

Feasting on God: A Table in the Presence of My Enemies (Psalm 23)

“I WILL PREPARE A TABLE FOR YOU IN THE PRESENCE OF YOUR ENEMIES”

Turn to Psalm 23. A couple of weeks ago while just sitting before the Lord, He spoke to me a very simple sentence. He said, “I have prepared a table for you in the presence of your enemies.” I carried that in my heart every day for a couple of weeks and meditated on that; I knew it was a personal word for me, but I also knew it was a corporate word for the IHOP–KC family. So I came back and told Allen. He said, “What did the Lord speak to you when you were away these last couple of weeks?”

I responded, “Well, several things but very specifically one sentence: I have prepared a table for you in the presence of your enemies. You know the well-known verse in Psalm 23:5.”

Allen’s eyes got big, and he says, “Oh, that seems like there is an intense message in that. That means the Lord is preparing us for more enemies to rise up.” I think that is right; but that did not actually occur to me.

I responded, “Wow. I was thinking more of the table. I mean for real. I was focused on the table.” I said, “and it is right to be focused on both, but there is a message.” Our enemies are intense, but that is what the Lord is saying. I am talking about not just our personal lives, or IHOP–KC as a spiritual family. I am thinking of just our nation and the nations of the earth. The devil is raging; he is mounting his attack against the Body of Christ and just him against the nations in general. The Lord’s answer is, “I have prepared a table for you in the presence of your enemies—right in eyesight of your enemies. I mean now think about what that means to be sitting at the dinner table, and you can see your enemy within eyesight.” That means they are close. This is not a future enemy. This is an enemy who is drawing near. That is what David was talking about; he was talking about how the Lord had prepared to feed his heart and to sustain him—to sustain him in the time of attack where he would actually have victory and to increase in his experience in God and his encounter in God. He would grow in it. He would have more. It is an amazing thing when that the attack comes and our relationship with God is strengthened and our experience in the Spirit is increased. Let’s read Psalm 23. Most of you know it, but it is worth just going through to get the feel of it; then we will break it down and make a few statements about each verse.

PSALM 23

Psalm 23:1-6: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me besides the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs

over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

DAVID’S EXPERIENCE, CONFESSION, DECLARATION OF FAITH, AND HOW HE LIVED BEFORE GOD

Psalm 23 is a description of David’s experience in God. It is his confession before the Lord. God called David, “the man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14). Here we have the man after God’s own heart opening up to us. He let us know how he talks to God, and what God speaks to him about. I mean Psalm 23 is a declaration of his faith, particularly in a time of trouble. It is how he lived before God. It is what he determined he would experience in God. There are about ten or fifteen different phrases depending on how you group the phrases together. They are confessions. They are statements that David made before God. They are statements we also speak against the attack of the devil when he comes against us.

We say, “it is written,” and we can speak any one of these ten or fifteen statements back to the devil, but we speak them to God. We declare before God how we understand we are to relate to Him. I want to encourage you to not allow Psalm 23 to be in a neat, sentimental, poetry kind of section in your thinking. We might think, “Oh yeah, Psalm 23—that is neat. That is for funerals. Everybody knows that one.” It is almost like the Lord’s prayer of the Old Testament—meaning it is line-upon-line, very high impact statements that talk about our relationship with God at the heart level. In the Lord’s prayer in Matthew 6, every phrase is insight into prayer. Psalm 23 is very similar. Every phrase is insight into our prayer relationship, and how we are to carry our heart before God. I want to encourage you to look at Psalm 23 as a must read passage—a must understand passage in your spiritual life. I want to encourage you to journal it and journal; what I mean journal is that as you read it, keep a notebook, and write down the phrases, as you say these phrases to God. Like you will just be reading and saying these phrases back to God because they are meant to be a confession of your heart to God. That is how David used them. I mean that is—he was actually revealing his heart confession.

