

*"...He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name."*

PSALM 23:3





Psalm 23

HE PROVIDES DIRECTION

Do you remember the day you got your driver's license? Leaving the Department of Motor Vehicles with the legal right to drive is an exciting feeling. Even better is jumping in the car and cruising down the road with the music playing and the windows down. Driving places is part of a woman's life and now-a-days drivers need not fear getting lost. GPS navigation is like a trusted friend, but there was a time when GPS navigation did not exist. Depending on your age you might remember trying to find your way to new destinations the old fashioned way...writing the directions on a piece of paper or using a physical map. Missing a turn, not seeing a street name or unknowingly heading the wrong direction was a real possibility. Without GPS to pinpoint the way, a girl could easily become lost or end up in the wrong place, maybe even a dangerous place.

Thankfully, built into every smartphone is a navigation system. With a few strokes of the finger the system will guide you turn by turn to your desired location. It's comforting to know you can get where you need to go without worry or fear as long as you follow the route. Just like driving to physical locations requires direction, so your soul needs direction too. Without a guide to show the way, you can easily get lost by following the world's ways or by letting curiosity about sinful things lead you astray. **Thankfully, you have a personal guide who lovingly directs your soul toward the right pathway of life.** He is the Shepherd, the One who made you and the One who knows the best way for you to go. When you follow Him, He will surely bring you safely to your destination.



SOUL NEED #3: DIRECTION

Traits: Navigate which way to go. Pathway. Route. Guide.

Struggle: Don't want to follow. Stubborn. Insists on own way.

Truth: The Shepherd provides personal direction & it's right & good.

DIRECTIONALLY CHALLENGED

David continues comparing his relationship with God to that of a shepherd and his sheep by stating, "*He guides me along right paths...*" (Psalm 23:3). David understood sheep are directionally challenged creatures. They have a tendency to wander off and get lost, to follow a sheep who's gone astray or to walk the same worn out, rutty road over and over again. Like sheep, Christian women are vulnerable to losing all sense of direction too. Look at the three scenarios below.

Woman One

This woman didn't mean to wander away from God but the worries and cares of life have consumed her mind and heart. Without realizing it, she walked away from God to follow her own plan. Her own way led her far away from the Shepherd & the distance has left her feeling lost and alone..

Woman Two

This woman struggles with worldly temptation.. The shiny new thing, cultural influences or sinful desires easily lead her to poor choices..This woman says to herself, "*I can dabble in this and still maintain my Christian life.*" Before she realizes it, she's been led astray. Following her fleshly desires resulted in unfollowing God.

Woman Three

This woman wants to follow Jesus but she struggles to make new habits. She likes her way of life. It's familiar. It's known. It's predictable. And it's hers. She continues to walk the same roads over and over again, even pathways that aren't healthy or good. This woman is trapped by her own self-deception.

1. Which of the the three women above do you most closely relate to? Why?

EXAMINE CLOSELY

At the beginning of Psalm 23, David confidently declares, "*The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need*" (Psalm 23:1). The remainder of the Psalm supports why David lacks nothing. As you dig into the next section of Psalm 23 ask God to help you understand how He meets your needs so you can be as sure as David when you say, "*The LORD is my shepherd.*"

Look at the Scripture and answer the questions below.

"...He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name."

Psalm 23:3 NLT

1. Underline any words that create a mental image. What pictures come to mind when you read this verse? Make notes below.
2. What human needs are represented in this verse?
3. Circle all the personal pronouns. Who are the personal pronouns referring to?
4. Put a box around the verbs. How do these verbs inform you about what is happening?
5. Summarize what you learned about the Shepherd.

HE GUIDES ME ALONG RIGHT PATHS

Sheep can't be driven or forced to go. They must be gently and lovingly led. A good shepherd points out the way, he leads from the front and he travels along with the sheep. As the overseer of the flock, the shepherd guides the sheep with his voice. The sheep know what his voice sounds like and they can distinguish his voice from other voices. When the sheep follow their shepherd's voice they can rest assured they are on the right path. Even when the road is rough and dry they can trust the shepherd. He always takes them to places of rest and restoration. Places away from danger. Places of safety and peace.

