



**Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.**

A shepherd's job is to care for his sheep, to provide for all their needs. So when we are under the care of the Lord, the Good Shepherd, we can be assured that he will provide for us all that we need. As the Good Shepherd, do you think the Lord knows how to keep His sheep in good health? Absolutely. Do you think the Good Shepherd wants to have a sickly flock of sheep? Of course not. He has provided all that His sheep need in order to be in the best of health. So what is it that He has provided to keep His sheep well and healthy? Let's keep investigating the rest of Psalm 23 to discover His plan for keeping us well.

**Psalm 23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.**

The Good Shepherd makes His sheep lie down in green pastures. Here is our first principle for wellness—rest. In order for the sheep to be healthy, they must have adequate rest. Rest is very important for our bodies. When we are sleeping our body is repairing itself and getting ready for the next day. Important hormones are released while we are sleeping, and growth in children takes place most efficiently while they are sleeping. Our bodies need at least 7-8 hours of sleep each night. And sleep before midnight is more beneficial than sleep after midnight.

In order to get sufficient sleep at night, you need to plan your evenings so that you can get to bed on time. Make sure you do not eat within 3 hours of going to bed, and do not exercise within 2-3 hours of going to bed. Have a relaxing bedtime routine—take a shower, read a book, have personal worship time—and keep going to bed at the same time each night, so your body gets used to the routine.

**“The importance of regularity in the time for eating and sleeping should not be overlooked. Since the work of building up the body takes place during the hours of rest, it is essential, especially in youth, that sleep should be regular and abundant.”** *Education* page 205. Not only do we need adequate daily rest, but we need weekly rest as well. The Good Shepherd designed us so that we function best when we receive a weekly rest on the Sabbath day.

There is something else here that we can find to help us on our quest for wellness. Let's think about this phrase for just a little longer. First of all, where do we find green pastures? Are they in our houses? Are they at the office? Where are green pastures? Outside! Of course! The sheep are not lying down to rest in the barn here. They are outside in the pasture. What do we find outside? Fresh air and sunshine! Here are two more very important principles for wellness that we need to remember—fresh air and sunshine.

We need fresh air to breathe in order to have good, pure blood and healthy bodies. Fresh air helps to promote many healthy functions in the body. Try to keep the windows open in your house to allow for fresh air to flow through the house consistently. Here is what Ellen White says about fresh air. **“Air, air, the precious boon of heaven which all may have, will bless you with its invigorating influence if you will not refuse it entrance. Welcome it, cultivate a love for it, and it will prove a precious soother of the nerves. Air must be in constant circulation to be kept pure. The influence of pure, fresh air is to cause the blood to circulate healthfully through the system. It refreshes the body and tends to render it strong and healthy, while at the same time its influence is decidedly felt upon the mind, imparting a degree of composure and serenity. It excites the appetite, and renders the digestion of food more perfect, and induces sound and sweet sleep.”** *Testimonies to the Church*, volume 1, page 702.

We also need sunshine in order to be healthy. The minimum amount needed is 15 minutes daily on your hands and face. Vitamin D is produced in our bodies when we have exposure to sunlight. Sunlight is also very important in regulating our mood and our mental outlook. It improves the immune system, which helps our bodies to fight off sickness, and it helps to regulate our sleep/wake cycle. We are told that, **“Nature is God's physician. The pure air, the glad sunshine, the beautiful flowers and trees, the orchards and vineyards, and outdoor exercise amid these surroundings, are health-giving—the elixir of life.”** *Counsels on Health* page 170

Psalm 23:2b **He leadeth me beside the still waters.**

The Good Shepherd provides plenty of water for His sheep. This is our fourth principle for wellness—water. Sheep must have water to live, and so must we. The Good Shepherd knows what His sheep need to drink in order to live. He doesn't provide them with soda, or tea, or coffee, or juice, or cow's milk to drink. No, He provides them with water. And that is what He has provided for us to drink as well. He intended for us to drink lots of water in order to be well. Every day you need to drink a minimum of 1 ounce of water for every 2 pounds that you weigh; that is about 8-12 glasses of water every day for adults. That is the minimum. This means you need to drink even when you don't feel thirsty, and you want to keep your urine pale. If you are hot and sweating and losing water, then you need to drink even more to make up for the extra loss.

Drinking juice or soda during the day does not count for water intake. You need pure water. Do any of you have pets? What do you give them to drink? Do you pour them a bottle of beer or soda when they are thirsty? How about a cup of hot coffee in the morning to help them wake up? Does that sound silly? Of course! But it's just as silly to give your child a bottle of soda or a cup of coffee when he is thirsty. Or to pour yourself a cup of coffee every morning! That is not what God created for us to drink.