SPEAK PSALM 23 BACK TO GOD

As you speak these phrases back to God, the Holy Spirit will cause you to say them sometimes—I mean a lot of times—you will just say, and you will not feel touched. Sometimes you will feel a special touch when you say a sentence, when you are saying it back to God. Write that sentence down and use it over and over and over because as you speak it back to God, the Holy Spirit has a tailor made way to help you understand what these verses mean to you in a very specific tailor made way, which is fit for your heart. I tell you: it will enhance your relationship with God and your dialogue with Him. When I pray through Psalm 23, I feel His pleasure. I do not mean every time, but I feel that He is looking at me smiling, and He likes what I am saying. He likes that I am agreeing with His heart in this way. I really feel His pleasure when I speak it back to Him line by line—again I do not do this every time, or all the time, but I do this many times. I think that you will find the same thing but have you pencil out; capture a key sentence that has life on it, so you can say it over and over to the Lord through the weeks and months ahead. Now these next couple days in our three-day fast coming up, I want to encourage you to take Psalm 23 for two hours at a time in a prayer meeting, just read it, and say it slowly back to God. As you say it

to God, add some description of what it means to you. You say, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1); add another phrase of what that means to you. Again, you will feel the presence of the Lord many times in doing that.

TWO PARTS OF PSALM 23

Now, the Psalm is broken down in two main parts: Psalm 23:1-4 is a revelation of the Lord as the shepherd of His sheep. As the shepherd, He is the affectionate, attentive leader over His people. That is what David lays out in four verses, as the affectionate leader. The attentive leader—the one who is paying attention with a heart connect.

THE LORD PREPARES A TABLE FOR HIS PEOPLE

Roman numeral II. Psalm 23:5-6, the second part of the psalm, David presents the Lord as the host providing a meal for a friend, for an honored friend. So the Lord is our shepherd; the Lord is the host, providing a meal, or hosting a banquet for a dear friend. So those are the two different ways which we understand the Lord in Psalm 23. Let’s go to the main verse that the Lord has highlighted to me. Each of the verses is so important. We will only have a chance to spend a minute on each one. In Psalm 23:5, David said, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.” I am looking at the Lord as the host of the banquet. He is spreading a feast on a table before an honored friend. It is more than a guest. It is a friend. It is a dear friend that the Lord greatly honors. You are that dear friend who He is going to put a feast on the table before you, and when the enemy gets within eyesight, I mean it is that close to you. The enemy is coming. The Lord will feed you in a way that will cause you to have victory at the heart level, as well as in circumstances as well, but the most important issue when the enemy comes is what happens in our heart. When we give up, give in, and we just yield to despair, we give the enemy so much more authority in our life. If we stay connected to the Lord, we stay in a place of confidence. We stay in a place of talking to the Lord, and the enemy does not look near so powerful. If we lose our dialogue with the Lord and our confidence in the Lord, when the enemy comes, the enemy has so much more impact negatively in our life. So it really matters what happens in our heart when the enemy approaches, when he is coming near and when we are in his very presence.

FEASTING ON GOD

The practical theme of Psalm 23 is this theme of feasting on God. That is the real take away in this psalm. I mean the Lord is providing many things, but the real practical thing to do is understand that we are to feast upon God even under pressure. Now this table is within the reach of every single believer; yet many believers are suffering from spiritual malnutrition. The Lord has spread the table in front of them. They study the menu, but they do not actually eat. They sit at the table. The Lord will not force-feed us. He will not make us eat. We are at the table. He puts a banquet in front of us. He says, “Now you must choose to eat the food and to drink the cup. You must do that. I will not make you do that. If you do, do it. There will be an anointing that will flow upon you—your life and your cup will run over. Many people could be going to a Bible school—like a number of you here. Or they are in a place like a full time ministry context where the Word is being taught; they have many hours to read the Word. They have access to the Word, but they never actually assimilate it. They never eat the Word. They never digest the

Word. They never take it into their spiritual life. It is kind of like going to a fine restaurant, reading the menu, but never ordering the food, and eating it. They are a connoisseur of the menu, but never actually eat the food. Many believers are like that. They have got a Bible. They carry the menu around, they talk about how great the menu is, but they do not actually talk to God and assimilate it. The way that we feast on God's table is that we connect with God. I just have a key sentence here: we do this by prayer reading the Word, by fellowshiping with the Spirit, with a spirit of gratitude and confidence. Now there is a—those are simple ideas, but they are very important, all four of those ideas. We pray read the Word, or we pray read the Word. What I mean by that: when we read the Bible—whether we are in a prayer room or studying in another place—what I have as a real priority in my personal life is when I am preparing a handout, a message, just studying for another reason, I try to always make room. I do not always, but mostly I do stop intermittently while I am reading; the verse I am reading, I speak it back to the Lord. I talk to the Lord about that verse, so it is not just a Bible study, but it is a conversation with the Lord in context to that Bible study.

