

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PATHWAY: HE LEADS ME

Because the Lord is my shepherd...He leads me besides still waters:

Your Shepherd has promised: "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled* " (Matthew 5:6, KJV). In the natural world, grass and water are two basic necessities for sheep. The previous chapter focused on the green pastures provided by the Shepherd. This chapter concerns the waters of spiritual life.

Water is extremely important for sheep, as dehydration can quickly set in and lead to confusion and death. The same is true spiritually. Spiritual water is vital to prevent doctrinal confusion, essential for spiritual life, and required to prevent spiritual death.

What are these waters and where are they found? Just follow your Shepherd. He is leading you there.

HE LEADS YOU

Drawing on the biblical analogy of believers as sheep--it is characteristic of sheep not to know where they are going. They will easily stray into the wrong paths and even follow other sheep right over a cliff to their death! Sheep must be led.

The fact that Psalm 23:2 says the Shepherd leads you confirms four things:

First: That there is a Shepherd.

Second: That HE communicates with you.

Third: That you can recognize HIS voice when HE speaks.

Fourth: That HE has something to say.

In the natural world, you do not recognize the voice of a stranger and they must identify themselves if they call you on the telephone. You easily recognize voices of those you know and those with whom you have developed an intimate relationship. The same is true in the spiritual world. If you are to

come to know the Shepherd's voice, you must become acquainted with Him. You must spend time with Him through worship, prayer, and His Word--the Holy Bible. You must join His flock in being "fed and watered" in a church fellowship and reproducing new lambs. Through this, you will learn to know His voice.

Is the Lord your Shepherd? Are you His sheep? If you answered "yes", then the Shepherd stands ready to lead you to spiritual waters. As His sheep, you will know His voice. All you must do is follow.

I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine...And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:14,16,27, NKJV)

The Bible reveals that there are many voices in the world clamoring for attention (1 Corinthians 14:10). There are the voices of man, Satan, self, and God. In everyday situations of life, believers are constantly making choices which determine whether or not they will follow the Shepherd. It is essential to know His voice and follow Him daily in the minor decisions of life because these affect your ability to make proper decisions regarding major issues that affect your life and destiny.

The ability to receive divine guidance comes through walking in intimate fellowship with the Shepherd. You learn to follow by studying His Word where answers are provided for the issues of life. You learn to follow by praying each day for His will to be done. As part of your prayer time, sit silently in His presence and listen for guidance from your Shepherd.

There are two Greek words used for "word" in relation to receiving a word from God: *Logos* and *rhema*. The "logos" is the written Word of God and it always agrees with the "rhema" or spoken, life-giving Word. A "rhema" Word from God usually applies to a specific situation, meets a personal need, or provides individual guidance. Because you recognize this Word as applying to a specific situation in your life, it becomes a life-giving Word to you.

A "rhema" Word may be communicated through a sermon or a verse from the Bible which suddenly strikes you with great meaning. It may also come through spiritual gifts like prophecy or words of knowledge, or it may be spoken into your spirit by the Lord. The written Word of God is complete. Nothing is to be added to it or taken from it (Revelation 22:18-19), so when

God speaks through the "rhema" Word, it will always be in harmony with His written Word.

You will be able to hear the Shepherd's voice as long as you remain firmly rooted in the truths of His Word: "...Every one that is of the truth hears my voice" (John 18:37, NKJV). The Holy Spirit who dwells within will guide you into spiritual truth:

When He, the Spirit of truth is come (the Holy Spirit), He will guide you into all truth...and He will show you things to come and He shall receive of mine (God's will) and show it to you. (John 16:13-14, KJV with comments)

What is truth? Jesus declared of the Father: "Your Word is truth" (John 17:17, NKJV)

In the natural world, a child must attain a certain level of maturity before he recognizes the voices of his parents. The same is true in the spiritual world. When you are first born-again you may not be able to recognize the Shepherd's voice clearly when He speaks to you. The Bible contrasts a new believer and a mature one by explaining that...