Do you think that there was a soda fountain or juice fountain in the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve to go and drink from whenever they got thirsty? No! But God did provide them with water. And water is still the best thing that we should be drinking if we want to be healthy. We are told that, **"In health and in sickness, pure water is one of heaven's choicest blessings. Its proper use promotes health. It is the beverage which God provided to quench the thirst of animals and man. Drunk freely, it helps to supply the necessities of the system and assists nature to resist disease."** *Ministry of Healing* page 237.

Psalm 23:3 **He restoreth my soul.**

Not only does the Good Shepherd provide refreshment and restoration physically for His sheep through the use of rest and water, but he provides restoration for the soul as well. He promises rest for the weary of heart and living water for the thirsty. So here we find the spiritual and mental aspects of the principles of rest and water that we just discussed. Let's talk about the spiritual rest first. Matthew 11:28-30 says, **"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."**

What is His yoke? It is obedience to Christ. How do I wear it? **"Take hold of the arm of God, and say, 'I am nothing, and Thou art everything'. Thou hast said, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Now, Lord, I must have Thee abiding in me that I may abide in Thee.' Then advance step by step, by living faith abiding in Jesus Christ. This is wearing His yoke, the yoke of obedience."** *Manuscript 85*, 1901.

**"The abiding rest... is found when all self-justification, all reasoning from a selfish standpoint, is put away. Entire self-surrender, an acceptance of his ways, is the secret of perfect rest in his love. We must learn his meekness and lowliness before we experience the fulfillment of the promise, 'Ye shall find rest unto your souls.' It is by learning the habits of Christ that self becomes transformed—by taking his yoke, and then submitting to learn."** *Review and Herald*, April 25, 1899.

Jesus also says that He is the living water and all who drink of Him will never thirst again. We find the familiar story of the woman at the well recorded in the book of John. Jesus told her, **"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh 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.

So what is this water? **"The water that Christ referred to was the revelation of His grace in His word. His Spirit, His teaching, is as a satisfying fountain to every soul....In Christ is fullness of joy forevermore....Christ's gracious presence in His Word is ever speaking to the soul, representing Him as the well of living water to refresh the thirsting. It is our privilege to have a living, abiding Saviour. He is**

**the source of spiritual power implanted within us, and His influence will flow forth in words and actions, refreshing all within the sphere of our influence, begetting in them desires and aspirations for strength and purity, for holiness and peace, and for that joy which brings with it no sorrow. This is the result of an indwelling Saviour.”** *Letter 73*, 1897. This is what we need; an indwelling Saviour who will be to us as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.

**“Restless, craving, exhausted heart, think of the Saviour’s words, ‘Whosoever drinketh of this water that I shall give him shall never thirst.’ Drink from the wells of worldly pleasure, and you will thirst again. Drink of the water of life, and you will be satisfied and refreshed.... Love and light and truth and life are found in the everlasting gospel. Come, ye who labor and are heavy laden, come to the living water. “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”** *The Youth’s Instructor*, September 11, 1902. The Good Shepherd truly is able to provide restoration for His sheep. Not only physically, but mentally and spiritually as well.

**Psalm 23:3b He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.**

The Good Shepherd leads His sheep in paths that are right. This indicates that there are other paths to choose from. David would not have had to specify that He leads me in paths of righteousness if it was the only path to take. So we know then, that there is a path we should take, and there are paths we should not take. The path that the Good Shepherd takes His sheep on is the path of right doing--the path that will bring Him honor and glory.

We find this stated in another way in 1 Corinthians 10:31, **“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”** And Colossians 3:17 says, **“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”** This is our next principle for wellness—temperance.

**“True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful and to use judiciously that which is healthful.”** *Temperance*, page 138. Dispensing entirely with everything hurtful and choosing the good means staying on the path of righteousness and not turning to the right or the left. This means that we should not eat, drink or use anything that we know to be harmful to us. Some things to avoid include alcohol, tobacco, street drugs, and caffeine.

It also means that I need to use wisely the things that are good for me. Even if something is good and healthy for me, I must be careful not to over-eat. Even if the food is the very best for me, it becomes bad for me if I consume too much of it. This is not just for food either! I can be intemperate in work, in play, in sleep, in the way I use my time. There must be a balance! Work is good, but not if I become a workaholic. Sleep is good, but too much is bad for me, and so is too little. I must use the good things in moderation. This is being temperate. This is following the Good Shepherd in paths of righteousness, or right doing, for His name’s sake.

