him, his sheep and God. Maybe he talked to God aloud. God was looking for a man to replace Saul (1 Sam 13:14). He found (Acts 13:22) a shepherd boy, David. He watched how David looked after the sheep. He loved what he saw....and acted accordingly (Ps 78:70)
- The sheep would know his voice and he loved them (1 Sam 17:34-35) i.e. prepared to die for them when defending them; (Very interesting, in John 10, Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd...who loves his sheep so much that he is willing to lay down his life to save them.)
- David developed extraordinary courage and faith in God when he was alone, looking after the sheep.

Q: How do we spend our time, particularly when we are alone? What do we do? What thoughts go through our mind? How do we pass the time? (good examples, bad examples). What prevents us from being like David? How can we change? What do I need to change in my life / lifestyle, so I can develop a close walk with God? Decide today what you will change.....ask another disciple; get input; Remember - God looks for Davids...he is looking for people who can be devoted to him (Jer 30:21)

- David saw himself as a shepherd looking after his sheep. But in Psalm 23, he sees God, or the Lord, looking after him as if he was a sheep and God is his shepherd. Interesting! A change of roles. David knew what it meant to be a shepherd. He also knew what the sheep were like....now he sees himself as a sheep. If the Lord is our shepherd, this makes us all sheep !! What does this mean that we are all sheep?

- **Facts about sheep:**

In a circus you see bears, elephants, lions, tigers. You don't see sheep. Why? Because all those animals can be trained. But sheep are dumb animals. Cannot be trained. They are slow. Their eyesight is poor.

So is their hearing. They have little strength. Little stamina. No sense of direction. They get startled very easily. They have no offensive or defensive weapons – no fangs, no claws, can be caught very easily and dragged to the ground. They can't attack their enemies or defend themselves.

Sheep are vulnerable to danger from wolves and other wild animals as they cannot run very fast. They are not smart enough to avoid danger. That is why they require a shepherd. To take them to fertile areas, to protect them, keep them together so that they don't stray from the group. The shepherd has to watch over them constantly and be able to provide them food (grass) and water.

- We are like sheep. Are you offended that you are called a sheep? We may not know it, but we wander. Get lost. Do stupid things. Mess up. Just like sheep get lost and find themselves in tricky and dangerous situations, so also the same happens to us (SHARE..what are some stupid things you have done....examples of how you messed up).

That is why we need a shepherd. Can you honestly say - The Lord is my shepherd (this implies that you are listening to his voice and are following him.."My" makes it personal...).

- God compares himself to a shepherd...and he compares Israel to sheep.
- God led his people Israel out of Egypt (not 1 person but approx. 2 million, not counting livestock). He fed them, gave them water, guided them through the desert, protected them....everything that a good shepherd does. Dt 8:15, Dt 29:5, Ps 78:52.
- God uses this analogy (He is the shepherd) because many great men of the Bible – Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Moses – were all shepherds at some point in time. They all knew about stubborn sheep, sheep that got lost, sheep that got killed, sheep that strayed and had to be brought back.....

If God is our shepherd, and we are the sheep, are we listening to his voice.....obeying.....trusting.....?

The good shepherd leads them from the front, so that whoever attacks has to go through him first. He calls the sheep by name and they come to him. If two good shepherds shared a meal and their flocks became intermixed, they would stand at opposite ends of the field, call out, and the sheep would sort themselves out. The good shepherd is their guide through danger, their gate to safety, who rescues them when they are lost, who heals them when they get hurt. The good shepherd is their life.

Conclusion:

Isa 40:11 This verse describes how God looks after us; see the words - tends, gathers, carries, gently leads.

Q. Are you allowing God to be your shepherd today, or whose voice/s are you listening to?

Q. How can I let God be my shepherd.....what do I need to do?

Q. What happens if I allow God to be my shepherd?

1. For Home work: Read Eze 34 – Why is God angry here? And what does He decide to do? What can we learn from this chapter?
2. Memorize Ps 23:1-4
3. We know the names of 3 of David's brothers (1 Sam 16). Can you tell me the names of 3 more brothers of David?
4. Read 1 Sam chapters 1 to 10.
5. Memorize John 10:11.

(Summarize: last week we talked about the Lord is my shepherd.....what do you remember?
Time for a short quiz.....come prepared with 5 questions based on the last lesson).

I shall not be in want.....read the full psalm. Today we will focus on the next 6 words.

