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Take Time to Relax and Hear God's Voice

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The Lord is my Shepherd, you (the sheep) shall not want.



In Psalm 23 there are two metaphors: Jesus is the Shepherd and you and I are the sheep. We are carefree and totally provided for.

"He makes me to lie down in green pastures" (Ps. 23:1:2a).

Meditating on this beloved Psalm can help to take stress away. When I think of my childhood in Florida, what this verse reminds me of is rolling down a beautiful green hillside in my neighborhood.

At age 6 or 7, I was totally relaxed as I rolled round and round until I came to the bottom of the hill. The fresh cut grass also had a sweet smell and, as usual, the sun was shining. Then I wanted to go to the top of the hill and do it again.

I can picture Jesus, my Good Shepherd, sitting there on the grass watching me and enjoying my childlike activity. Maybe He would begin to quote Psalm 23, which He had learned from the scrolls in the synagogue.

Closing my eyes and thinking about this makes me want to take a deep, relaxing breath.

"He leads me beside the still waters" (Ps. 23:1:2b).

If a sheep wanted to take a drink of water from a spring-fed river, the water would be running, but not rushing water. Rushing water and a sheep's heavy coat of fur would be dangerous combinations.

One of my favorite memories at the University of Florida in Gainesville was going "tubing." Each of us had an inner tube. Clad in our bathing suits, we sat in the tube and let the river gently carry us for several miles down stream.

Sometimes the inner tubes would go round and round. Never wanting the adventure to stop, we met up with friends who had driven to a special location to meet us. They took care of us by providing nice warm towels and delicious food and cold drinks.

They were like good shepherds. I'd like to be there right now, but those pleasures are only for me to meditate on. Good memories are wonderful gifts.

I think Jesus would have liked to be in an inner tube beside me. Even more wonderful, maybe He'll meet me at the 750-mile long River of Life for the swim of my life upon entering Heaven. Those trees with 12 kinds of fruit on each one will be a delicious treat after our swim.

"And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on

either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore 12 manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month" (Revelation 22:1-2 *KLV mod.*).

To learn more about this river, read the Chapter 6 commentary of *Front Door View of Heaven* (Bennett, R., "Heaven Tours," 2009, p. 68-70).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

One of the great New Testament chapters that elaborates on the theme of Psalm 23 is the 10th chapter of the Gospel of John.

"He who enters by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. To Him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear His voice: and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out."

The voice of Jesus is rich and powerful. He called to the 12 disciples one by one, "Come follow Me." And they did. Somehow He called to you or is calling you. He is drawing you to follow Him, to study His life and messages.

He's calling your name. Will you follow?

(Join me for the 4th "Psalm 23 Series" next time.)

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