

Who is Your Shepherd? (#2)

Joe Slater

With the Lord shepherding him, David lacked nothing (Psalm 23:1). Specifically, *"He makes me to lie down in green pastures"* (v. 2a). Sheep don't lie down unless they are full and secure. Dry, brittle grass contains minimal nourishment, but green pastures provide nutritious food for a hungry sheep. The Lord supplied David not only with sustenance for his body, but with the good diet of His word for his soul. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, meets our needs for both physical and spiritual nourishment. As we *"seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,"* our daily needs are supplied (Matthew 6:33). And our souls feast upon the milk and meat of the word (1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14).

The next line of the psalm also emphasizes security and satisfaction: *"He leads me beside the still waters"* (v. 2b). Sheep would be frightened to drink from a raging river; but a nice calm pond would be ideal. David certainly experienced his share of scary ordeals while caring for his father's sheep as well as while serving as king of Israel. Through them all David experienced the guidance and protection of the Lord and knew he could rely on Him through thick and thin. Similarly, we go through trials of various kinds, some of which are downright frightening; but regardless of circumstances we can say with Paul, *"I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content . . . I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:11, 13).

(More next week!)

Conduct Unbecoming

The term "conduct unbecoming" is used to describe inappropriate or unethical behavior that goes against a standard of conduct. Although the term is most often recognized in relation to the military, it can be used to describe unacceptable behavior in official civilian or personal settings. When it comes to living the Christian life, the Bible does not fall short in warning us about conduct unbecoming a child of God.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21, the Apostle Paul lists behaviors that are unbecoming of Christians. As we read these lists, we recognize these as the worst of the worst of personal traits. Even non-religious folks consider these behaviors to be unacceptable. For the Christian to willingly participate in such conduct will cause forfeiture of God's forgiveness and keep one from inheriting the kingdom of God (Hebrews 10:26; Gal. 5:21). In a broad sense, worldly behavior is not Christian behavior. If a Christian routinely acts this way, then it is time for godly sorrow and repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10).

We are to be spiritually transformed and separate from the world (Romans 12:2). *"Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 6:17). As a matter of fact, that's exactly what we have done if we have obeyed the gospel message. *"And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God"* (1 Corinthians 6:11). Because God has saved us by His amazing grace, we are to do our best to be holy in all of our conduct (1 Peter 1:15).

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

Targeted Renewal: The Power of Focused Faith

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
--Psalm 119:105

Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) is a remarkable therapy that uses magnetic fields to stimulate specific areas of the brain, particularly those linked to mood regulation. This non-invasive treatment activates neurons in targeted regions, helping to correct imbalances that contribute to depression and other mental health conditions. TMS is precise, gentle, and focused qualities that reflect God's intentional design of our minds.

Just as TMS targets precise areas in the brain to bring about healing, God's Word is a powerful tool that targets specific areas of our hearts and minds that need renewal. Psalm 119:105 reminds us that God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, guiding us in the exact areas where we need direction and healing.

Consider how the brain's responsiveness to magnetic fields in TMS highlights the Creator's intricate design. God crafted our minds with the ability to respond to external stimuli, allowing for restoration and balance. In the same way, He knows the precise areas of our lives that need His healing touch.

When we meditate on Scripture, it's like applying TMS to our spiritual lives. By focusing on God's promises and wisdom, we stimulate and strengthen our faith. For example, meditating on Philippians 4:6-7 can bring peace to an anxious heart: ***"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*** This passage, when focused upon, acts as a spiritual pulse that activates and strengthens the neural pathways of trust and peace in our minds.

--Robert Kargbo (Middleton, WI)