- David calls God his shepherd. And says: I shall not be in want.
- In other words, God is my shepherd ...what else do I need? Nothing ! David believed God would supply all his needs. He could say - I am content. I do not lack anything.
- But do WE really feel this way? Can we truly say – I am content. I am happy with what I have? My salary? My house? My family?
- We want more stuff, we want nicer stuff, we want lots of stuff.
- God knows best what each of us needs – (ask the audience what do we need daily): eg. water, food, shelter, clothing, good health, good friends, to be loved, etc.
- Yes we need money too, but how much?
- Pro 30:7-9 The writer here is scared if he gets too much he will forget God! There are plenty of warnings for rich people in the bible. It is very hard for them to go to heaven.

We live in a world where Money, Beauty, Glamour, fancy cars, big homes, expensive TVs.....are being advertised. And that if you have these, then you will be happy; content; at rest; at peace. Sure....these things will give you satisfaction.....for a while. Then you will want a bigger home, a more expensive car, a bigger TV....When will it end? In trying to get these things, you might wander away from God.

- James 4:1-4 We all have desires. When we want something (that God has given to someone else), we get envious and wish / desire that for ourselves. Fights and quarrels result because of this.
- Instead of asking God for what we need, we try to get what he has given to someone else (v2). But God shall not answer our greedy desires.
- Think about David as a shepherd. David was the youngest in his family. Probably he was ignored. He used to live away from home, in the wilderness and look after his father's flock. He had no one to talk to. He was surrounded only by an innocent yet a dumb flock. He had many needs (find a good grazing place for the sheep, water, safety, etc.) and his hope was in God only. Just imagine - David's meeting place with God was in the open fields. Green pastures. Quiet waters. Dark valleys (picture millions of stars above).

CHALLENGE: Where is your meeting place with God? How much do you value your relationship with him? What effort are you making to seek him, talk to him....in quiet places where you can see his creation.....get up early....go outside for a prayer walk. When you are close to God, you will feel, you will say like David - I shall not want. You will trust in the Lord for your daily needs. He will meet your genuine needs.

EXERCISE:

- Have you counted your blessings recently? What are you most grateful for? Write this down..take 2 minutes. OK. Now write down the things you want most right now. Take 2 minutes.
- Now, which will have a greater impact on you – losing all the things for which you are grateful for OR gaining all the things you currently want.

The Christian life is not a problem free life, bad things still happen; but God is near to us, and while God may allow bad things to happen, God can and will help us through them.

- Php 4:4-7 If you are worried / anxious, you need to ask, through prayer for help, where you allow God's presence to lift you up. God is near. Tell God about your joys and concerns, make your requests known and then thank God for listening to you. Paul in Philippians says that when we do these two things, i.e. rejoice in the Lord, and 2. present our requests to him with thanksgiving, then the Peace of God that passes understanding will fill us, and will keep our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.
- God has been providing us every single day....think about it. But fear and anxiety can easily cripple us in life. This is the lesson of the thorny ground (Mt 13:22) Jesus compared this ground to those who are consumed by the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things.
- You are deceived if you think that material possessions will make you happy. But more than this, you are deceived if you think you possess the capacity to make yourself rich. All things come from His hand. Many times, God answers our prayers and gives us more money, etc. but then instead of giving more we give less, we get even more greedy...little by little our commitment falls, we get caught up in the world and we slowly wander far from God.
- God gave the Israelites manna for 40 years. Every day. They were to gather just enough for the day (Ex 16:15-18). They were not supposed to save any manna for the next day (Ex 16:19-21) But some did. In Ex 16:22-30 – On the 6th day of the week, they were told to gather for 2 days. Yet some disobeyed, went out on the 7th day to gather (v27). We are like them. We want more. We worry about the future. We are not content with what we have for today. Worry, worry, worry. Don't. Why? Because Jesus says so.
- Jesus says in Mt 6:25-34 he will take care of our basic necessities. It doesn't get any more basic than our need for food, water, and clothing. He also says 'Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things, but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well'.

God will provide for you DAILY.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Mt 6:11 saying - give us today our daily bread. He did not say – give us lots of food for the whole week / month/ year, plenty of money so I don't have to worry, a nice big house with lots of servants, etc. The request was for the day. 1 day. Live 1 day at a time. He was teaching his disciples to depend on God daily.