DIALOGUING WITH JESUS—NOT JUST STUDYING THE BIBLE

If you take your Bible study and move it out of the place where you are not dialoguing with the Lord, then really what you are doing is you are storing up food in a warehouse; you are not actually eating it. Many people who are students of the Bible, they do not actually connect with the Lord much at the heart level. Bible knowledge is not the same thing as dialogue with the Lord, or talking to the Lord. Some people, they just go in a prayer room, and they just talk to the Lord the whole time; I think is great, but I want to encourage you that in your dialogue with the Lord, your prayer, when you are talking to the Lord, use the Bible as a conversation material. As you are reading verse-by-verse, not every verse will have conversation material in it, but many verses will. As you read a certain verse, you talk to the Lord. If the details of that is a new idea to you, I have some different handouts on the website just breaking down the practical mechanics of how to pray read the Word. In other words, you read the Word; you turn it into prayer and into conversation. It is the most important facet of my spiritual life, and I just cannot imagine living without doing that. Many believers study their Bible, and they do not actually talk to God when they are in it, when they are studying it. I am not saying that as a rebuke to them; I am saying that as good news. The good news is if you will pause and talk to the Lord while you are studying, while you are doing your homework; you will pause and say, "I love You. Lord tell me about this, and I commit myself to this. According to what this verse means, Lord touch me according to what You just said in this verse." I am telling you, the Bible will come alive; your heart will come alive. The written Word and the living Word, we will find out they are the same. They are one. Well, we pray read the Word. Number two: we fellowship with the Spirit, meaning we just talk the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in our spirit; but we talk to Him.

It is more than prayer reading the Word and talking to the Holy Spirit. I am just talking about talking to the Holy Spirit throughout the course of the day. The Holy Spirit is like a burning fire living in your belly. He is like a river. He is like a river, a fire, and a light. Those are the different metaphors of the Holy Spirit, but He dwells inside of you. I want to encourage you to just speak little sentences to Him. I do not mean it has to be an hour conversation, but just phrases throughout the day where you turn your attention to the Holy Spirit living in your spirit, and just

talk to Him as a friend. Then when you open your Bible: talk to Jesus, talk to the Father, talk to the Spirit, but do it with a spirit of gratitude. This is critical. With confidence as well, which we call faith. Spirit of gratitude is critical because a lot of people will talk to the Lord using their Bible, but they are mostly complaining. A complaint has an element in the Bible. There is an element of a lament or of a complaint; but it is common to have a complaining spirit—just be moaning how everything is. In essence it is like we say, “Lord why are You not leading my life a little better? That is in essence how it comes across to the throne of heaven. That is not what we are saying, but that is what it means. Why are You not leading my life better? Why are so many things bothering me and troubling me? With a spirit of gratitude, I do not want to go into that right now. I just wanted to mention it that when we pray read the Word, when we talk to the Holy Spirit, we have gratitude. It is a dialogue that has a spirit of confidence in it or faith. I am telling you your spirit will get built up. You will have a happy, buoyant spirit. I do not mean you are happy all day, every day where you are just giddy all the time—that is not what I am talking about; but your spirit will be buoyant and vibrant. You will not be thinking mostly of quitting, just yielding to sin, giving up, or giving in. You will be day dreaming about going deeper in God, and that is the inheritance of every single believer— every believer will feast at the table not just sit at the table. They actually have to eat the Word in the way that I have just described. Very, very simple to do, but it must be done. Christianity is an ongoing relationship with a person. It is an ongoing encounter with a person.

Christianity is not just a mandate to go help people, but it is an encounter with a person forever. It starts in this age, and it goes on forever. The Lord will not force-feed us. He will not make us eat. He spread the table. He gave us the Word. He gave us the Spirit, and He smiles over us. He has a happy heart towards us, and He says, “I will break in and help, but I want you to talk to me. I want to relate to you. I want to have an ongoing dialogue with you.” When we feast on God in the presence of our enemies, we end up with victory over our fears and our anxieties.

WHEN WE FEAST ON GOD, OUR ENEMY LOOKS DIFFERENTLY

When we feast on God, our enemy looks different. When we feast on the Lord, our enemy looks different. Our enemy looks small, and our enemy looks temporary. When we do not feast on God, but we feed our soul on our enemy, our enemy looks powerful and permanent. We end up with despair. It is like this problem is never going to go away whether it is a person, just a circumstance, or issue in your life, our enemy looks permanent and so powerful when we consume our thinking on our enemy. That is what many do. They feed their soul on what the enemy is doing to them more than feeding at God’s table. It is critical that when the enemy rages in his increase and his attack even increases, it is critical that we eat more. We feed on the Lord more. Whatever we focus on is what we are feasting on. Whatever we are preoccupied with, that is we are feasting—that is what we are feeding our soul on.

“YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR ENEMIES” (PSALM 23:5)

Roman numeral II. I mean even if it is a problem, if it is an issue of bondage in our life, we do not want to make that the primary point of our thinking. We want to feed on the Lord. The way that we get free of darkness is by turning on the light. We do not get free of darkness by staring

at the darkness. You do not have—like if this room was dark—all the lights were off, you do not open the window, get buckets full of darkness, and empty it out. The way you get rid of darkness is you turn light on. The way you get rid of bondage is by feasting on the Lord, not by staring at the bondage, or focusing on a person who is the enemy who is causing tremendous trouble in your life. Now the enemy is close. He is within eyesight. He is in your very presence. You are right next to the enemy. Now the enemy could be pressures in society. I mean, as our nation is just in the acceleration of darkness. The enemy is raging. It could be people. It could be circumstances. In kind of a simple definition, the enemy includes anything that hinders your connection with God. The enemy is anything that is seeking to hinder the will of God in your life from happening. Whether it is mounting darkness in society, the earthquake, famine, drought, the person afflicting you, or attacking you. Whether it is an issue in your own soul, the enemy, in just a most general sense, is anything that is seeking to hinder your connection with God, and to hinder the will of God in your life. There are enemies that resist us. Those are the ones that kind of create pain. They resist us. They are attacking us, or they are resisting us in some way. It is people or circumstances, but there is a lesser enemy; but also this lesser enemy is very effective.

It is the enemy that annoys us. So there is the resistance. King David was attacked by different people at different times in his life. There were actual people trying to kill him, so the resistance can be intense. There is another enemy that can be subtle, but very, very destructive to our spiritual life. It is the enemy that annoys us because both of them cause our heart to disconnect from God. When we disconnect from God and I mean as believers, I do not mean disconnect where we deny the faith. That is not what I mean. Where we just kind of get preoccupied with our enemy, whether that is an enemy of resistance, or just an annoyance, and it actually causes a disconnect. This disconnect causes the assignment of God, or the will of God in our life to be minimized. It hinders our ability to do the will of God. Of course that is what the devil is after.

MARTHA AND MARY

In Luke 10, just a moment on this, it is the story of Mary and Martha. Most of us know the story in Luke 10. I will just summarize it: Jesus comes to visit their house. Martha the older sister is in the kitchen, and Mary is you know in the living room kneeling at the feet of Jesus talking to Him. So Martha is troubled, and she says, “Jesus tell my little sister to get with it and come help me.”

Jesus surprises Martha and rebukes Martha in Luke 10:40; Martha was “distracted” with much serving. Jesus answered to her because she was saying, “tell my little sister to help me in Luke 10:41.” It is as if Jesus said, “Martha, Martha you are so worried—number one, but number two—you are troubled. You are annoyed so easily.” One translation says you are *bothered easily*. Worried is one issue; annoyed is a second issue. Those are separate issues. It is as if Jesus says, “Martha, the real issue is the way you carry your spirit with Me.” He says in Luke 10:42, “your sister Mary has chosen the good part.” This passage is not about the people who serve in the kitchen verses the people who serve in the prayer room. That is not what this passage is about. The whole Body of Christ is called to serve in the kitchen and the whole Body of Christ is called to be in the prayer room. What I mean is to have a prayer life. I do not mean they have to have a prayer room. The whole Body of Christ is to be involved in serving—everybody is.

Everybody does the work in the kitchen. Everybody has a prayer life. That is not what the issue was. Jesus was not putting down the people who work in the kitchen. He really esteems them. It was not her serving. It was that she was serving with a wrong spirit.

SERVING WITH THE RIGHT SPIRIT

That was the problem. She was serving out of anxiety, out of just kind of a whole lot of emotional storm on the inside. She was annoyed. Again, I like the translation she is *bothered easily*. Everything bothered her. Jesus is looking at Martha: “Martha, you are so bothered you cannot see what is in front of you.” I mean what was in front of Mary? God in the flesh was in her living room. Now I do not mean just the presence of the Holy Spirit that is really good. I am talking about the Genesis 1 God with a human body sitting in her living room; she is doing the dishes making sandwiches. Now God in the flesh is not in the living room of very many people in all of human history.

He is as if Jesus said, “Martha, sit down, be quiet right now.”

