

PROTOTYPE

"MODEL FAITHFULNESS" PSALM 23:1-6

This Week's Core Competency

Personal God – I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life. Psalm 121:1, 2

- 1 *I lift up my eyes to the hills-
where does my help come from?*
2 *My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

Standing in awe before the majesty of the LORD, David asked, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? (Ps 8:4). The idea that the Creator of the heavens would take a personal interest in mere human beings made no earthly sense to the psalmist, who wrote:

- 1 *O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
above the heavens.*
2 *From the lips of children and infants
you have ordained praise
because of your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.*
3 *When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,*
4 *what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?*

***The twenty-third Psalm is the
nightingale of the Psalms.***

– Henry Ward Beecher

- 5 *You made him a little lower than the heavenly
beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.*
6 *You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet:*
7 *all flocks and herds,
and the beasts of the field,*
8 *the birds of the air,
and the fish of the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.*
9 *O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

Lest anyone doubt the truth of Psalm 8, David wrote Psalm 23 to describe the extent of God's personal interest in us humans. About this psalm, Henry Ward Beecher, a Congregationalist clergyman of the nineteenth century, eloquently writes:

"The twenty-third Psalm is the nightingale of the Psalms. It is small, of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh! It has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy, greater than the heart can conceive. Blessed be the day on which that Psalm was born! What would you say of a pilgrim commissioned of God to travel up and down the earth singing a strange melody, which, when one heard, caused him to forget whatever sorrow he had? And so the singing angel goes on his way through all lands, singing in the language of every nation, driving away trouble by the pulses of the air which his tongue moves with divine power. Behold just such an one! This pilgrim God has sent to speak in every language on the globe.

cont. pg. 2

It has charmed more griefs to rest than all the philosophy of the world. It has remanded to their dungeon more felon thoughts, more black doubts, more thieving sorrows, than there are sands on the sea-shore. It has comforted the noble host of the poor. It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the heart of the sick, of captives in dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illuminated; it has visited the prisoner, and broken his chains, and, like Peter's angel, led him forth in imagination, and sung him back to his home again. It has made the dying Christian slave freer than his master, and consoled those whom, dying, he left behind mourning, not so much that he was gone, as because they were left behind, and could not go too. Nor is its work done. It will go singing to your children and my children, and to their children, through all the generations of time; nor will it fold its wings till the last pilgrim is safe, and time ended; and then it shall fly back to the bosom of God, whence it issued, and sound on, mingled with all those sound of celestial joy which make heaven musical for ever" (*Life Thoughts*, cited by C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 2 vols., 1:403).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Psalm 23:1-6

A psalm of David.

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

3 he restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

4 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.

5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

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

Cf., another translation

23:1 The Lord is my shepherd,
I lack nothing.

23:2 He takes me to lush pastures,
he leads me to refreshing water.

23:3 He restores my strength.
He leads me down the right paths
for the sake of his reputation.

23:4 Even when I must walk through the
darkest valley,

I fear no danger,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff reassure me.

23:5 You prepare a feast before me
in plain sight of my enemies.
You refresh my head with oil;
my cup is completely full.

23:6 Surely your goodness and faithfulness will
pursue me all my days,
and I will live in the Lord's house for the rest of
my life. (the NET Bible)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Circle "my" in v. 1.

* Highlight the metaphor "shepherd" in v. 1.

* Underline the pronoun "he" in vv. 2, 3.

* Bracket the phrase "for his name's sake" in v. 3

* Underline twice the pronoun "you" in vv. 4, 5.

* Box "even though," indicating *contrast* in v. 4.

* Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 4.

* Highlight the figures "prepare a table" and "anoint my head" in v. 5.

* Bracket the phrase "in the presence of my enemies" in v. 5.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. After reading it, what word would you use to describe the tone of this psalm?
2. Psalm 23 uses two metaphors or images to picture the LORD. How is he depicted in the psalm?
3. Has the LORD ever made you lie down in green pastures, ever led you beside quiet waters, and restored your soul? Explain.
4. Put what "for his name's sake" means in your own words.
5. Explain the *contrast* in verse 4.
6. Compare your level of confidence in the LORD with that of the psalmist in verse 4.
7. Explain the *significance* of the phrase "in the presence of my enemies" in verse 5a.
8. What does verse 5b tell you about the LORD?
9. Do you take verse 6b as a blessing of the LORD or a promise of the psalmist?
10. **Discussion.** Talk about the last time this psalm brought you comfort

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The twenty-third psalm extols God for his goodness and love. As one author says, "The psalm expresses confidence in God's goodness—in this life and in the life to come. The personal way in which the psalmist speaks of God, the imagery of God's soothing guidance, and the ensuing confidence in God have all been factors in making this one of the most charming and beloved of the psalms. The universal appeal of this psalm lies in the comfort it gives to those who have confronted the most difficult periods of life. It is a psalm of God's strength and grace for all ages" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 252).