Challenge:

1. Today – instead of wanting more, think how you can give more of your time, in your contribution, etc.
2. How you can use your home / homes for Bible Talks, devos, other meetings to save the lost. Your treasure – is it in heaven or on the earth?
3. Invite a family to your house for a meal (Eze 16:49)

1. For home work: Read John 10
2. Read 1 Sam chapters 11 – 20.
3. Memorize Php 4:4-7; Mt 6:32-33
4. Write down Ecc 5:10; Ecc 7:29
5. Read 1 Tim 6:6-10; Ps 49:16-20; 1 Jn 2:15-17; Write down what these verses are telling you.

(Summarize: last week we talked about being content. Not being in want.....what do you remember? Time for a short quiz.....come prepared with 5 questions based on the last lesson).

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Ask what are our two greatest needs? (Food and water).

A sheep requires grass and water too. The ground in Israel is dry and scorched by the sun. Unless the shepherd goes to the trouble of clearing the rocks, plowing the soil, planting the seed, irrigating the land....there will be no grass for the sheep. Maybe David had to go far and wide with the flock and search for green pastures so that the sheep could have access to grass and water. He had to look for new places whenever the grass got over. Watching the sheep, herding them, getting them to stay together, moving them along, is hard work. Think about it. Controlling 100 or more sheep, each one wanting to go in a different direction. It's tiring. David needed to rest and so did the sheep.

Just like David (the shepherd) looked after his father's flock, he loves the way God (his shepherd) gives him rest, gives him water and how he restores his spirit. Picture the scene - A shepherd watching his sheep sprawled beneath the summer sun with bellies full from munching on rich green grass. They require rest from walking and green pastures that allow them to fill up quickly and then lie down to rest and chew their cud. David feels the same way like a well-fed sheep does...for a Christian imagine the calmness of your soul as salvation flows like gently running stream over it and all WANT is taken away.

Working in Mumbai is stressful. Heavy loads. Crowds everywhere. Traffic. Going from one place to another. Struggling. Getting exhausted. Getting pounded. Getting worn out. Money is tight. Troubles at home. Troubles at work. We have to get our minds around this. Stop. Think. I am a sheep. Belonging to God, the shepherd. He loves me. He knows my name. Am I taking time to rest daily or I am slogging continuously? Many companies give their employees leave / holidays. But they also allow them to encash their leave. So instead of taking leave and being with family or taking a vacation, the employees prefer taking the extra money and not going on leave. NO...don't do that. God requires you to rest from your work. The Lord wants us to take time to rest from our busy lives. Spend time with Him and you'll feel refreshed.

QUESTION: Are we getting our rest daily or are we caught up too much in our jobs with little time for resting? Some people (after a hard day's work) want to drink heavily and party till late instead of resting. Others indulge themselves and go on shopping sprees ("I deserve this because I work so hard"). Others look for love in the wrong places. But it is only God who can lead you to the right place – if you allow him to. Jesus took time to rest – he withdrew from multitudes.

You lie down because you are tired. Everyone needs to rest. Stop working. Get some sleep. Then you wake up energized after resting. Are you able to lie down in green pastures? Not literally but meaning – taking time to rest. Lie down for a while. Rest. Comfort. Are you taking time to rest or will God have to force you to rest ? (sickness, hospital, accident, etc). The forced rests that occur when He makes you lie down can be humiliating and painful.

He restores my soul...comes after you allow yourself to be led by God. It literally means – He causes my life to return. When your spirit is weary, exhausted, troubled anguished....God gives it life once again, heals it, encourages it and fills it with joy and excitement. God can restore your soul, revive it – first you

need to feed on his word, next you need to rest a while, meditate, relax (maybe go to different place, a mountain top, a valley, a beach, somewhere quiet and peaceful) and then God can restore you, make you anew.

What depletes or empties your soul? Being busy, doing the ministry and people not responding, getting impatient and angry, being around ungodly people, falling into sin (eg. greed, lust, laziness), health problems, financial problems....

Ps 19:7 states *The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.* If each of us allows God's word to enter our hearts daily (open your bible and let God talk to you), this will do wonders for restoring us, physically, mentally, spiritually. Many people have to take pills, injections, see doctors, psychiatrists, etc. and pay a huge sum to get well mentally. Some health specialists say that most hospital beds are occupied by those who have emotional problems rather than physical problems. But a generous dose of God's word DAILY is tonic for our soul, our spirit. It revives, restores the soul (which was made in God's image and is in you).

