

A Study in Psalm 23

Lesson 2: God Provides for Peaceful Rest (verse 2)

I. In pastures of green grass, He makes me lie down

- A. A careful look at the words used.
 - 1. "Pastures" – Seats, dwelling, habitation, pastures in which flocks can lie down and rest. It is not the same word for a place to feed.
 - 2. "Green Grass" – Either the area immediately adjacent to natural sources of water or in the dry semi-arid land of Israel – carefully prepared soil and diligently constructed irrigation systems cared for by the shepherd
 - 3. "Lie Down" – To recline as of men or beasts dwelling in security.
- B. Sheep cannot lie down and rest unless the following conditions are met:
 - 1. They must be free from all fear (their only form of self-defense is to run) – 2 Tim. 1:7.
 - 2. There can't be any friction within the flock (butting order of the old ram at the top).
 - 3. They must be free from torment of flies or parasites (nasal flies, ticks, etc.)
 - 4. They won't rest if they are hungry (in lush land, they can fill up quickly and then lie down and ruminate).
- C. The only way to provide for their needs is the actual physical presence of the shepherd. His diligence in being there will allow for the condition of rest.

Remember the role of the Holy Spirit – "another comforter," John 14:16. We are lacking nothing!

II. To waters of rest He leads me

- A. A look at the words used:
 - 1. "*Waters of rest*" – These are not the rushing streams or cascading waterfalls. The sight and sound of "white water" will frighten the sheep. These are still and quiet ponds, pools or lazy streams, not too deep or noisy.

This rest allows one to "set down," for a quiet, calm reflection and sustenance.
 - 2. "*Leads me*" – From the Hebrew word meaning to lead flocks with gentleness and care. The concept, too, involves God going before, look at John 10:4, 14.
- B. The importance of water to sheep:

1. 70% of their bodies are water. Water provides vitality, strength and vigor essential for health.
 2. They can go months without drinking from a well or stream, as long as they are out in the field early enough to lick the heavy dew from the grass.
 3. Drinking from polluted sources causes them to pick up parasites (look at Jer. 2:13). Consider the broken cisterns that hold no pure water.
- C. "Rest" is a direct result of following the careful lead of the Shepherd.
1. St. Augustus said, "O God, Thou has made us for Thyself and our souls are restless, searching till they find their rest in Thee!" On many of the catacombs in Rome, it is written "In Christ – In Peace"
 2. "Peace" – Translated in other languages: "My heart sits down" or "the well-arranged soul" or "a song in the body"

III. So what?

- A. The usual pace and direction of our lives leaves us frustrated, exhausted, usually with a sense of guilt over unaccomplished tasks and generally stressed out! (the opposite of peaceful rest).

Take the Holmes-Rahe Stress Test.

Under 150 points = 37% chance of getting sick in the next 2 years

150-300 points = 51% chance of getting sick in the next 2 years

Over 300 points = 80% chance of getting sick in the next 2 years

- B. The anecdote to stress and the lack of peace is found in Matt. 11:28-30.

Thought: when there is no peace for the oxen, it's a matter of:

1. Wrong yoke (they are custom made for each ox)
2. Wrong field (working the "wrong side of the street")
3. Wrong owner (working for the wrong master)

- C. Steps towards the solution: let go and let God! He wants to lead us toward peaceful rest (look at Is. 32:17-18)

1. Admit daily: I'm only human/lighten up!

Remember the Greek motto: "You will break the bow if you keep it always bent."

2. Quit blaming others: take control/get organized.
3. Shift the ultimate responsibility off your shoulders and onto the Loving Shepherd.
Look at Ez. 34:11-16

- a) Memorize appropriate scriptures to help focus your mind: John 14:27, Phil. 4:7-9, Col. 3:15

- b) Pray over your schedule/things to do list. Invite the Good Shepherd into your daily life. Ps. 31:14-15, "My times are in Your hand..."
4. Keep a Kingdom perspective and listen! (Isa. 28:10-12)

HOLMES-RAHE STRESS TEST

In the past 12 months, which of these have happened to you?

| Event | Value | Score | Event | Value | Score |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Death of a spouse | 100 | _____ | Son or daughter leaving home | 29 | _____ |
| Divorce | 73 | _____ | Trouble with in-laws | 29 | _____ |
| Marital separation | 65 | _____ | Outstanding personal achievement | 28 | _____ |
| Jail term | 63 | _____ | Spouse begins or starts work | 26 | _____ |
| Death of a close family member | 63 | _____ | Starting or finishing school | 26 | _____ |
| Personal injury or illness | 53 | _____ | Change in living conditions | 25 | _____ |
| Marriage | 50 | _____ | Revision of personal habits | 24 | _____ |
| Fired from work | 47 | _____ | Trouble with boss | 23 | _____ |
| Marital reconciliation | 45 | _____ | Change in work hours, conditions | 20 | _____ |
| Retirement | 45 | _____ | Change in residence | 20 | _____ |
| Change in family member's health | 44 | _____ | Change in schools | 20 | _____ |
| Pregnancy | 40 | _____ | Change in recreational habits | 19 | _____ |
| Sex difficulties | 39 | _____ | Change in church activities | 19 | _____ |
| Addition to family | 39 | _____ | Change in social activities | 18 | _____ |
| Business readjustment | 39 | _____ | Mortgage or loan under \$10,000 | 18 | _____ |
| Change in financial status | 38 | _____ | Change in sleeping habits | 16 | _____ |
| Death of a close friend | 37 | _____ | Change in number of family gatherings | 15 | _____ |
| Change in number of marital arguments | 35 | _____ | Change in eating habits | 15 | _____ |
| Mortgage or loan over \$10,000 | 31 | _____ | Vacation | 13 | _____ |
| Foreclosure of mortgage or loan | 30 | _____ | Christmas season | 12 | _____ |
| Change in work responsibilities | 29 | _____ | Minor violation of the law | 11 | _____ |

*Thomas H. Holmes and Richard Rahe, Stress Rating Scale, Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 1967, Volume II, page 216.

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