

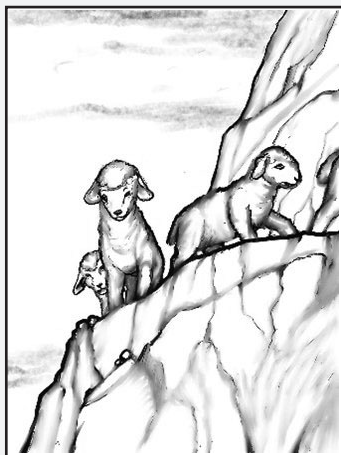
# Jesus, Our Shepherd, Leads Us



## SABBATH—JUNE 25

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 23:3, 4; Ezekiel 34:12; John 10:14–16.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “He restores [makes new] my strength. He leads me on right paths to show that he is good” (Psalm 23:3, ERV).



Yes, the Shepherd in Psalm 23 leads His sheep on the right roads. But sometimes the way is not easy.

**IN TEARS, SOPHIE FELL** on her bedroom floor. “How can he do this to me?” she asked herself in pain. Her tears splashed down her cheeks. Sophie just learned some bad news. Someone was telling awful lies about her. Worse, this person was her friend. At least, Sophie thought he was her friend. Sophie trusted him. She respected him. But now he told awful stories about Sophie to ruin her good name and destroy her work. Sophie picked up her Bible from her bed and let it fall open in her lap. After she wiped away her tears, she saw a verse she read many times in the past: “He restores [makes new] my strength. He leads me on right paths [roads] to show that he is good. Even [but] if I walk through a valley [a time of suffering or trouble] as dark as the grave, I will not be afraid of any danger, because you are with me. Your rod [Shepherd’s pole] and staff [walking stick] comfort me” (Psalm 23:3, 4, ERV).

Sophie believed that God was talking to her in this verse. But the Bible truth was hard for her to accept. Yes, the Shepherd in Psalm 23 leads His sheep on the right roads. But sometimes the road is rough. Sometimes the Shepherd leads us into a “dark valley.” But that’s how God works. He uses the dark valley to teach us how to be holy.

**THE SHEPHERD: A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY  
(Psalm 23:1)**

**“The LORD is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need” (Psalm 23:1, NlrV).**

A teacher asked a group of children to draw a picture of God. All the children drew a heart somewhere in their picture. Then the teacher asked the children why they all drew a heart. All the children answered at the same time: “Because God is love!” The answer is that simple.

We have no trouble thinking the best about God when things are good in life, right? But as we grow older, life becomes harder and more difficult. Our view about God often changes. Of course, God Himself does not change (Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17). But we do.

So, we always need to remember how much God loves us and cares for us. Psalm 23 teaches us that we can always trust the love of God. Why? Because God’s love also never changes. God is our loving Shepherd. The Bible uses the shepherd as a word picture to teach us how much Jesus cares for us. Before we look at Psalm 23, let’s first look at what different Bible writers say about our Shepherd.

**What do you learn about the Shepherd from the verses below?**

**Isaiah 40:11** \_\_\_\_\_

**Jeremiah 23:3, 4** \_\_\_\_\_

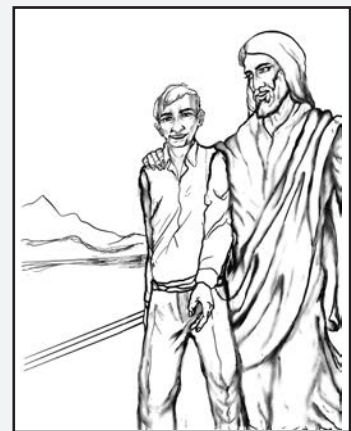
**Ezekiel 34:12** \_\_\_\_\_

**John 10:14–16** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Peter 2:25** \_\_\_\_\_

**Now turn to Psalm 23:2–6. What does Jesus, our Shepherd, in Psalm 23, do to take care of His sheep?**

**What does it mean to you to know that Jesus, our Shepherd, cares for you? What if someone you know has a hard time with faith because of everything that he or she suffers? How can you use this picture of our Shepherd to comfort this person who suffers much?**



**We always need to remember how much God loves us and cares for us.**

## GOOD ROADS (Psalm 23:3)

**“He leads me on right [good] paths [roads] to show that he is good” (Psalm 23:3, ERV).**



Psalm 23 shows us how our journey in life is the same as a road.

