

Gateway Church 21-Day Fast 2023

Scripture Focus:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, 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 runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.” Psalm 23

Day 1: The Lord

As we start this fast, it’s important to understand why we are doing this. When we fast, we give up something that our flesh craves. We are called to walk by the Spirit and not gratify our flesh (Gal. 5:16). As you keep that in the forefront of your mind for the next 21 days, remember that you are doing all of this, unto *The Lord*. Just as David begins Psalm 23 with, the Lord, we should do the same. Everything we do, everything we are, everything we give up is for, *the Lord*. Put him first in all things today!

Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

There are so many things that can take that place in our lives. As we begin this fast allow the Holy Spirit to identify what may be out of order in our lives and make a commitment to put God first in everything.

Action Step: Put the Lord first in every part of your day. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to highlight the thing(s) that we’ve put ahead of the Lord. Surrender that to the Lord during these 21 days of fasting and watch the awareness of God come alive in your life.

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Day 2: My Shepherd

The Bible uses so many metaphors to describe us. It would have been nice if it would have been something fierce, like a lion, or strong, like an ox. But the most common one we see is being compared to sheep. Sheep aren’t the fastest, they’re not the strongest, and quite honestly, they’re not the brightest. It can be easy to think, this doesn’t sound anything like me! But in reality, it sounds so much like us. We’re not as strong as we think we are and we’re not as smart as we think we are. This is exactly why we need a shepherd. Jesus is our shepherd. He keeps us intact, He protects us, and He guides us. As you go through your day, focus on the fact that you have a shepherd who loves you dearly and who wants the very best for you.

David highlights this picture of the Lord as our shepherd throughout the Psalms.

Psalm 100:3 Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Prayer: God, help me to remember that you are my shepherd. When my flesh wants to lead myself, catch me. Will you lead me and guide me where you want me to go and what you want me to do. I trust you fully knowing that you are my shepherd. In Jesus name, Amen.

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Day 3: I Shall Not Want

Have you ever found yourself wanting more? You buy something nice for yourself but then after a few months or even a few weeks, you find that your eyes are catching other things. Something that might be better than what you have. I think if we’re honest, we can all be guilty of this sometimes. This doesn’t make us bad; it just makes us human.

I’m sure on this fast, you’ve been wanting a lot of things you can’t have! My question for you today is, are you wanting more of the right thing?

In Philippians 4, Paul talks about being CONTENT and how Christ gives us the strength to live like that! When you find yourself wanting more of something today, take a moment, and WANT more of God!

Action Step: Read Phil. 4:11-13 and thank God for what you have and be ok with what you don’t.

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Day 4: He Makes Me to Lie Down

It’s said that sheep do not lie down easily and will not unless four conditions are met. Because they are timid, they will not lie down if they are afraid. Because they are social, they will not lie down if there is friction among the sheep. If flies or parasites trouble them they will not lie down. Finally, if they are anxious about food or hungry, they will not lie down. But REST comes because the good shepherd deals with, takes care of the fear, friction, flies, and food.

Psalm 23 is a reminder that He is everything to us. And in Him we can REST. What is the thing that has kept you from Rest? What do you need to let Him take care of today? 1 Peter 5:7 says we can cast all our cares on Him, because He cares for us.

Take a moment, in a journal or your device and write / type out 1 Peter 5:7.

Pray: *Father, I give my anxiety, my stressful relationship, my need to you today. I choose to rest in knowing you care for me and know what’s best for me. Father, I trust You! Amen*

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Day 5: In Green Pastures

Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us that God’s thoughts and plans for us are GOOD! In GREEN PASTURES is not just about providing a place to rest, but also a place to eat. As the Good Shepherd takes care of ALL the needs in our lives – He leads us to the things that are needed in every season of our lives.

2 Corinthians 9:10 tells us; “He who supplies *seed* to the sower and *bread* for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.”

It’s a testimony that God not only provides for our present, but also for our future.

Genesis 22:14 and Abraham called the name of that place 'Jehovah-Jireh,' because it is said to this day, The Lord does provide.'

As you pray today, come boldly, knowing God IS a provider!

Pray: *Father I thank you, that you provide for (insert your needs). You not only see my present, but my future needs. I’m thankful that you will lead me to provision in every season and for every need in my life. Amen*

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Day 6: He Leads Me

I love seeing the stories of parents surprising their kids with trips to special places. They just pack their bag, jump in the car and are along for the ride and as they get closer, their eyes light up as they begin to imagine the destination.