David describes the LORD in terms of two metaphors: shepherd and host. In verses 1-4 he elaborates on the first; in verses 5-6 he elaborates on the second. As a shepherd, the LORD meets his flock's every need. He provides for and protects each of his sheep but he does not fabricate a world free from hardship for them. What he provides his sheep is comforting, but the hints we get regarding what life may bring them is quite disturbing. David confesses, "I shall not be in want" because he runs the risk of being in want. He confesses, "I will fear no evil" because he runs the risk of being filled with fear in the face of the shadow of death. His confession, "He leads me beside quiet waters" suggests his many dangers and the many enemies that threaten to sap his life. His confession, "He restores my soul" suggests even those with a heart for God grow weary at times.

As a host, the LORD celebrates with his honored guest. "The Lord is the host at a banquet (cf. Isa 25:6-8) prepared for his child. The 'table' is laden with food and drink. Before entering into the

banquet hall, the host would anoint the honored guest with oil (45:7; 92:10; 133:2; Am 6:6; Lk 7:46) made by adding perfumes to olive oil. The 'cup' symbolizes the gracious and beneficent manner of entertainment. The overflowing cup pictures the Lord as giving the best to his child. It symbolizes the care and provision of God, previously represented by 'green pastures' and 'quiet waters.' Moreover, the Lord vindicates his servant 'in the presence of [his] enemies,' expressing both the adversities of life itself as well as God's demonstration of his love toward his own. In the presence of God, the fragrance of his rewards ('oil') and the bounty of his provision ('cup') make one forget troubles and tears. His is 'the cup of salvation' (116:13) that pertains to both body and spirit" (256). No wonder David promised to faithfully return to the LORD's house as long as he lived.

In past years I relished analyzing this psalm. I remember studying it in Psalms' class in seminary. We broke it down into its parts and analyzed it line-by-line, stanza-by-stanza. We looked up the meaning of its obscure words and examined its grammar. We talked about shepherds in the ancient world. And afterward, I marveled at its literary beauty and profound simplicity. Studying it left an impression on my mind. Now that I'm older, I relish contemplating this psalm. I read it line-by-line, stanza-by-stanza to know the LORD about whom the psalmist writes. I read it after the psalmist who wrote it and as I do his words become my own. The LORD is MY shepherd; I shall not want. You, LORD, prepare a table before my enemies. You anoint MY head with oil; my cup overflows. Contemplating it leaves an impression on my heart.

The Message of the Passage

*Fear not; the Lord is your shepherd and gracious host,
the one who provides for your every need.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“Model Faithfulness”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **my**

"The distinctive word of this psalm is not 'shepherd' but 'my!' Elsewhere Yahweh is the shepherd of his people, but here he is the shepherd of the individual (cf. Gen. 48:15)" (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 126).

v. 1 **shepherd**

"In the word shepherd, David uses the most comprehensive and intimate metaphor yet encountered in the Psalms, preferring usually the more distant 'king' or 'deliverer', or the impersonal 'rock', 'shield', etc.; whereas the shepherd lives with his flock and is everything to it: guide, physician and protector" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, TOTC, 127). "Most commentators perceive two images in this psalm: Yahweh as shepherd (vv. 1-4) and as host at the temple (vv. 5-6). In both roles, Yahweh provides nourishment (vv. 1-3a, 5) and safe passage (vv. 3b-4, 6). The former provision is implicit in the absence of want for the sheep, to whom the shepherd gives pasture, water, and restored vigor, and it is implicit in the second section in the table prepared by the divine host" (Broyles, 124). God is depicted as Israel's shepherd (Ge 49:24; Ps 28:9; 80:1; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10; Hos 4:16; Mic 7:14) and as the nation's king (2Sa 5:2; 7:7; Ps 78:71). And Israel, his people, are depicted as God's sheep (Ps 74:1; 77:20; 78:52; 79:13 95:7; 100:3; Jer 23:3; Eze 34:11-16; Zec 9:16). The shepherd metaphor was not peculiar to Israel but was used among other nations of the ancient Near East (A. A. Anderson, *Psalms 1-72*, NCBC, 196).

v. 2 **he** (cf., you v. 4)

"The opening (vv. 1-3) and closing (v. 6) verses refer to Yahweh in the third person while the middle verses (vv. 4-5), which overlap the images of him as shepherd and host, are praise addressed to him. Thus, the psalm opens and closes with testimony about God, and the praise to God in the middle ties together the two roles Yahweh plays" (Broyles, 124).

v. 2 **pastures**

The setting of verses 2-4 is outdoors "in pastures," "beside waters," "in paths," "through the valley." The setting of verse 5 is indoors in a banquet hall. "These 'green pastures' were a seasonal phenomenon. The fields-even parts of the desert-would turn green during the winter and spring; but in summer and fall the sheep would be led to many places in search of food. God's care is not seasonal but constant and abundant" (VanGemenen, 253, 54).