**Psalm 23:4 Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...**

Here the Good Shepherd takes His sheep where they may not want to go. It is not fun to be in the valley of the shadow of death. But here is where we find our next principle for wellness—exercise! **“Yea though I walk...”** The sheep need to exercise! If all the sheep do is eat and rest all day they will get fat and weak and unhealthy! Even though it might not be considered the fun thing to do, the sheep need to walk.

We need to exercise, too! Sometimes making the effort to exercise feels like the valley of the shadow of death, but we must go through it. Exercise is needed to keep our muscles strong and healthy. It aids in digestion, helps our heart and lungs and circulation, and improves our thinking and our mood. Ellen White says, **“Exercise is indispensable to the health of every organ. If one set of muscles is used to the neglect of others, the living machinery is not being worked intelligently. When physical exercise is taken, the circulation is quickened. The heart receives blood faster and sends it to the lungs faster. The lungs work more vigorously, furnishing a greater amount of blood, which is sent with stronger power through the entire**

**being. Exercise gives new life and strength to every part of the body.”** *Daughters of God* page 173. And walking is one of the best ways to get exercise.

We need to exercise at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week at moderate intensity. Moderate intensity means that you can talk, but cannot sing, while you are exercising. Walking is the best exercise, but you can also bicycle, swim, or do water aerobics. Gardening and yard work are also great ways to get exercise. If you are not accustomed to exercise, start slow and work up to your goal over 1-2 months. Any exercise you do in addition to what you are doing now will give you health benefits, even if it is just a little bit.

Here again with exercise, we also find the principles that we discussed earlier—fresh air and sunshine. When you go for a walk, where do you walk? Do you walk around and around in circles in your house? Not usually, unless it's raining outside! Unless you have been very sick and are unable to go more than a few feet at a time, walking generally involves going outside into the fresh air and sunshine. **“There are but few who realize that, in order to enjoy health and cheerfulness, they must have an abundance of sunlight, pure air, and physical exercise.”** *The Health Reformer*, April 1, 1871. So when you go for a walk outside to exercise, you can check three things off your list of ways to wellness all at one time!

Psalm 23:4b **I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.**

Here we find the most important principle for wellness—an entire trust in God! The sheep know the shepherd and trust that He is able and that He will protect and provide for them. This knowledge and trusting relationship brings them comfort even in the valley of the shadow of death. They faithfully follow wherever He leads them because they trust in Him. We need to trust entirely in the Good Shepherd as well. It doesn't do any good to just say that we trust Him. We have to live out that trust. We have to live moment-by-moment trusting in Him, and not in ourselves.

Psalm 103:2-5 assures us that we have many reasons to trust Him. **“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.”** He is our source of healing and strength and wellness. It is not the doctors, or the medications we take, or our own efforts that heal us. It is the power of God. And we need to put our entire trust in His ways, and not in our own.

**“Never ... think that in the human being is power to heal the sick. You are to depend much more than you have done on the co-operation of the Great Physician in the work of healing disease. Your faith is to lay hold upon the efficacy of Christ to make effectual the effort put forth for the recovery of the sick.”** *Paulson Collection*, page 2. This is the most important aspect of wellness. It is only by cooperating with God—as He gives us power to change—that we may be able to make the changes we need to and maintain wellness. We may attempt to make changes in our diet or exercise or temperance, but those changes will not be permanent unless we have God's help; unless we have an entire trust in Him.

Psalm 23:5 **Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.**

The Good Shepherd provides food for His sheep. Notice that it doesn't just say, “I eat.” No, it says that the shepherd prepares “a table before me.” So the shepherd is particular about what he wants his sheep to eat. They don't eat just anything; they eat what he prepares for them. So here is our next wellness principle—nutrition. Sheep need proper nutrition in order to be well and stay well.

So what kind of food does the Shepherd provide for His sheep? Let's take a look in Genesis 1:29. Here we find the original diet given to man. **“Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.’”** This is the food that God intended for us to eat, and it is only in eating the food that He has prepared for us that we will find the wellness that we seek. We need to eat largely of ripe, raw fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and seeds. These foods are what the shepherd has prepared for his sheep to eat.

Notice also that the table the Good Shepherd provides is in the presence of the enemy! Was the food God gave to man in the Garden of Eden not also in the presence of the Enemy? Indeed it was, and the Enemy is still right there in our presence, doing all in his power to entice us eat of his food instead of the food the Good Shepherd has provided for us. And he is very crafty, we must watch out for the Enemy! The enemy has prepared a variety of food for us as well, but his food is intended to break down our physical and spiritual powers instead of building them up.

