

# LESSON 7

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## PSALMS 23—26

### PSALM 23: SATISFIED WITH GOD

Because of its popularity and sweet spirit, this psalm has been called “The Pearl of the Psalms.” It is a beautiful song of confidence, trust, and satisfaction in Yahweh. A string of touching phrases stretches from the first mention of God to the last, as the care and grace of God are recounted with grateful appreciation.

The reader learns that true peace is rooted in a deep-seated, unwavering fellowship with God. The psalm’s words bring serenity to God’s servant, whether he reads it at his highest pinnacle of spiritual growth or in his lowest moment of despair.

Two figures are used in the psalm to convey this special walk with God: a shepherd and a host. Another figure, a guide for a traveler, may have been intended in verses 3 and 4. God is pictured under these two (possibly three) images as Sustainer, Guide, Teacher, Companion, Protector, Encourager, and Host. Beginning with an affirmation of satisfaction in God, the psalm continues with descriptive phrases of the writer’s relationship with God and ends with an expression of confidence, affirming that God will encircle him with His gracious goodness in the future as He has in the past.

1. What figures are used in this psalm?
2. Describe the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep.
3. What is the “valley of the shadow of death”?
4. What does it mean to have a table prepared before one’s enemies?
5. What does “dwell[ing] in the house of the LORD” mean?

## **PSALM 24: CELEBRATING THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

It is possible that this psalm was written for the occasion of bringing the ark of the covenant from Obed-edom's house, in Kirjath-jearim on the western border of Benjamin, to Mount Zion (2 Sam. 6:12–19; 1 Chron. 13). No other event in David's reign fits the psalm and harmonizes with the progression seen within its strophes quite as well as does this momentous event. If this is not the case, the reverence and wonder of that scene provides a good illustrative setting for the psalm.

Such a view of the psalm would not preclude the Holy Spirit's intending a wider future use for it. In fact, its place in the Book of Psalms may even suggest a purpose for it that reaches beyond the event for which it may have been originally written.

A major theme of the psalm is the character required of the worshiper of God, taking us back to Psalm 15 and forward to Psalm 100. It identifies the worshiper who will be accepted by God and (by implication) the worshiper who will be rejected by Him. The last three verses may picture a veiled prophecy of Jesus returning to the throne of God after His earthly ministry, although no clear New Testament confirmation is found for this view.

6. What may be the background of this psalm?
7. Why does this psalm begin with a declaration of the Lordship of God?
8. Describe the characteristics of those who come to worship God.
9. How shall the worshiper of God be blessed?
10. How is the awesome being of God described in the latter part of the psalm?

## **PSALM 25: PIETY PORTRAYED**

With its alphabetical arrangement, this psalm is regarded as one of the nine acrostic psalms in the Book of Psalms (9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145). This rigid way of organizing a psalm follows the pattern of the first verse or line beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the second verse or line beginning with the next letter, and so on through the alphabet, until all twenty-two letters have been successively used in the verses or lines. Occasionally we use this style of writing in English. It is a literary structure that lends itself especially to memorization (and maybe even visualization).

The alphabetical psalm is not usually noticeable in the English translations of the Bible. Because of this, more recent versions add a footnote that alerts us to this special acrostic design of the psalm.

The acrostic psalms are generally thought of as wisdom or teaching psalms. They were not written to be sung, but to be learned, although this one may be an exception to that rule. We cannot be sure of the time or the circumstance of the writing of it.

Made up of two prayers, between which are reflections and praises about piety and godliness, the psalm is loosely organized. However, what it lacks in systematic order, it makes up for in beauty. It contains some of the most admired, spiritual thoughts in the Book of Psalms.

11. How does one “lift up [his] soul” to God?

12. How does one “wait” on the Lord?

13. What does the writer tell God to remember?

14. What benefits will the one who fears the Lord receive?

15. What are the characteristics of “true hope”?

### **PSALM 26: LIVING WITH INTEGRITY**

This touching and popular psalm emphasizes the topic of integrity in an inclusio format. It begins with this quality—“I have walked in my integrity”—and ends with it—“I shall walk in my integrity.” The writer has chosen spiritual genuineness to be his way of life.

In light of its content, we might call this piece “A Psalm of Innocence.” Bewilderment had descended upon the psalmist because he had been accused of being a hypocrite. He adamantly recoiled at the insinuations and earnestly besought God to judge him and make known his blamelessness. In the psalm, he lists the evidence that confirms his righteousness and thus proves that he should not be grouped with evildoers.

Because of this psalm’s exposition of this crucial theme, it has become known as a thorough illustration of honesty and how it is demonstrated in the life and worship of the devout believer. No other psalm addresses the topic of integrity quite the way this one does. Genuineness is not sinlessness, but devoted sincerity; not flawlessness, but faithfulness. More than one’s reputation, integrity has to do with one’s following what he or she knows to be true and right.

16. What is integrity?
17. What will a righteous person not do?
18. What are the values of the proper focus?
19. How does this psalm say we are to come to worship?
20. How important is integrity?