Psalm 23 shows us how our journey in life is the same as a road. For sure, God leads us on the best roads possible. But does that mean that our trip always will be easy? Make a picture in your mind of the “right [good] paths [roads]” (Psalm 23:3, ERV) that God chooses for us. Sometimes we can’t see where the road ends. But you already know that your home with God in heaven is at the end of the road. What else do you see on the road? Do you see where the road will go? No. You can see only a few places along the road. Other parts of the road are hidden. Sometimes the road disappears over the top of a high hill. Some parts of the road are easy for you to walk down. Other parts of the road are full of rough areas. In the same way, Israel had a hard time with faith when they traveled from Egypt to the Promised Land.

**Read Psalm 23. In Psalm 23, David talks about some of the difficult places that the sheep must go through on their way to see God. What are some of these difficult places?**

To help us answer the question, let us start by asking one more question: Why does David name the roads the “right [good] paths [roads]” (Psalm 23:3, ERV)? Here are four important reasons: (1) These roads are good because they go in the right direction. They lead the sheep to the Shepherd’s home. (2) The roads are good because they help us follow the same life as our Shepherd. (3) The roads are good because they train us to behave the same as the Shepherd behaves. (4) The roads are good because they help us to praise the Lord and honor Him. So, the roads with Jesus our Shepherd are good for us to travel when the roads are easy and when the roads are hard.

When God leads us, He trains us to be holy. God guides us and protects us while He teaches us. God leads us because He is teaching us to be a holy people.

**How can hard times or your experience of suffering help you show the love of God to other people?**

**WHEN GOD LEADS US IN WAYS WE DON'T EXPECT:  
PART 1 (Psalm 23:4)**

**“Even [but] if I walk through a valley [a time of suffering or trouble] as dark as the grave, I will not be afraid of any danger, because you are with me. Your rod [Shepherd’s pole] and staff [walking stick] comfort me” (Psalm 23:4, ERV).**

What if we traveled only on roads that were next to cool streams and green grass? Cool water and nice weather would help our journey to be easy, right? But David says that life is not always easy. The road of life is next to the “valley” that’s as dark as the grave. The valley is a word picture for suffering or trouble. No one wants to visit it! In Bible times and now, the valleys in Israel often flooded with water. These valleys are not very wide. There are tall mountains on each side that block out the light. That’s why David names the place in his poem the “valley as dark as the grave” (Psalm 23:4, ERV).

**Think about the times you’ve been in your own “valley [a time of suffering or trouble] as dark as the grave” (Psalm 23:4, ERV). Share your experience with the class. Were you afraid? Did you remember that Jesus, the Shepherd, was there with you? Which Bible verses were the most precious to you at that time? Why?**

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**How do you think the sheep end up in the valley? Do you think the sheep find the valley on their own? Or does the Shepherd lead the sheep to the valley Himself? Explain.**

“A lamb in the valley as dark as the grave may think that the Shepherd led him the wrong way. But this thought is false. The lamb must travel that dark valley. Why? So, he will learn not to fear. The Shepherd is always with the lamb.”—Elisabeth Elliot, *Quest for Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell Books, 1996), page 218, adapted.

**Have you ever felt that the Lord led you the wrong way? When God, our Shepherd, leads us in a new and strange way, we may misunderstand Him. Why do you think that God allows our misunderstanding?**



**The road of life is next to the “valley” that’s as dark as the grave. This valley is a word picture for suffering or trouble.**

**WHEN GOD LEADS US IN WAYS WE DON'T EXPECT:  
PART 2 (Psalm 23:5)**

**“You prepared [made] a meal for me in front of my enemies. You welcomed me as an honored guest. My cup is full and spilling over” (Psalm 23:5, ERV).**

Sad to say, we have enemies in this life. How do you feel about your enemies? Do you think about how you can hurt the people who hurt you or destroyed your work? Christians often have a hard time deciding what they should do about their enemies.

