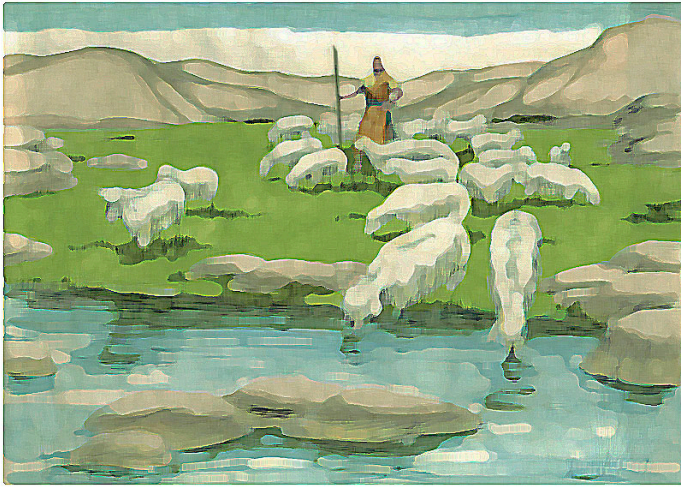


Lesson 6: Comfort



Introduction

In Psalm 23, King David wrote a song in which he remembered what it was like when he was a boy taking care of sheep. David said that human beings are like sheep, and that God is the shepherd who takes care of us and watches over us.

Read: Psalm 23

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

The Book of Psalms is at the very center of the Bible.

The Old Testament: The Writings

Throughout the Old Testament there are instances of poetry, proverbs, and songs. But there are some books in the Bible written entirely in this style. In addition to the Law and the Prophets, the Jewish people referred to this third category of books in the Bible as “the Writings.”

Biblical Genre: Worship and Poetry

The Bible is honest in reflecting the real-life experience of faith in our lives — both good times and bad. The people of Scripture were not so different from us; they experienced joy as well as pain, happiness as well as hardship. This is reflected in the Book of Psalms.

In the Psalms we find the thoughts and prayers of God’s people who were facing situations common to us all. God gives us these words to read and speak to express our own faith in the many different circumstances in which we may find ourselves.

When in Time?

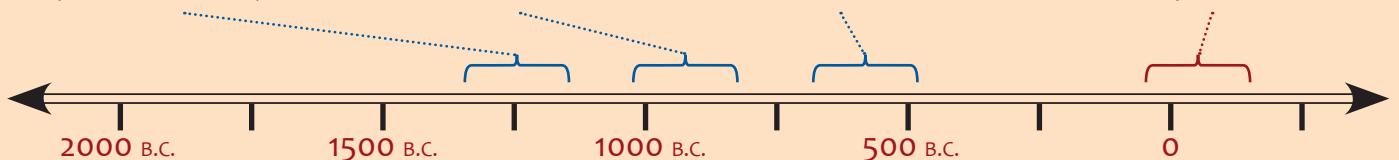
The Bible was not written all at one time, or by the pen of a single person — it was written over the course of several hundred years as God spoke through many people over time:

The first small pieces of the Bible were written at the time of Moses, around 1200 B.C. (“Before Christ”).

The first major section of the Old Testament was written at the time of King David, around 1000 B.C.

A second large section of the Old Testament was written at the time of the Major Prophets, around 500 B.C.

The New Testament was written during the 20 to 80 years after Jesus’ ministry, at the time of the Apostle Paul.





Discuss: Psalm 23

1. In Psalm 23, the Lord God is compared to a shepherd. If that is the case, who are the sheep? What does a shepherd do for the sheep?
2. Shepherds lead their sheep to good pastureland, even if they have to travel a distance to get there. In our lives of faith, how does God lead us “in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake”? What means does he use?
3. For what reason does the psalmist “fear no evil,” even when he walks through the “valley of the shadow of death” (or “the darkest valley”)?
4. What are a rod and staff? What are they used for? How can those two things be comforting to the sheep?
5. In what sense would you say that the Lord “prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies”? What does that mean?
6. Read what Jesus said in John 10:11-18 and 27-30. As our Good Shepherd, how does Jesus say he is unlike the hired hand? What is he willing to do for his sheep?
7. Shepherds spend much of their time bringing and keeping the sheep together. Why? How is this like how God brings believers together as the Church?
8. As disciples of Jesus, what is the basis of our relationship with him? What sure and certain promises does he make to us?
9. In what practical ways in your life does Jesus continually remind you of his promises?



Christians commonly refer to the Hebrew Scriptures as the **Old Testament**.

Jewish believers refer to their Scriptures as the **Tanak**. The word Tanak is an acronym formed from the initials for the three major sections of the Hebrew Scriptures:

T = Torah (the Law)

N = Nivi'im (the Prophets)

K = Khetuvim (the Writings)

While the Hebrew Scriptures recognized by Jews and Christians are practically the same, they are ordered, grouped, and numbered differently in printed volumes.

The Book of Psalms is a great collection of Hebrew hymns, poetry and prayers, expressing the varied emotions of joy, sadness, anger, and guilt — as well as a genuine trust and praise toward God.

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings and good advice, reminding people to do the right thing and not be foolish.

The Book of Job is the story of a man who suffered much under the devil’s temptation, but God remained faithful to Job to the end.

The Book of Ecclesiastes contains the reflections of a wise man who was honest about the struggles of life and faith.

The Song of Songs (also known as the Song of Solomon) is a love poem between a man and a woman. It symbolizes God’s faithful and loving relationship with us as his people.