The times our family has traveled to amusement parks and other vacation spots, I have memories of those trips; but most of those memories aren’t just about the place, but much more about who I was there with. My wife, my kids, my grandson, my family.

We are on the journey of a lifetime. And though we know ultimately where we are headed, Heaven; there are also places, moments along the way that take us by surprise. Blessings, miracles, relationships, opportunities that are God directed. And while those are HUGE, they really can’t compare to the One who is with us on the journey! The reality that He leads us to those moments. It reminds us that He is always with us, He never leaves us but always with us.

Matthew 28:20 ...And be sure of this: **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age.”

Pray: Father, let me be aware today that you are always with me. Thank you for never leaving me. In the good times and rough times, you are always there. I want to always be mindful of that. Amen

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Day 7: Beside the Still Waters

The Psalmist puts rest and refreshment at the beginning of this Psalm. Maybe it’s because this is the way God moved him. I believe it’s the way He moves us also. His blessings overflow our lives. When we look back over life, the trials are outweighed by His love.

John 4:14 “But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.”

It all keeps me coming back to Him. We can become so dependent on other things, that promise us peace, rest, transformation... But as a follower of Christ, we grow in realizing how ever dependent we are on Him.

His leading us, His calling to us is always; “Come to Me...” “Come up here and let Me show you...” “Follow Me and I will...” He is always drawing us back to Him!

If the direction you are headed is moving away from Him and not toward Him – STOP! Turn around and run back to Him! And when we do, when we repent, Acts 3 says Refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord!

Pray: Lord, I come to you. You are the source of my strength. You are the life giver. Thank you for drawing me to you. Thank you for drawing me continually back to you! Amen

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Day 8: He Restores my Soul

The word restore here, means to bring back to the original condition or to put back in place.

Have you ever restored an old car or an old piece of furniture? An old dining room table for example, New, it was beautiful, shiny, and spotless. Unfortunately, through years of wear and tear (especially for those with children or pets), it gets scratched and the paint chips. It needs to be sanded down to get the marks and scratches out, then refinished or repainted. When it’s restored, it’s brought back to the original condition. The beauty of restoration is that while it is brought back to the original, it’s not brand new. It has a story and plenty of character behind it. Isn’t this what God does in our lives?

Hebrews 13:14 says, “For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.” This world can cause wear and tear on us. Our souls can get hurt, wounded, and in need of restoration. Just like the table, we may have a chip on our shoulder or rough areas we need sanded out. The great news is we serve a restorative God.

In Matthew 11:28, Jesus said “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” We go to God with our problems, distractions, burdens, and wounds and He brings healing and restoration to us. Then He uses our stories to help others!

Moment of Reflection: Is there an area of your life you need God to restore today? Nothing is too big or too small for God! Why don’t you take a few minutes to ask God to search your heart and reveal any areas he needs to refresh or restore?

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Day 9: He Leads Me in the Paths of Righteousness

Shepherds are careful to lead their sheep down the right paths because they know what is best for them. It’s dangerous for many reasons for sheep to be left to themselves to forge their own path.

Sheep are creatures of habit. If left to themselves, they will follow the same trail over and over again and continue to eat off the same pasture till nothing nourishing is left. Good shepherds lead their sheep from pasture to pasture, so they don’t get sick and malnourished.

Sheep are also more likely to walk on uneven ground. This causes them to lose their balance and fall over. Good shepherds lead their sheep down paths with flat, solid ground so they do not fall.

God desires to be our shepherd and guide us down the right path to save and protect us. If we’re honest, we would agree that it’s a struggle to give up control. We want the steering wheel to our life. But like sheep, when we take the lead, we open ourselves up to harm.

Isaiah 55:8-9 reminds us that God’s thoughts and ways are higher than ours. If we trust God, step out in faith to follow him, He will lead us down better paths than we could ever imagine.

Pray: Lord, we desire to be sheep who know your voice and follow You with all our hearts. We let go of control (insert the area you’re struggling to let go of) and trust you. Thank you for being our good shepherd who protects us and provides for us. We love you, AMEN!

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Day 10: For His Name’s Sake

God loves, restores, and leads us not because of us or who we are, but because of His name. He does it because of WHO HE IS. The phrase, “His name’s sake” is mentioned many times throughout the Bible. It reminds us that God is true to his reputation and character.