**Who are your enemies? What did you say to the person who tried to hurt you or your loved ones? Did you think about Jesus’ words to us in Matthew 5:44 or the words of Paul in Romans 12:18–21?**



**When the guest arrived, the host poured oil on the guest’s head before he went to the feast hall.**

In Psalm 23:5, David shows us how to behave with our enemies. David does not think about the bad things his enemies did to him in the past. No, David thinks about all the wonderful things God is doing for him right now.

In the time of David, a host did something very special for a guest that he wanted to honor. When the guest arrived, the host poured oil on the guest’s head before he went to the feast hall. The oil was a mix of olive oil and perfume. Then the host led the guest to a seat at a table. In front of the guest was more food than he can eat.

**In Psalm 23:5, David talks about the table, oil, and a cup. How do these three things help us remember that God always takes care of our needs?**

Paul tells us, “Our fight is not with people. [Our fight] is against the leaders and the powers and the spirits of darkness in this world. [Our fight] is against the demon world [government] that works in the heavens [skies]” (Ephesians 6:12, NLV). So, we have enemies we see, and enemies we don’t see. They are all around us everywhere. But when we’re with our Shepherd, Jesus, no one can steal the blessings that He gives us.

**What did the Shepherd do for you when your enemies were all around you? How can your answer help you to remember to give thanks during the difficult times ahead?**

## A PROMISE FOR THE JOURNEY (Psalm 23:6)

**“I am sure that your goodness [mercy] and love will follow me all the days of my life. And I will live in the house of the LORD forever [a long, long time]” (Psalm 23:6, NlrV).**

When bad things happen to us, we may feel that God has left us alone. We may believe that God is not doing very much for us. Because we are in trouble, we think that God doesn't care about us. But David doesn't feel this way.

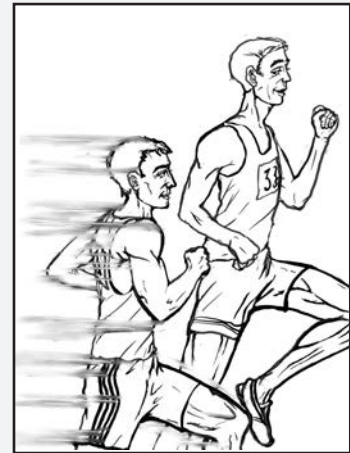
**David has some hard times in life. But what two things does David say in Psalm 23:6 that he's sure about? (Also read Ephesians 1:4; 2 Peter 1:10; and Hebrews 11:13–15.)**

In Psalm 23:6, NlrV, the verb written as “follow” is much stronger in the Hebrew language. This Hebrew word “live” is the same as “to chase” someone. How does “live” or “chase” help us understand God's love and mercy? God loves us so much that His love and mercy are the same as people who run in a race. God's love and mercy “chase” us the same as runners. We cannot escape God's love and mercy. They will “chase” after us. When God's love and mercy “catch” us, they will stay with us all the days of our lives. (Look at Genesis 14:14; Joshua 10:19; and 1 Samuel 25:29. Do you see how these verses show us the idea of “chasing” after something?)

**God's love and mercy are the same as fast runners. Make a picture in your mind of God chasing after you. Why do you think David uses this word picture? What do you think David wants us to understand about God and His love for us?**

At times, life will be hard. People may hurt us or work against us. We may doubt God's love for us at these times. We may wonder if God is really leading us. During these difficult times, we must remember Jesus. When He was on the cross, Jesus had strong faith in God's love. This trust helped Jesus stay strong while He hung on the cross. If these thoughts helped Jesus, they can help us, too.

There are times when our family and friends ask us questions. In Psalm 23:6, David shows us the best way to answer them. Don't argue. Just share your personal belief in Bible truth about God.



