

REFLECTION QUESTION: How specifically can you focus your eyes and your heart on Jesus right now?

Spiritual Practice

Each day, I will suggest a spiritual practice to help you fix your eyes on Jesus. Spiritual disciplines help us block out the noise of the world and hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. You can either see this situation as a setback or as an opportunity. During this trial, use it as an opportunity to slow down and give God space to work in your life in a whole new way. Suffering has a way of slowing us down, but often occurs during this new pace when we can hear the voice of the Good Shepherd more clearly.

Day 1 Challenge— Meditating on God's Word:

Meditation is one of the best ways to start practicing spiritual disciplines. Medically speaking, it has been found to help people focus, experience inner peace, and reduce stress. But Christian meditation is not about calming breaths; it's about communing with the Holy Spirit. Unlike Eastern meditation or secular meditation, where the goal is to empty your mind, Christian meditation is the practice of *filling* your mind with the Word of God. Christians don't just meditate; we mediate *on God's Word* (Psalm 1:2). We repeat God's Word in our minds or even out loud, chewing on it slowly like the food it is, letting it seep deep into our souls and fill our hearts and our minds with the Holy Spirit, the presence of Christ.

Try meditating on God's Word today. Set a timer on your phone for ten minutes (or longer if you like). Remove any distractions and take a few deep breaths, then read Psalm 23 out loud, slowly and deliberately, over and over. If you choose, you may take a few moments to reflect between each reading and ask God to speak to you through the text. At the end of your meditation time, write down 5–7 items that the Holy Spirit spoke to you through repeating His Word.



Daily Devotional Day 1: Meet the Good Shepherd ***[Individual Version Version]***

I. START WITH PRAYER AND THE WORD

READ: Psalm 23

REFLECTION QUESTION: What qualities of the Shepherd do you see in this psalm? What does He do for His sheep?

II. DIGGING DEEPER

REFLECTION QUESTION: How could the description of God in this psalm be calming for those who are feeling anxious or fearful during this time?

- “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing” (Psalm 23:1 NIV).
- If that were the only Bible verse you read during this time of crisis, it would be enough. The Lord is our shepherd, we lack *nothing*. We have everything we need. It may *feel* like you don’t have enough—enough toilet paper, enough canned food, enough work, enough emergency savings, enough patience, enough activities to keep your kids entertained, enough whatever. Scripture promises us, when the Lord is your shepherd, you have everything you need.
- “Even when I go through the darkest valley, I will fear no danger, for You are with me” (Psalm 23:4 CSB).

No doubt, this is a scary time. No one is going to tell you to pretend that it isn’t. But, God is with you.

Life may feel out of control – right, but God is always in control. He is not surprised by any of the circumstances you are facing, and He is working in it and through it. Even when you don’t see it or feel it, God is *always* working.

There are plenty of resources on the Internet to tell you how to deal with anxiety, whether it stems from lack of money, a pandemic, family strife, or work overload.

From a spiritual perspective, the only way to get through a period of fear and anxiety is by following the voice of the Good Shepherd. Psalm 23 shows you that you must:

- let Him guide you along right paths (v. 3).
- let Him lead you beside quiet waters (v. 2).
- lie down in those green pastures with Him (v. 2).
- let His rod and staff comfort you (v. 4).
- Eat at His table and bask in His goodness and love (v. 5–6).

III. APPLY IT TO LIFE

Every day, for the next five days, we will look at a different Scripture passage about the *Good Shepherd* and how He *guides us, protects us, pursues us, and lays down His life for us*. When the world feels like it’s spinning out of control, we must fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1–2). Just like a ballet dancer has to focus on a fixed point while spinning to keep from losing balance. We will focus our gaze on the One who walked on water even as the storm raged around Him (Matthew 14:22–33). Instead of panicking, we will cast our worries on Him (1 Peter 5:7). When we do that, no matter what the world around us looks like, His perfect love will cast out fear (1 John 4:18), and He will give us His supernatural peace (Philippians 4:6–7).

REFLECTION QUESTION: What specific things are you feeling anxious or fearful about? God doesn’t ask us to pretend we don’t have any worries but to cast our cares on Him, to bring them to Him in prayer. Naming them specifically before the Lord will bring His peace.