Avoid cheese, meat, and spices and limit or cut out of your diet all dairy products and highly processed or high fat foods (white flour, refined sugar, margarine, oil, butter). Instead, eat foods more closely to the way they grow--as close to the natural state as possible. This is the way we get the most nutritional value from them. Breakfast should be large, lunch medium, and supper small—if you have supper at all. Meals should be spaced 5-6 hours apart so that your stomach can completely digest the previous meal and have time to rest before you fill it again. Eat nothing in-between meals so that your digestion is not interrupted.

Studies have shown that even taking one bite of food or candy in between meals can arrest digestion and cause a delay in stomach emptying. In one study, volunteers who ate two bites of chocolate between each meal for 3 days still had some of the food in their stomach from the first day they started! And let me tell you, it might have been good, healthy food when you first ate it, but after three days in your stomach, it is nice and rotten. Not exactly the food you want to make good blood with! You can't make good blood with rotten food! So, if you are hungry between meals, drink water to satisfy that hunger.

It may seem hard at first to deny appetite and make changes in your diet, but stick with it—your taste buds change every thirty days! The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that, **“God requires continual advancement from His people. They need to learn that indulged appetite is the greatest hindrance to mental improvement and soul sanctification... Indulgence of appetite is the greatest cause of physical and mental debility, and lies largely at the foundation of feebleness and premature death. Intemperance begins at our tables, when we use an unwise combination of foods. Let the individual who is seeking to possess purity of spirit, bear in mind that in Christ there is power to control the appetite.”** *Paulson Collection*, page 3.

Psalm 23:5b **Thou anointest my head with oil.**

When something happens to His sheep, the Good Shepherd cares for their sickness and suffering. The oil in this passage is used as a balm for wounds, and also as a treatment to protect against insects and pests that bother the sheep. The Good Shepherd has a solution and a plan for caring for all of their needs. So for us, the Good Shepherd has a plan for caring for our needs when we are sick and suffering. Here we find another important principle. God has provided in the things of nature ways for us to prevent sickness as well as ways to aid in healing.

**“There are many ways of practicing the healing art, but there is only one way that Heaven approves. God's remedies are the simple agencies of nature that will not tax or debilitate the system through their powerful properties. Pure air and water, cleanliness, a proper diet, purity of life, and a firm trust in God are remedies for the want of which thousands are dying; yet these remedies are going out of date because their skillful use requires work that the people do not appreciate. Fresh air, exercise, pure water, and clean, sweet premises are within the reach of all with but little expense; but drugs are expensive, both in the outlay of means and in the effect produced upon the system.”** *Testimonies to the Church*, volume 5, page 443.

The Good Shepherd has provided for healing, not only physically, but mentally and spiritually as well. God anoints us with the oil of His Holy Spirit to heal our wounds, to soothe our hurts, and to protect us against the attacks of the enemy that constantly assail us. He is indeed a Good Shepherd. There is nothing that we need that He has not made provision for that we may find our health and wholeness in Him.

Psalm 23:5c **My cup overflows.**

Here we see that the sheep are so well cared for that they not only have a sufficient supply, but they have a surplus. Their cup overflows. Wouldn't you like to be overflowing with good health? It is possible with the Good Shepherd, but we have to cooperate with Him and follow His guidelines for our lives. **“Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power--these are the true remedies. Every person should have a knowledge of nature's remedial agencies and how to apply them... The use of natural remedies requires an amount of care and effort that many are not willing to give. Nature's process of healing and upbuilding is gradual, and to the impatient it seems slow. The surrender of hurtful indulgences requires sacrifice. But in the end it will be found that nature, untrammelled, does her work wisely and well. Those who persevere in obedience to her laws will reap the reward in health of body and health of mind.”** *Ministry of Healing*, page 127. Our cup will be overflowing, and we can claim the wonderful promise of reward found in the next verse of Psalm 23.

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

What a promise for the faithful sheep of the Good Shepherd! What a life He has promised to the sheep that follow His principles for life and wellness.

So what have we learned about WELLNESS from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm? Let's review.

W-water

E-exercise

L-live temperately

L-lots of fresh air

N-nutrition

E-entire trust in God

S-sunshine

S-sleep, Sabbath rest

If we will follow the Good Shepherd and make the choice to be obedient sheep, then He has promised us a life of health—not only physical health, but mental and spiritual health as well. The Good Shepherd wants to restore us to complete health that we may be presented as a living sacrifice to God, holy and without blemish.

This isn't just a matter of good health for today, or tomorrow, or even next year: it's for eternity. If we choose today to surrender to the Good Shepherd, to obey His commands, and follow wherever he leads, then when the chief Shepherd appears, we will receive a crown of glory that does not fade away. And we will be able to say with David the Psalmist, **“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”**

May we all give ourselves unreservedly to the Good Shepherd today that He may work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Please stand with me as we pray.