**God's love and mercy “chase” us the same as runners. We cannot escape God's love and mercy.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “Missionaries in the Home,” page 143, in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 4; “The Divine Shepherd,” pages 476–484, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“How will we finally win the war against sin? We will have difficult tests and experiences in our religious life. But we must not stop trusting in God. Our difficult tests and experiences are part of our education in the ‘school of Jesus Christ.’ Jesus uses these tests and experiences to make our hearts clean from sin. So, we must stay strong when we are attacked by Satan. Satan will say awful things to us to discourage us. But we must not give up. We must not fall into the traps that Satan makes for us along the way. . . .

“Do not look at your problems. Keep looking to God. Then you will not faint when troubles come. You will soon see Jesus reaching His hand to help you. Give Him your hand in trust. Let Jesus lead you. Then you will grow in trust. Soon your heart will fill with hope.

“You will find the help you need in Jesus. He will help you to become as He is. He will give you a perfect and holy heart that is filled with His love. Satan can’t put out the light that shines from the heart of this person. . . . God gave us His best gift. He gave us His only Son, Jesus. Jesus brings us back to God. Jesus gives us His own perfect life so that we can live with God in heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, pages 63, 64, adapted.



**“Do not look at your problems. Keep looking to God. Then you will not faint when troubles come.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① “Our difficult tests and experiences are part of our education in the ‘school of Jesus Christ.’ ” Share a story from your own life about a time when you had a difficult test or experience. What did the experience teach you?
- ② How can we help Jesus to comfort and encourage other people? How is this work part of God’s plan to help other people in their time of suffering and need? What things can you do as a church to help people who are in need?
- ③ How has God’s love and mercy “chased” you and your friends at church? What can you learn from each other’s experiences?

## PART 1: FILLED WITH DEMONS

**11** -year-old Eduardo raced on his skateboard in front of his house on a hot summer morning in Brazil. Sweat covered his face.

“Eduardo Ferreira dos Santos!” Mother called to him.

“Come in and take a shower before lunch.”

Eduardo didn’t shower but ran straight to the kitchen. He wanted to eat his lunch. Eduardo ignored the customer in the living room. Mother operated a beauty business in her home. She painted people’s nails and cut their hair.

Eduardo sat on a chair in the hallway. As soon as he sat down, he screamed. Then his body shook and twisted. Mother rushed over to Eduardo. Eduardo’s mouth opened and a low evil voice spoke from inside him. The voice inside Eduardo told Mother to give up her son or watch him die.

Mother started to cry. The customer in the living room came over to Mother. “Don’t worry,” the woman said. “Your son has been chosen to be part of my religious group. I belong to the Candomblé religion. I am a Candomblé leader.”

Mother heard about the Candomblé religion. Africans brought the Candomblé religion on slave ships to Brazil in the early 1800s. Candomblé teaches that gods can live in people and control them. As Seventh-day Adventists, we know that these gods are evil angels or spirits.

Finally, the evil spirit left Eduardo. Eduardo didn’t remember the experience. But Mother remembered. She was afraid. She took Eduardo to the Candomblé temple. The temple leaders welcomed Eduardo as if he were a king.

“You are very honored,” one of the priests or religious leaders told Eduardo. “The spirits chose you to join us.”

For the next seven years, Eduardo learned how to become a priest. Evil spirits talked to Eduardo during this time. When the spirits were in Eduardo, they often talked to other people.

When Eduardo grew up, he became the top priest of a temple. People paid him to curse their enemies. The evil spirits told Eduardo he must not curse Seventh-day Adventists and other Protestants. They were protected. The spirits warned Eduardo that he will grow weak if he tried to curse these Christians. The spirits told Eduardo not to talk with Adventists. Not long after, Eduardo met Sidilene Silva de Oliveira. Eduardo and Sidilene had a son, Eduardo Junior. Eduardo and his family had a peaceful life until Junior announced that he wanted to join the Adventist Church.

Your 13th Sabbath Offering will help build eight churches in South America. Four of these churches will be built in Brazil, where Eduardo Ferreira dos Santos and his family live.

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**The voice inside Eduardo told Mother to give up her son or watch him die.**