v. 2 **quiet**

Others take the word to mean, "refreshing waters" or "water at the resting places." "The beautiful English phrase does not convey the meaning of the Hebrew, which is literally 'waters of restfulness'-not placid waters, but streams where rest can be found" (A. Cohen, *The Psalms*, Soncino Books of the Bible, 67).

v. 3 **my soul**

"The word 'soul' is not here the spiritual dimension of humankind but denotes the same as 'me,' repeated twice in v.2, i.e., 'he restores me' (VanGemenen, 254).

v. 3 **paths of**

"In the right paths" (TEV). "These paths do not lead one to obtain righteousness. 'Righteousness' (*sedeq*) here signifies in the most basic sense 'right,' namely, the paths that bring the sheep most directly to their destination (in contrast to 'crooked paths': cf. 125:5; pr 2:15; 5:6; 10:9)" (254).

v. 4 **shadow of death**

Cf., "darkest valley" (the NET Bible; NRSV; NLT); "a ravine dark as death" (NJB). Darkness is menacing; danger and death linger in its shadows (Anderson, 197, 98). "Although darkness is the leading thought in most of the Old Testament contexts [where "shadow of death," Heb. *salmawet* occurs], death is dominant in a few, including (in my view) the present verse" (Kidner, 128).

v. 5 **table**

What did David have in mind? "The cup and table of Psalm 23 may not be merely metaphoric. They depict a meal and being at the house of the LORD they probably allude to the thanksgiving offering, which was to be shared as a communal meal with Yahweh, the priests, and the worshiper's family (Lev. 7:15-16; Deut. 12:5-7; 1 Sam. 1:3-4, 9; cf. Pss. 22:26; 36:8; 63:2-5)" (Broyles, 124; Anderson, 198).

v. 4 **rod, staff**

Implements used by the shepherd to protect his sheep. The rod was a club used to drive away wild animals-sometimes it was tipped with metal or studded with nails. The staff was longer than the rod and could be used as a support.

v. 6 **love**

Heb. *hesed*. Cf., "faithful love" (NJB; HCSB); "mercy" (NRSV; NKJV; ESV); "faithfulness" (the NET Bible). "Mercy is the covenant-word rendered 'steadfast love' elsewhere (see on 17:7). Together with goodness it suggests the steady kindness and support that one can count on in the family or between firm friends" (Kidner, 130).

v. 6 **dwell**

The Heb. text reads, "I will continually come back to the house of the Lord as long as I live," which conveys the idea of returning again and again to the temple (VanGemenen, 257; Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 812).

v. 6 **house**

To "dwell in the house of the LORD" is "to be in his presence." "There is a suggestion of pilgrimage in the picture of a progress that ends at the house of the Lord; but it is also a journey home, for it was not only the Levites who considered the courts of the Lord their true home (as in Pss 42 and 84) but also, in heart and mind, David the man of affairs: cf. 27:4; 65:4" (Kidner, 130).

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.

Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

This week's Family Time will require a little planning but I guarantee the results will be worth it.

Over dinner one night present a list of possible service opportunities to your family. Give suggestions based on your family's interests. Are you animal lovers? Try volunteering at the local animal shelter. Are you outdoor people? Pick up trash in your favorite city park. Want to get your neighborhood involved? Organize a food or clothing drive and donate the items to Arlington Resale or another charity. Mission Arlington allows families to work sorting clothes or stocking the pantry. Do grandparents live far away? How about spending an afternoon at a local nursing home playing cards with the residents? Making time to serve with your family will be an intentional act. However, once you do, your family will make it a priority to do over and over again. This week we are focusing on our Provider, the Giver of our daily bread. Connect this truth to your service project by reminding your kids that they are joining God in His kingdom work as they serve and love others by meeting their needs. Don't forget to take a picture and journal some of the day's activities. It will fun to go back through those in the future and see all of the things God has allowed your family to be a part of!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Matthew 6:11

"Give us today our daily bread."

- *Who were the disciples depending on to provide for them?
- *What were the disciples instructed to ask for?
- *How much bread were the disciples to ask God for?

What Do You Think

*Is Jesus teaching his disciples to only ask for bread?

*Why does Jesus instruct his disciples to ask only what they needed for that day?

What R U Going To Do

Make a list of things that you have recently asked God for. Next, circle the ones that you must have. Put a box around the ones you want but don't have to have. Which ones did Jesus teach his disciples to pray for?

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Personal God - I believe God cares about everything in my life.

Memory Verse

Matthew 6:12 "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than thirty-five years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-two years and have one son, Zach.

Keith Smith (B.A. in Speech Communication, Texas Tech University and M.A. in Religious Education, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the Family and Children's Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. Keith speaks at children/student camps across the country. He has developed a number of relational parenting seminars designed to motivate parents to empower their parenting by emotionally connecting with their kids. Keith lives with his wife, Denise, and their two children, Jordan and Alex.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.