6. Look up John 10:25-27 and answer the questions below.

- Who is the personal Shepherd of God's sheep?
- What do God's sheep know and do?

7. **A girl can know Jesus but still choose not to follow Him in her daily life.** Hearing and following His voice is a matter of the heart. Read Psalm 25. What do you learn about the heart of the woman who looks to the Shepherd to guide and lead her? Draw a line from the verse to the correct heart attitude.

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|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Psalm 25:4 | A heart that is humble. |
| 2. Psalm 25:5 | A heart that fears God. |
| 3. Psalm 25:9 | A heart that waits on & hopes in God. |
| 4. Psalm 25:10 | A heart with eyes on God. |
| 5. Psalm 25:14 | A heart that asks God. |
| 6. Psalm 25:15 | A heart that obeys God. |

8. Look at the list of heart attitudes from question 7 and write the one you need to work on the most. Ask God to change your heart in that area.

9. Look up the the verses below and note the two primary ways God guides and directs believers today.

- John 16:13
- Psalm 119:105



Soul Direction

**WHEN YOU NEED TO KNOW
WHICH WAY TO GO**

READ YOUR BIBLE & ASK THE HOLY
SPIRIT TO SHOW YOU THE WAY

BRINGING HONOR TO HIS NAME

In Psalm 23, David called God by His personal name Yahweh, also known as LORD. God's names reveal His character and nature to us. Yahweh means the right here, right now God who has always existed and never changes. David's confidence that God would lead him along right paths *bringing honor to His name* was grounded in the character of Yahweh. He knew his well-being was closely connected to Yahweh's reputation. Yahweh is a faithful shepherd who takes care of His sheep and keeps His promises. He is motivated to personally lead His sheep on the best path for each one individually because what is best for them also honors His name.

Trusting other people to follow through with their promises has the potential to end in disappointment. However, trusting in God will never fail you. You can count on Him to be true to His character.

10. Why can you trust God to lead your soul in right paths for His name sake?

- Psalm 145:13
- 2 Timothy 2:13
- Hebrews 10:23

11. Go back and re-read Psalm 23:1. As you follow the Shepherd, what does the Shepherd promise to give you?

God's faithfulness accompanies your soul as you walk His right roads. As you rely on the Shepherd to lead you, He is glorified. When you make difficult but right decisions, when you keep your ears attuned to the Shepherd's voice when other voices are vying for your attention or when you travel through inner pain with steadfast hope, God's name is honored and lifted high. He is faithful to "*bring honor to His name*" (Psalm 23:3).

WHEN YOU ARE ON THE WRONG PATH

At the beginning of this chapter you were presented with three different women who walked away from the right path (see page 27). Most Christian women can relate to all three situations at different times in their lives. Maybe you are facing one of those situations right now. **What should a girl do when she finds herself on the wrong path?**

The answer is so simple it's almost too good to be true! Simply turn back to the Shepherd. The Bible says, "Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). **To turn means to change direction, reverse or go back.** The book of James provides great insight on how to turn to God. James says, "Come close to God and He will come close to you" (James 4:8). Below are three ways to draw near to God. Your soul can get back on track when you do the following -

Humble Yourself:

Humble Yourself (James 4:7) - humble yourself by realizing God knows what's best for your life. Surrender your plans to His.

Resist the Devil:

Resist the Devil (James 4:7) - Satan doesn't want you to turn back to God. Refuse listening to his lies. Listen to your Shepherd's voice calling you back.

Wash Your Hands:

Wash Your Hands (James 4:8) - Confess your sins and receive forgiveness. Live rightly. Wholeheartedly follow Jesus.

1. When you feel far away from God are you quick to humble yourself, resist the devil and wash your hands (confess)? Why or why not?

ACTS PRAYER

As you write your prayer consider what you have learned about Psalm 23.

Dear Lord,

Adoration

Give praise, honor, and glory to
God for He is Lord over all.

I praise you because...

Confession

Repent, come clean & admit
your sins, ask for forgiveness.

Forgive me for...

Thanksgiving

Recount your blessings & thank
God for all He has done.

Thank you for...

Supplication

Make your requests, both for
yourself and others. Ask God for
what you need.

My requests are...

In Jesus' Name, Amen