There is power in the name of our God, and he is true to His name! Throughout scripture God reveals himself to us through His names. Let’s look at a handful of the names of God from the Old Testament and grow in knowing who He really is!

Name	Meaning	Reference
El- Shaddai	Lord God Almighty	(Genesis 17:1)
Yahweh	Lord, Jehovah	(Genesis 2:4)
Jehovah Raah	The Lord my Shepherd	(Psalm 23)
Jehovah Rapha	The Lord Who Heals	(Exodus 15:26)
Jehovah Jireh	The Lord will Provide	(Genesis 22:14)
Jehovah Shalom	The Lord is Peace	(Judges 6:24)

Action Step: Get into your word today and add to this list. There are many more names and characteristics of God throughout the Bible, especially when you get into the New Testament and add Jesus’ names. Memorize a verse today from this list and remind yourself of who God is!

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Day 11: Yea, Though I Walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death

The valley being discussed in this verse has taken on many faces for each of us throughout our lives. For some this valley is a time of physical pain and infirmity. Others go through valleys that bring loneliness at the end of a valued relationship. Some have walked through valleys financially that seem to continue for years. Whatever type of valley you may find yourself in, see it through the lens of this scripture. It doesn’t say that you are walking IN the valley, it proclaims that you are passing THROUGH the valley. It challenges us to be tenacious in our faith. Don’t stop doing what you know to be right. KEEP WALKING! While doing so let this verse be an encouragement to you! If you are currently enduring a trial, stay strong, stay consistent in God’s Word and this season WILL pass.

James 1:12 says, “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.”

Meditation: Think back to a time when God brought you through a different trial and remind yourself that God NEVER changes! He’s the same God today as He was then!

Pray: Today Father I choose to see you and not my trial. I know that this season is passing but your Word endures forever. I choose to remain steadfast and to persevere through this valley. No weapon formed against me will prosper, not even this current trial. I thank you for giving me the strength to endure today, In Jesus name... Amen!

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Day 12: I Will Fear No Evil

Much has shifted these past few years. It seems with each new year comes a new fear. And every new fear seems more frightening than the last. There are many evil and ungodly influences in our world. These have the potential to move us further away from the peace that God has promised us. Though we can’t do much to change evil, we can limit its effect on us.

“I will fear no evil”, doesn’t deny that evil exists but that through faith we don’t have to fear it. As believers we live by faith and not by fear.

The scripture says that Faith comes by hearing God’s Word (Romans 10:17). We have God’s Word to combat the evil realities of this world. God’s Word lifts our faith to trust Him more than the world.

Psalm 91:10-11 – “There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

Meditation: Fear is a liar that leads you astray from trusting God’s Word. What areas can you think of that you may have conceded to fear? Take those areas back by faith and the power of God’s Word!

Prayer: Today I choose faith and not fear in Jesus’ name! I choose to stand on the Word of God and what it declares over me and on my behalf. I will no longer allow the evils of this world to dictate my reality. I will trust and lean on God and every word written in the Holy Bible. In Jesus’ name!

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Day 13: For You ARE With Me

We all will experience trials in this life. The Bible says that it “rains on the just and the unjust”. But one of the most beautiful things about God is His desire to be with us in every moment. Even in those difficult seasons.

David, the writer of Psalm 23 was no stranger to pain or complicated seasons. David’s peace came from knowing God was with him! We too, can have that peace. Knowing as he was there for David, He will be there for all His children. David declared, you *ARE* with me, reminding himself that God was there. That’s something that we should all do; remind ourselves that we are never alone. God is always with us!

It’s easy to forget the things we cannot see. As we often sing, “even when I don’t see Him, He’s working...”! Take comfort today in the fact that He IS with YOU. There is nothing you can do to change that about Him.

Deuteronomy 4:31 – “For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath.”

Meditation: Have you forgotten the reality of God’s desire to be with you? What are some things that you can do to remind yourself that He is always with you?

Prayer: Father I know that you are with me. Forgive me of the times when I have lost faith in you and your promises. Allow me to walk in a new reality of your presence starting today. I desire to be constantly aware and conscious of your presence so help me know that you are always with me. In Jesus’ name.

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Day 14: Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Comfort Me

David describes as a shepherd, a topic with which David was very familiar. As a shepherd working for his father, Jesse he was responsible to lead them to food. We also know that David had two run ins with predators, a bear, and a lion, who looked to attack his sheep. Shepherding required the ability to lead and feed and the ability to protect and defend.

