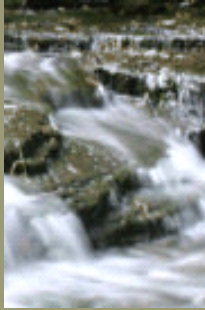


Christ-Centered Change



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Safe Pasture

Anyone who has any knowledge of the Bible is probably familiar with the 23rd Psalm. This often-quoted passage describes simple trust, restful obedience and confident assurance. The author, David (the giant-slayer), rose out of obscurity to become one of the greatest kings who ever lived. He was a brave, loving shepherd boy who was chosen to lead God's people, primarily because of his heart for God. He had a "heart after God's own heart."

David says in Psalm 23 (verses 1-3): "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul." (NIV) There is no striving, no discontent, no questioning of God's loving care in this statement. Do we truly trust the Lord to provide everything we need? I know I sometimes pursue things I want that are not good for me – that pull me away from God's best. Yet, what I truly need (and what I truly want in my heart of hearts) is to trust God as He leads me into safe pasture.

When we fall into temptations and do those things we know are wrong, isn't it often because we question if the grass is 'greenest' in our safe pasture – where the Lord has lead us?

David writes in Psalm 37:3-4, "Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." (NIV)

Recent research on self control and how to break addictive behavior patterns reveals that we can resist temptations by engaging in reflective thoughts and considering the long-range implications of our actions (rather than giving into impulsive desires for self-gratification). Similar research is confirming that rest, appropriate pacing, and relaxation help strengthen our resistance to selfish, destructive impulses. Unholy thoughts, ambitions, and choices thrive in an atmosphere of discontent, burnout, or grandiosity and entitlement. If we knew God's plans to bless us and to give us so much more than we would even dare to hope for, or ask of Him, we would forsake our false idols and simply follow Jesus.

Let's pray for peace, patience, faithfulness, humility and gratefulness, as we enjoy the green, green grass of home – the safe pasture our Lord has prepared just for us – exactly what we need!

-Bill