He guides me in paths of righteousness..... David, as a shepherd, would know that sheep are creatures of habit. They can't be left to themselves. They require careful handling and detailed direction. Otherwise many pastures get ruined beyond repair by overgrazing and poor management of the sheep. Sheep have to be led from one grazing ground to another. David had to survey the land, make his plan, move his flock at the right time, see places where they would thrive, see that they don't overgraze and ruin the ground in one area... He trusted God to show him the paths of righteousness.

Like sheep, we are stiff-necked and stubborn. Isa 53:6 says *We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.* We do this deliberately, repeatedly. It's called PRIDE. We insist we know what's best for us even though we know disaster will come. Just as sheep blindly follow one another along the same path, we also cling to the same habits that we see have ruined other's lives. I want to do what I want. My own wishes, my own ideas. In spite of the warning – Pro 14:12 and 16:25 *there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.* But Jesus says I am the Way and in John 10:10 – *I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*

Do you want to be led in paths of righteousness? This goes against our mindset because we want to lead, not follow. We want to turn to our own way even though it may take us straight into trouble. We don't want to deny ourselves or give up our right to make our own decisions. But Jesus leads us in paths of righteousness.....are we on His path?

Conclusion:

- God wants you to take the time to rest. So he can restore you. What are you doing about this?
- When is the last time you went on a vacation with your family? To be surrounded by nature. When will you plan your holiday so you can all get your souls restored?
- Are you living a life of tough self-denial? Think. It is not the normal way people would live, but Christ makes it clear that to follow him is to deny oneself.

1. For home work: Memorize Ps 23 the whole psalm without a mistake. Write it down so you are sure.
2. Memorize Pro 14:12 (same as 16:25)
3. Read 1 Sam chapter 21 – 31.
4. Pray from Ps 25:4-5 Think of what are God's ways, and what paths have you learnt to walk on?
5. Read Ps 27:4 How often do you long to be with God? To spend time with him? Talk to him? What can you do to improve the quality of your time and ensure it is consistent?

(Summarize: last week we talked about taking rest; to restore our souls. To walk on God's paths. Time for a short quiz.....come prepared with 5 questions based on the last lesson).

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.

Walking in the night, all alone, in a fearful place where bad things happen can be very scary. David must have experienced fear, death and danger many, many times for his sheep and himself. Wild animals. Robbers. Treacherous terrain. Snakes. How many nights would he have to return home late, through dark valleys? Valleys where you sensed that you could die here. But every time he returned home safely, every time he beat wild animals off, every time he got victory, his faith in God increased. It grew. Upto the point where he could say *I will fear no evil* – even in the most dangerous of situations. He knew he was not alone...*for you are with me.*

How can we explain his confidence in taking on Goliath? It has to be what he learned and experienced when he took care of the sheep. And how he saw God was on his side, delivering him and giving him victory while he was protecting his flock. His trust and faith in God grew in the valleys and fields when he had to have close encounters with death many times in order to save his flock from being killed. He won his battles all alone, but he knew it was because God was with him. Amazing!

What are some difficult situations you are facing right now? You may have to walk through difficult situations at times – medical emergencies, death of a loved one, cancer that is spreading, bad accidents, loss of job, children running away, bitter fights, pressure at work and everywhere...it seems that you are walking in a dark valley with the shadow of death all around. Write down some stressful situations you are facing.

How brave are you at these times? Are you ready for battle? Do you sense victory, no matter what happens because God is with you. Can you be like David, ready to battle because you know you will win? Do you say.....Bring it on, I am ready, because God fights for me....**What is your attitude?** Defeated? Or ready to take on WHATEVER because you trust in God's deliverance.

Every shepherd carried a rod and a staff. He carried **the rod** at his belt. It was a stout piece of wood, perhaps three feet long, with a lump of wood the size of an orange at one end of it. **The staff** was a long stick with its top shaped like a hook or crook. Always the shepherd walked with it in his hand, and, when a sheep showed signs of straying, or got caught in a bush, he would stretch out and pull it back with the crook.

Just like David would use his rod and staff for the sheep, he sees how God takes care of him. The Lord also has his rod and his staff. You may get prodded or pushed, at times, but it is for your good, for your protection and to keep you on your path. The rod and staff are there to comfort you and know that you are cared for and loved.