The primary tool of Shepherds is called the “shepherds hook”. This was used for guiding the sheep and preventing them from straying into dangerous areas. This same tool held from the other end could be used as a rod to protect the sheep from predators. David is speaking of the same tool but to its two different uses. He says that he was comforted by the rod and the staff. By God’s correction and protection. While not at first comforting, His corrections eventually lead to blessings and comfort.

Hebrews 12:11 – “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

The rod speaks to God’s protection. God will always fight for us! We can take comfort in that! God will guide us to blessings and peace. And He will fight for and protect us! Whether the staff of correction to us, or the rod to our enemies, His rod and Staff truly comfort us today.

Meditation: Do I take comfort in correction, or do I oppose it? What are some areas that I can yield and receive the blessings of God’s correction?

Prayer: Father today I thank you for your undying favor. Your desire to correct and realign me to your heart comforts me today. Thank you that I’m always safe because you are with me and your rod and staff do bring me comfort. I’m grateful for you as my shepherd this day and every day. In Jesus’ name.

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Day 15: You Prepare a Table before Me

Learning to eat while in the presence of our enemies is such an important discipline to learn. Let’s face it, in our world today, there is no shortage of threats or things to come and steal our peace and wreck our faith. Between the news updating us in real time about event around the world, or with social media constantly stirring the pot of opinions and arguments, peace can seemingly be in short supply.

Then again, that’s the point of the table in the first place. In biblical times, sharing a meal with an individual was a valued activity. The pace of the meal was the opposite of our fast food and drive-through culture. Meals in biblical culture were opportunities to rest, talk and relate to the people at the table. At the table, people would influence each other and help them with what they were walking through. This is what our heavenly Father intends to do at the table He has prepared for us. The God of peace wants to give us peace. The God of hope is serving up hope today. The God of love wants to remind us that we are the object of His love. For every enemy that’s around you, there’s help from the God across the table from you.

Consider taking a simple sheet of paper, or your journal, and begin writing out the challenges that face you at the start of this year. Then, with a simple internet search or by asking a friend/family member, begin putting what God’s Word says next to it. Ask the Lord to help you focus on His promises and not the problems alone. With His promise comes the way through the trials you are facing.

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Day 16: In the Presence of my Enemies

The concept of this verse is so interesting. The fact that God prepares a table for us isn’t necessarily surprising knowing that He is our Jehovah Jireh, the God Who Provides. What is interesting is the fact that He prepares it IN THE PRESENCE of our enemies. This could lead to questions like:

- How are we supposed to relax and enjoy a meal with the Good Shepherd when we’re surrounded by our enemies?
- Or maybe one would ask why not remove our enemies first and then prepare the meal?

But there is a bigger truth that this verse speaks to the we have to comprehend. Not only is God sovereign, but He is all powerful! God is always in complete control and always far greater than any enemy that could come against us. In moments like this, our heavenly Father is teaching us to trust in Him and learn to keep focused on His sovereignty. Let the enemies around us rage, the God who’s at the table with us is more concerned with our relationship than with their roar.

Have you found yourself spending more time lately worrying and stressing over the things in your life than with sitting and spending time with God? If the answer is yes, let me encourage you to make an intentional shift in your attention. Sitting at the table with the Lord doesn’t mean you ignore the thing in your life that are troubling, it just means that you allow God to help you see them through His perspective and address them with His plan. Afterall, He can do more in 5 seconds than we can do in 5 years.

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Day 17: You Anoint my Head with Oil

In the bible, oil is often associated with the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, kings would be anointed as they were consecrated, set apart to lead and empowered with God’s Spirit. David, who wrote this Psalm, understood what it means to be anointed with oil. He was anointed by Samuel when he was young to be the next king of Israel. The bible tells us that the Holy Spirit came upon David from that moment forward in a powerful way.

As follower of Jesus, God delights in anointing us with His Spirit as well. At salvation, God sets us apart unto himself and fills us with His Holy Spirit. And as we walk with God through different seasons, He continues to pour out His anointing on us so He can move through us. When was the last time you acknowledged God’s anointing on your life? When was the last time you acknowledged the Holy Spirit within you? Like David, we will face great challenges in our lives as we walk with God. And like David, we can stand against them in confidence knowing that the Holy Spirit is with us.

