

The Lord Is My Shepherd

by Kelly McFadden

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 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. 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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

—Psalm 23

Sheep are notoriously known as dumb animals, unable to make decisions on their own. They simply follow the lead of the shepherd, stopping when he stops, walking when he walks. They never think for themselves. Of course, as I read this psalm by David, I think he has a different view of sheep.

Most likely this psalm is familiar to you. It is a psalm of comfort and peace; a reminder that the Lord is with you at all times, even in the darkest hour. People cling to this psalm when someone dies, when there is illness, a loss of a job, or a relationship ended. We cry out to the Lord who is our Shepherd, begging Him to show us which way to turn.

David, the author of this psalm, was a shepherd himself. He knew as well as anyone how lost a sheep was without its shepherd. The shepherd took care of every need. The shepherd led his sheep to water and food, and provided time to rest and recoup. It was when the sheep walked away and tried to do things on their own that trouble came, as they too easily walked away from their best interests.

In this psalm, David doesn't focus on the *stupidity* of sheep. He focuses on whom they are following. For they follow the one who will protect and provide for them. They follow the one who wants to give extravagant blessing, unfailing love and goodness. Sounds like some smart sheep to me.

How else can you and I walk through death, but with the Lord at our side? He is the only one to conquer it. It is He who offers us His hand, guiding us to eternity with Him. He wants us to have eternal life, eternal blessings and eternal goodness. But, He also wants us to be as smart as sheep and choose to follow Him daily. He wants us to choose to walk through this life walking near to Him and holding onto His promises.

GOING DEEPER:

1. In what ways do you see that you choose to follow your own way?
2. In what ways do you stay focused on the path the Lord has for you?
3. Why do you let Him lead you in some ways and not others? How can you work towards following Him in all ways?

FURTHER READING:

Psalm 62; 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Peter 2:25