How can a rod and staff bring comfort? W. Phillip Keller in his book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* brings some clarity to the issue. A rod and a staff are the universal instruments used by shepherds. The rod serves four basic functions. **First**, the rod stands "as a symbol of the shepherd's strength, his power, and his authority in any serious situation." **Second**, it is the instrument the shepherd uses to discipline and correct wayward sheep that wandered off. "With it, the owner is able to carry out effective control of

his flock in every situation.” **Third**, the shepherd uses his rod to examine and count the sheep. The Old Testament term was “passing under the rod and this meant not only coming under the owner’s control and authority, but also to be subject to his most careful, intimate, and firsthand examination.” **Finally**, the rod serves as an “instrument of protection for the shepherd and his sheep when they are in danger. It is used both as a defense and a deterrent against anything that would attack.”

God wants to do this in our lives. Examine us with care to see that all is well. We are good at hiding things, maybe not confessing sin. When we make bad choices, the rod is useful in disciplining us. Do you like the discipline of God? Sometimes it could be a gentle examination, sometimes a whack! It all depends upon our willingness or stubbornness. Confess any unconfessed sin today.

The staff was used solely as a source of comfort for the sheep. How can a curved stick be a source of comfort? **First**, the shepherd uses it to draw sheep together into intimate relationship. If a newborn lamb is separated from his mother, the shepherd uses the crook of the staff to lift the lamb and reunite it with the ewe. **Second**, the shepherd uses the staff to draw the sheep “close to himself for intimate examination.” He can, for the purpose of establishing relationship, use his staff to pull in timid sheep that would typically keep away from the shepherd. The **third** purpose of the staff is to guide the sheep. The shepherd will reach out his staff and gently lay it on a sheep. The sheep is comforted by his touch and with some gentle pressure, the shepherd guides the sheep in the direction he desires.

Do you feel God’s rod and staff comforting you? The rod can be compared to the Word / Bible. God’s Word can be used as a tool to discipline us and prevent us from going astray.

The staff can be compared to the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit and that “the Spirit of Truth will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:13).

How are you doing as a sheep today? Are you with the flock or have you wandered off? Lost and alone? Are you making your own way in the fields not caring about the others or are you following God’s way?

Conclusion:

- What are you afraid of? Write these things down. Then Pray. And go and do battle with these things that you are afraid of. Expect to win. Watch and see how God will give you the victory.
- How have you been disciplined in the past by God? Did you resist it or did you accept it? Get together with your discipler / mentor and share somethings that are troubling you.
- How are you allowing God to lead you? Do you go where he wants you to go? Or do you do what HE wants you to do?

1. For home work: Invite someone who intimidates you to a Bible Talk. Do it every day for a week.
2. Memorize Heb 12:11
3. In Psalm 119 write down the following 10 verses: v9, v18, v62, v71, v97, v99, v105, v136, v164, v176. What is unique about this amazing Psalm?
4. Read John 14:26, John 16:13, John 16:15.
5. Read 2 Sam chapters 1 – 12.

(Summarize: last week we talked about scary situations. Being near death. And how to trust God. Time for a short quiz.....come prepared with 5 questions based on the last lesson).

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

Imagine God preparing a table for you, while all your enemies watch. He puts the table cloth, then the plates, the glasses, the cutlery, the fruits, the food, the drinks, the sweets. Your favorite foods and desserts. A feast for you. Prepared by God. Like an expensive buffet in a 5 Star Hotel. There is so much.

But your enemies are waiting. Watching. They want to kill you, oppose you, accuse you, slander you, speak ill of you, but God is honoring you, serving you. So what can they do? Nothing! Rom 8:33 *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.* They can do nothing, say nothing against the person whom God has decided to honor! Do not listen to Satan's lies.

Satan is our accuser. The enemy. He will do anything to take you away from God. Make you feel worthless. That you don't matter. That you cannot change. That you cannot be forgiven. That it is too late. All negativity comes from him. Feelings of hatred, anger, resentment originate from him. Desires for material things flow from him. Satan wants to press home his attack. But then he sees God (in you). He stands far off. He cannot attack. Because you are strong, filled with the Spirit, imitating Christ wherever you go.

How could David see this and feel this way? So secure in his understanding, so imaginative in his thoughts. It can only be because he had such a close relationship with God. Have you ever thought this way? Jesus has gone to prepare a room for you (John 14:1-3). God is preparing a feast for you, a banquet. We need to encourage ourselves with these thoughts, just like how you feel when you are going to a good friend's house for dinner.....or you go for a holiday and the hotel you stay in has an amazing room with a great view.

