

LEARNING TO LEAN



1.6

A mature member has learned to rely on God and His provision.

Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

As a leader, you are expected to be independent. You probably expect this of yourself, in some ways. How, then, can someone who is an independent person, learn to rely on another? How can we mature in relying on God?

First, we have to understand that God is actually a provider. How do we know that? In Scripture we are told about His provision in many places, but there is one place where God is actually given the name of provider because of what He has done—Genesis 22:14.

Genesis 22:14 So Abraham called the name of that place, “**The LORD will provide**”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

One of the names of God is Jehovah-Jireh, which means “the Lord will provide.” It comes from the story of Abraham and Issac. God required Abraham to be willing to sacrifice his son, as a precursor to Christ’s sacrifice as God’s son. God stopped Abraham after it was apparent Abraham was willing and gave him a ram to offer instead. See [Genesis 22:1-18](#).

Another reference in Scripture that teaches us about God’s provision is in the Psalms. **Open Psalm 23** and let’s delve into this well-known piece of the Bible.

WHO HE IS

Much of what we will learn to expect from God is directly connected to who He is. God provides out of His being and character. In providing for us, He is revealing Himself to us, so a key to His provision comes out of the very first verse of Psalm 23, where David refers to God as “my shepherd.”

Q. What do you think the “shepherd” reference has to with God’s character?

Among other things, the shepherd protected, guided, cared for, corrected, fed, watered, and rested the sheep. Their very lives depended on the shepherd’s commitment to their care and protection. So how does this relate to God’s care and protection of us?

Psalm 23 is divided into three sections; three different ways God provides for His people.

1. God’s Provision of Rest v. 1-3
2. God’s Provision of Comfort v. 4,5
3. God’s Provision of Confidence and Care v. 6

GOD’S PROVISION OF REST

Psalm 23:1-3 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

In verses 1-3, we can almost feel the rest provided by the written words. “Lie down in green pastures,” “still waters,” “restores my soul,” and “paths of righteousness” are all restorative phrases and places, describing the shepherd’s way of caring for your spiritual well-being. Also, notice some words that are missing. Words like “busyness,” “production,” “striving,” and “earning” are not included.

Verse 3 is important in the phrase “for his name’s sake.” In scripture God’s name is synonymous with Himself and it is often invoked as action God takes to manifest His glory, power, and reputation in relation to Israel or among the nations. In other words, God leads you in the paths for righteousness because it glorifies Him to do so.

Describe how God has provided rest for you.

GOD’S PROVISION OF COMFORT

Psalms 23:4-5 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.

Does “comfort” mean no pain, no distress, or no affliction? No, it does not; at least not yet. We all wish that, I think, but it is not what God promises us in this world. That is underscored by the use of the phrase “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” In difficult times, we will “fear no evil because you are with me.” He promises to never leave or forsake you, ([Joshua 1:5](#), [Hebrews. 13:5](#)) so your comfort comes from His presence, not your circumstances.

His care and our comfort are described using the image of two shepherd’s tools—the rod and the staff. The rod was used representing power and authority, a thick wooden pole used to count and protect the sheep. The staff, a thinner, often curved stick, was used to guide, reach, and support the sheep.

He prepares a table for you, even in the presence of your enemies, (Note: He doesn’t take your enemies away, He cares for you in their midst.) The anointing with oil depicts consecration, refreshment, and rejoicing. You will have more than enough.

Q. What does this description of comfort say to you about who God is and what you really need?

GOD'S PROVISION OF CONFIDENCE AND CARE

Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The word “surely” speaks of the **confidence and trust** David had in what the Shepherd was doing and will continue to do. This confidence brings comfort in the same way the Bible uses the concept of Shalom. Shalom means completeness, soundness, welfare, and peace. God promises shalom and He will fulfill His promise. So surely goodness and mercy (or lovingkindness) **will** follow me all the days of my life. The Shepherd will make sure of it.

The word “follow” is also important in that it is sometimes translated “pursue.” The Shepherd’s provision is a pursuing provision. He makes sure it happens. He doesn’t wait for you or me to be in the right place. The Shepherd has chosen to provide.

As a final thought, the entire psalm reminds us of another wonderful promise of God. This confidence in the care of God bringing comfort is very similar to the concept of Shalom. Shalom means the completeness, soundness, welfare, and peace in life that only God can bring. Shalom is a life with everything in its proper place. When God promises shalom, He fulfills His promise.

SUMMARY

God’s provision is a revelation of His being and character. He provides more than we can imagine, far more than you or I could possibly provide on our own. He provides Rest, Comfort, Confidence and Care. Shalom.

LEADERSHIP CONNECTION QUESTION

Q. As a business leader, you are also a provider—one who provides products, services, jobs, income, rules, values, and culture. How can a person who provides to others also rely on another for provision?

RESOURCES FOR NEXT STEPS

- RightNow Media @WorkStudy
Torchlighters: George Müller
<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/377968>
- A Journey Through Psalm 23
<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/723312>