Coming out of this 21-day fast, how can create an intentional awareness of the Holy Spirit in your life. Begin to ask the Lord to help you to be sensitive to His voice and to help you celebrate His presence with you.

Gateway Church 21-Day Fast 2023

Scripture Focus:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, 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 runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.” Psalm 23

Day 18: My Cup Overflows

Most people reading this can relate to pouring a soda into a cup of ice and accidentally having it overflow the cup. If you can, then that’s the picture David was going for. Well, minus the soda part!

The imagery used here at the end of verse 5 speaks to abundance. Make no mistake about it, God is a God of abundance. He doesn’t just want His children to just be blessed, He wants them to be “cup overflowing because it’s so full” kind of blessed. And this isn’t because He is wasteful Father. This isn’t because He must give us what we want if we ask Him the right way. It’s because He loves us SO MUCH! Our heavenly Father has called us to a life of abundance. Abundance physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is His delight to see His children blessed.

How many approach God begging for scrapes from the table of His provision because you think He is indifferent to you or what you are walking through. There’s good news! Jesus came that we would not just have life, but life more abundantly!

Do you struggle with believing that God wants to bless you? Have you believed the lie that God is indifferent to your struggle? Be encouraged that God knows just what you need and stands ready to bless you.

Gateway Church
21-Day Fast 2023

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Day 19: Surely Goodness and Mercy shall Follow Me

To follow is to **pursue**. A pursuit is not passive. This is evidence that God is actively, purposefully, and intentionally moving. The goodness and unfailing love of God does not idly wait until we turn to it before it decides to follow us. It actively pursues us whether we know it or not.

Paul says something powerful in Philippians 3. In verse 12, he says, “Not that I have already obtained it all, or have already arrived at my goal, but (now) I PRESS ON (pursue) to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Paul is saying in essence, I am not pursuing the One who has been pursuing me!

Pray: God thank you for always pursuing me with your love. Even in moments and seasons I’m distracted or sidelined, you are always near me. Today I pursue you, grant me the grace to pursue you passionately, consistently until I reach all you’ve set out for me to reach. Amen!

Gateway Church 21-Day Fast 2023

Scripture Focus:

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Day 20: All the Days of My Life

The first half of this verse acknowledges how God’s love pursues us, without waiting by for us to first seek it. This next statement declares how long God has been and will pursue us. “All the days of my life...”

2 Peter 3:9 says, The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being **patient** for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish but wants everyone to repent.

As you meditate on these words, thank God for the times His goodness and loving kindness has been patient. And as you do, there may be a family member or friend that comes to mind that needs to know this Goodness and Mercy! Be encouraged, knowing His goodness and mercy is forever pursuing them too!

As you pray today, take time to reflect on the past and present moments the Goodness and Mercy of God have been at work in your life. Then close your time by thanking Him for how He is already preparing for the days of your life yet to come. How blessed we are to serve an always present God who sees all the days of our life and brings fullness to all of them!

Pray: Father thank You for being patient, longsuffering with me! Thank you for not giving up on me. Thank you for not giving up on (insert who is on your heart) ... I believe we will see them impacted by your Goodness and Mercy, the way you have impacted me. Amen!

Gateway Church 21-Day Fast 2023

Scripture Focus:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, 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 runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.” Psalm 23

Day 21: And I will Dwell in the House of the Lord Forever

The 23rd Psalm is one of the most memorized passages of scripture. Since it was first breathed by God, countless believers have taken comfort in these words in times of peace and times of tribulation. In coming to know and pursuing; His heart, His care, His provision, His protection – you realize there is nothing in this world that can compare to Him!

In a moment when others were walking away from Jesus in John chapter 6; Jesus turns and asks the 12, “...will you also leave?” To which Peter immediately replied; “Lord where would we go, for you have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are The Christ!”

While we have talked about some of the amazing blessings that come from Jesus being our Shepherd, we are reminded that the greatest blessing of our good shepherd is yet to come! May the end of this time of fasting and prayer be a hallmark in your life as you grow closer and more passionate about pursuing God and His Kingdom and growing with a greater ETERNAL perspective.

Pray: Father, I am thankful for the daily blessings that you load us down with. There is no one that could do for me what you’ve done for me. There is nowhere I can go and receive the Joy, the Peace, and the Hope that I’ve found in You! May I continue to grow in an awareness that the blessing of the Good Shepherd doesn’t end with this life but is only a sample of what we will receive in the next one! Amen!