...every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: For he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:13-14, NKJV)

The "milk" and "meat" mentioned in these verses refer to the written Word of God, the Holy Bible. When you are first born-again you should study the simple truths (the milk) of the written Word of God. As you mature, you will be able to master the deeper truths (the meat) of the Word of God. As you continue to study God's Word, your spiritual senses will mature and you will be able to properly discern between good and evil. This means you will be able to distinguish the right pathway from the wrong one. You will know the Shepherd's voice and follow His lead.

BESIDE STILL WATERS

Sheep fear rushing water because they are not good swimmers. Their heavy wool coats and small, spindly legs make them top heavy. When their wool is saturated with water, they can flip over and drown easily. They shy away

from running water, so the shepherd searches out still waters for them to drink. A fresh pool. A calmly flowing river.

It is interesting to note that the shepherd leads to "still waters." Still waters are defined as silent, yet fresh and pure. Still waters speak of spiritual stability which is not moved by the shifting winds of experience or popular theology. It is fresh water, not stagnant like the Dead Sea, because the spiritual water runs to you and through you to a thirsty world.

The Hebrew word translated in this verse as "still" literally means "resting place, a place of repose to rest from tiredness".

The Shepherd does not lead you to a dangerous raging torrent. In fact: *"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him"* (Isaiah 59:19, NKJV). You won't be swept away by the raging waters of this world or the deep waters of the circumstances of life.

The Shepherd also does not lead you to stagnant, polluted pools of ritual, tradition, and religion. He leads you to pure still waters where you can be refreshed.

Are you tired of battling the white-water rapids of difficulties in this world--the frenzy and craziness that is all around you? Are you sick of drinking from the polluted ponds of man-made religion and tradition. Is your life like an empty water jug spiritually? The Prophet Jeremiah spoke of "cisterns that hold no water". That emptiness you feel cannot be filled except by the water of life (Jeremiah 2:13). Jesus said: *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink..."* (John 7:37, KJV). Your emptiness, your dryness, and your spiritual frustration can only be filled by drinking deeply of the water of life.

So where do you find this water? You find it in the same place that the woman at the well found it centuries ago. Her story is recorded in John chapter 4. As Jesus rested by a well waiting for His disciples, a woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me to drink". The woman said to Him, "How is it that you, being a Jew, asks me for a drink, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." There was intense racial and religious prejudice between the two groups at that time.

Jesus answered and said to her: "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that said to you, 'Give me to drink' you would have asked of Him and He would have given you living water."

The woman thought a minute and then said, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From where then do you have that living water?" Then Jesus said to her:

...Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:13-14, NKJV)

If you drink of the waters of the world--its attractions, ambitions, materialism, etc.--you will thirst again. If you drink of the waters provided by the Great Shepherd, which flow from the Shepherd Himself, you will never again thirst.

So how do you drink of these waters? You become a true worshipper of God. In the remainder of John chapter 4, Jesus explains to the woman what it means to be a true worshipper. It is not a matter of where and when you worship, but of who and how. Jesus revealed that those who worship the Lord must do so in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Genuine worship is based upon fact--the truth of God's Word. It is also based upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit and submission to God in your spirit. These are the worshippers God seeks.

You are drinking of Living Waters...

-Each time you study God's Word.

-Each time you pray and listen for His voice. -Every time you worship God.

-Each time you join the flock in corporate worship.

The still waters to which the Good Shepherd leads you are found in Jesus Christ (John 4:14). The Prophet Isaiah issued a clear invitation to the spiritually thirsty saying: "*Hey there! All who are thirsty, come to the water!*" (Isaiah 55:1, MSG). In these waters your spiritual thirst is quenched. You are spiritually satisfied. Drink deeply!

What great promises we have received in the first few verses of this Psalm. But wait--we aren't done yet. There are still more blessings for the sheep of His pasture. Time to journey on with our Shepherd and guide. He is on the move again!