

Chapter Two



GOD IS MORE THAN ENOUGH...

to Meet Your Spiritual Needs

If the Lord is your Shepherd, He will meet your *spiritual* need.

David says,

He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul.

David's first message in this psalm is especially for those of you who are spiritually tired, spiritually drained. Your spiritual resources have ebbed. You've been waiting patiently for God, and He's taking too long.

It's as if you've telephoned, but somebody pushed the "hold" button on your life and then forgot about you. Or you've been in the waiting room, waiting and waiting for your name to be called, but without a single indication that it ever will be. Or you're at a stoplight and the light won't change.

Like a tire going flat, all your spiritual air has been released. You're spiritually discouraged because you can't find God. Oh, you know He's there; you're too scared not to believe that. But He seems such a long distance off, and dryness of soul has set in.

David knows what you're talking about, because he's been there. The David who says, "The Lord is my shepherd," is the same David who cries out, "My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1).

It's in the midst of such a wilderness that your Shepherd shows up. It's in the midst of your spiritual discouragement, disgust, defeat, struggle, wrestling, failure, futility, emptiness, agony, anger, agitation—when you want to scream out for God's presence or even scream out against

Him—in the midst of all this, David says, if the Lord is your Shepherd, He'll meet you at the place of your spiritual need.

One reason we have such intense spiritual need is that our own sin drains us. Another reason is the unavoidable reality of our environment. We've all received mail addressed simply to "Occupant"; sometimes we lose spiritual resources merely because we're an occupant of planet earth. It isn't because of anything we did wrong, but just because we happen to live here.

The combination of the world, the flesh, and the devil can suck out your spiritual vitality. In the midst of that weariness and lethargy, when you run out of spiritual gas and you're making it only on the fumes, you try to pray, and no words come. You know you ought to be reading your Bible, but the letters on the page all run together, and none of it makes sense. You don't want to hear another sermon or another Christian radio program or another gospel song. You don't want to hear from spiritual people, especially when you suspect they must be faking their positive outlooks.

You're only going through the spiritual motions. You're

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nodding, you're saying "Amen," your head is raised, but deep down in your soul, you're running on empty.

You've lost your spiritual fire. And that's the perfect point, the ideal point, to discover that God is your Shepherd.

TO THE PLACE OF REFRESHMENT

It's at this point that David reminds us, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures." God doesn't *ask* me to lie down; He *makes* me.

And He makes me lie down not just in any old pasture, but in *green* pastures—that's the emphasis in that phrase. God makes sure the pastures are lush and green. Likewise in the next phrase: "He leads me beside the *still* waters." Not just any stream, but waters of quietness.

David kept sheep in the hills of Judah. I've been in that country in the summertime, and it's blazing hot with the sun beating down. You don't have to be out there long before it sucks the energy out of you. But a good shepherd will take his sheep from the barren, sun-exposed heights, where there's no life, to a shaded place where there's a green carpet of grass in which they can lie in comfort, and where the breeze blowing off the still waters is cool and refreshing.

In other words, the shepherd renews them...*restores*

them. But to do this he first has to force the sheep to lie down there, or else they would keep wandering, trying to make their own way.

FORCED DOWN

As long as you're self-sufficient, as long as you think you can fix your problems on your own, you'll only find yourself becoming more spiritually drained. God has to make you lie down—He has to put you in a situation you can't get out of. He forces the scenario where every door you try is locked. Everything you fix breaks again. You fall flat on your face.

To lie down means you have to get *low*. You know when you've been made to lie down, because you're desperate. And when you're desperate, when you're on your last leg, ready to throw in the towel, you're in a great position for the Shepherd.

God puts you in circumstances that rob you of your independence and cause you to be totally dependent, so you have to rest on Him. You finally realize that if *God* doesn't renew you, you won't get renewed; if

*When we look up,
He's all we're
seeing.*

He doesn't empower you, you won't get empowered; if *He* doesn't release you, you'll forever be in bondage.

God is trying to force us into a place of total abandonment to Him. He wants to bring you and me to the end of ourselves, so that when we look up, He's all we're seeing. But for some of us, it takes a long time before we're willing to let this process happen. So God keeps creating situations and allowing scenarios and causing issues we don't like, and He won't get rid of them until you understand that you're totally, absolutely dependent on Him.

FLAT ON YOUR BACK

I heard about a huge loggerhead turtle that laid her eggs on a Florida beach and then became disoriented. Instead of returning back toward the sea, she began walking farther into the sand dunes, where she was discovered by a park ranger. The ranger took a crowbar and flipped her over upon her back. Then he used chains to connect the turtle's legs to the tow bar on his jeep, and he towed the turtle back toward the sea and turned her loose.

While that turtle was being dragged along, I'm sure she didn't consider it a comfortable situation. We often feel the same way about what God is doing to us. Sometimes He has to turn our life upside down, and while we're on our

back getting dragged, it's hard to know whether we're being killed or saved.

Sometimes you don't know whether God is delivering you or doing you in. But He has put you in a place where there's room for only one God—and it isn't you.

HE GIVES YOU BACK YOUR SOUL

All this is because God has a purpose.

And what's His goal? What is God's reason for the crises He creates in our lives that force us to lie down?

David tells us: "He restores my soul." God wants to give you back your soul.

Your soul is who you are, your personhood, your identity. I'm not you, and you're not me, not because our body structures are different but because we have different souls. The soul is the "you." And when you become confused about who you are, and you lose your sense of well-being, your sense of purpose, your sense of direction, your sense of hope—then your soul needs restoring.

That process takes time. It's like making your cell phone lie down in the recharger after you've used it and talked on it all day. You make it lie down so it can get new energy, new strength. If you don't, it may not work for you tomorrow.