Not only does David see God preparing a feast for him, he says - *You anoint my head with oil.* Kings, priests and prophets were anointed with oil to set them apart as God's chosen leaders. David, the "man after God's own heart," is officially anointed with oil not once but three times (1Sa 16:12-13; 2Sa 2:4; 2Sa 5:3). In Psalm 89:19-21, the psalmist declares, *"Once you spoke in a vision, to your faithful people you said: 'I have bestowed strength on a warrior; I have exalted a young man from among the people. I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him. My hand will sustain him; surely my arm will strengthen him..'"* David welcomes his anointing. He loves it. He rejoices in it. It is a sign of God's confirmation in him. As a shepherd, David would anoint the head of the sheep with a certain type of oil to soothe scratches and wounds and to keep away insects and flies. It protected and healed them.

In much the same way, when we get baptized we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of God's presence that he comes and lives in us. It is a gift. There is nothing that we can do to earn it. 2Co 1:20-21 - *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.* Imagine this. We are of God. He has put his stamp on us..saying BELONGING TO GOD. How does that make you feel?

1 John 2:20 - *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.* It is a blessing that you know the truth about God when so many millions do not know. We show our gratefulness by sharing the truth with our friends and strangers that we pass by everyday.

My cup overflows..... This phrase means that I am given even more than I need or can use. The words form a very powerful image of a cup of joy and happiness that overflows as there is so much of it. It means I am truly abundant, abundantly loved and cared for beyond even my needs or wants.

Have you ever wondered when you go to somebody's house how long you're supposed to stay and when you're supposed to leave? Or have you had someone come to your house and you didn't know how to tell them to "get lost". There is a custom in the Middle East that everyone knew when they had to go. It had to do with filling the cup. If you came to somebody's house, even if you were a total stranger (in the desert strangers take care of strangers), the first thing you do is offer them a cup of water or wine ... They drink the cup and you refill it. They drink that cup and you refill it. ... As long as the cup kept being refilled it meant you were welcome to stay. If you came to somebody's house and after several refills, they left the cup empty, it meant your time was up -- it was time to leave. If the host liked the person and wanted him to stay a long time, they would take the cup and fill it -- not only to the rim but they would let it overflow. You don't waste water or wine in the desert. But when an overflowing cup was shown it was a symbol that you can stay as long as you want. It meant you are special.

David sees God pouring into his cup and it overflows. God is telling him to stay, don't go. When God says to you, "I'm going to fill your cup to overflowing" it means you matter to God and you're special to Him. Has someone hurt you? Offended you? Cheated you? Jesus invites you to a banquet. He says "I'll prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies. I'll anoint your head with oil. Your cup will overflow." He will take care of you.

Think of all the blessings that you have received in your life and then try to realize that you have received blessings without you even knowing it, because God works through others also. Our blessings have been so numerous; we can't even begin to count them. God's love has no limit, His grace cannot be measured, and He is all powerful...as long as we strive to stay with Him, He gives and gives and gives again.

CONCLUSION:

- Think positive thoughts. Encouraging thoughts. Loving thoughts. God's kindness. God's generosity.
- Take your family out for a nice meal this week. Or get together with 2 or 3 more families and have a joint dinner with lots of different dishes. Imagine what it will be like in heaven. Enjoy the meal together and share about God's blessings in your life.
- Philippians 4:8-9 says, *"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.*

1. For home work: Memorize Php 4:8-9
2. Read Psalm 89. What specific things does God say about David?
3. Read 2 Co 1:20-21. Remember your day of baptism. Who was there? What was it like? Call, write or email the brother or sister who invited you. Or studied with you.
4. Read 2 Sam chapters 13 – 24.

(Summarize: last week we talked about God prepares a feast for us. Serves us. Anoints us. Time for a short quiz.....come prepared with 5 questions based on the last lesson).

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

- David, as a shepherd, loved his flock. He cared for them. He protected them. He knew his flock has nothing to worry or fear about as long as they were under his protection. God noticed this. (Acts 13:22). But God allowed David to face danger. To see how he would react? David reacted with faith and boldness – killing a lion and a bear. Later he slew Goliath, who for 40 days tormented the entire army of Israel. Remember, David was only a “shepherd boy”. His trust and confidence in God was like a mountain. Firm, unshakeable and towering.
- In the same manner, if we allow God to be our shepherd (*The Lord is MY shepherd....*), we receive his kindness, his protection, his guidance, his love, his tests, his discipline, all the days of our life on this earth. David says “Surely” not “hopefully”i.e. he is confident that goodness and love are pursuing him, chasing after him.

Question: We all want goodness and love to follow us. We all want to go to heaven. But are we prepared to face the tests that God puts us through? e.g. Getting fired from a job! Someone else gets promoted! Someone close to you gets cancer! You get mistreated and slandered! A Goliath (difficult challenge) comes into your life! How do you react?

These situations can allow our faith to grow or diminish. If we react in a worldly manner, we lose the opportunity to pass God’s tests. No one said the Christian life is going to be easy. You are going to be hurt by the world, hurt in the church and hurt by your brother and sister...just like Jesus was. Do you react in the same manner as your Lord?

Rom 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* (in all things – this means good or bad)

Jas 1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.* (what gifts has God given you?)

Before glory, comes pain. Before exaltation comes humility. Before maturity comes perseverance. Before getting blessings and love, we sometimes have to experience curses and rejection. David went through some extraordinary difficulties before becoming King. Even after becoming King he faced challenges. But in all these situations, he allowed himself to be led by God. He repented when he did wrong. He praised God when he got victory over his enemies. You want goodness and love to follow you? Good. Be prepared for pain and suffering first.

- David was anointed to be king over Israel (as a boy, maybe 15 years old) but then what did he do? He did not become King right away. He went back to being a shepherd. It took many, many years before he was crowned King (2 Sam 5:3). Almost 15 years, if not more! Can you imagine David sitting there with the flock at evening contemplating the goodness and greatness of God. Why me Lord? Wondering about his anointing by Samuel. Why were his elder brothers not chosen? He was the youngest of them all.....chosen to be the next King of Israel. How will it happen? When will it happen? Saul did not die right away. David had to wait. In fact, Saul wanted to kill him so David had

to flee (1 Sam 19:11-12). Later on, when David had a chance to kill King Saul, he did not.....he trusted that God would give him the kingship according to his timing (1 Sam 24:6-10, 1 Sam 26:11, 23). Incredible patience. From a common shepherd boy to a king.

Question: Are you patient? Do you want things right away? Do you want your prayers answered now? Do you look for shortcuts? Do you like everything to be quick and easy? God answers our prayers according to his timing. You must pray and then leave it up to God. His timing is always right. And if you don't get what you want, maybe it is for your own good. Even though David was anointed by Samuel to be King, he had to wait a long time, he had to escape being attacked by Saul, he was on the run from Saul's army, he could have thought – what is going on here? But he waited, he trusted, and when the time was right, he was appointed and anointed once more, as King.

God is never in a hurry. Are you? God is never late, he always comes on time. What about you? When God says something, it happens - sometimes immediately, sometimes after hundreds of years. Do you keep your word..whatever you say, you do? God gives his best. Do you? (Col 3:23)

Psalm 23 teaches us the following:

- All of us are Sheep in the sight of God. He is our Shepherd.
- Jesus said the sheep knows the voice of their Shepherd. Therefore let us keep our ears tuned to hear God's voice. Hearing messages, Quiet times, meditation, deep studying of your Bible....you will hear God speak to you.
- As we follow the Shepherd, we can be sure he will provide for us, our burdens will be light, he will refresh us, we will be healed, guided, and have purpose. Goodness and kindness will follow us wherever we go. We can succeed when tested, we will always have protection, we can overcome things in this life, be disciplined when we go astray, because the Good Shepherd watches over us.

CONCLUSION:

God desires to guide us, his sheep, in his ways.

God seeks to comfort us when we are exhausted.

God provides security for us in very difficult and dangerous times.

God allows us to find security in him during these difficult times

God graciously provides for our needs in abundance, not just enough to barely get by.

God sees his relationship with us as one of an intimate friend, living together in his house, as part of his family. There goodness and love abide because God is good and God is love.

1. For home work: Once again, write out and memorize Psalm 23.
2. Memorize Rom 8:28
3. Read Psalm 22, 23, and 24. What do you notice about these 3 Psalms?
4. What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit? Do you have all of them? If not, why not?
5. Read 1 Kings chapters 1 and 2.

Final exam next week. For 30 minutes. On all the previous 6 weeks home work assignments. Also some questions will be asked from 1st and 2nd Samuel.