She might have resisted, “I have got to get stuff done.”

“Martha, God in the flesh is in your living room talking, shut up and sit down. Can you not see who is in front of you?”

Martha could have replied, “I have got sandwiches to make; nobody is helping, the dishes, the neighbors and . . .” God in the flesh is right next to her. Mary says, “you know what? I will do the dishes later. I will mow the lawn. I will do everything but not this minute. I may never have a moment like this again ever.” This is amazing. When we are bothered and when that enemy comes, we get annoyed. We cannot see the activity of God—the good news of God right in front of our eyes—we cannot see it. Yes, these people are doing all of these annoying things, but there are so many good things happening around your life. The Lord says, “What about all of that?”

“I do not know I am so bugged by this that I cannot even appreciate that. I cannot see what You are doing in other situations, even through the lives of these people who bug me. I cannot even see the goodness of God, and what You are doing. I am only annoyed.” That is a real enemy. It is not going to only just be annoyance. There are real enemies. They are people that will resist. Some of you have those kind of folks in your life right now, but that is going to increase more and more.

“YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL” (PSALM 23:5)

When David feasted and ate at the table, he experienced something when his enemies were approaching, but he threw his heart into God, and he experienced something: the oil of the Lord increased in his life. There is a spiritual principle. There is a manifestation of the presence of God, which increases in our life when the enemy approaches; we respond to God in a right way. There is actually an opportunity in the Spirit for great increase. Peter is the one who said it the

clearest, but David was referencing this principle in Psalm 23:5 when he said, “You anoint my head with oil.” The spiritual principle Peter captured it. Here it is in 1 Peter 4:14: “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” It says in 1 Peter 4:14, “if you are reproached for the name of Christ”—people are accusing you, putting you down because you are standing for something in the Lord, or for the things of God. You are blessed because the spirit of glory will rest on you. Beloved, there is a measure of the spirit of glory. There is a certain measure that only comes when we respond right under persecution. Now we can have the spirit of glory to a certain measure in our everyday life, but there is an extra measure that only comes when the resistance is there, and you respond rightly. David was tapping into this.

AN INCREASE IN THE SPIRIT OF GLORY FOR RESPONDING RIGHTLY

This is really what the Lord was whispering in my heart a few weeks ago when He said, “I am preparing a table. I have prepared a table in front of you now I want you to feast on it.” In other words, “I am giving you and your—this spiritual family called IHOP—an increase in the glory of God, but you have to feast when the enemy mounts up. You cannot retreat. You cannot feast on the enemy. You cannot feed on what the enemy is doing. You have to feed on what I am saying, and I am doing. You must shift your focus. Your natural focus is to focus on the enemy. You must shift it, receive, and feast upon Me. If you do, there will be an increased anointing upon your life. There will be a spirit of glory that will touch your heart, and it will flow through your life to touch others.”

David was experiencing that: that is what he is talking about. It is a strange thing because when resistance comes, when people resist you, and try to stop the will of God in your life, yet you respond in godliness and humility, it actually is an opportunity for your increase in the spirit of glory. It actually results in you increasing beyond what you could have if that enemy would not have attacked you. It almost makes you want to send out your newsletter asking people to attack you. Do not do that. They will come on their own. It is as if Peter said, “you are blessed. There is an opportunity in the Spirit.” More happens that would not have happened if you were not resistant, but you have to feed, and you have to respond rightly. That is the key because if we fret, and just yield to the despair that the enemy represents, then what happens is our heart gets embittered; we get offended, and we actually lose out in God instead of going forward in a great way.

“MY CUP RUNS OVER” (PSALM 23:5)

Psalm 23:5: “My cup runs over.” David was talking about a vibrant heart in God. A vibrant heart in Psalm 16:5: “O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.” David said this when he defined the cup. It is as if David said, “oh Lord You are the portion in my inheritance. You are the cup.” The cup that David was talking about is his connection to the Lord, and the Lord’s promises to David’s life. It was the Lord, the Lord’s provision, or the Lord’s promises. David said, “My cup is not half full. It is overflowing. When the enemy is attacking, we are feasting on God and we are responding rightly, there is an increased anointing. We find out that our cup is full and it is above. It is above full. It is flowing over. It is not half full.

A lot of folks, they do not actually use this language but they kind conclude they have a half-cup of salvation. You know enough to get to heaven, when they die, but they are just going to kind of live in spiritual boredom between now and when they die, and go to heaven. They are kind of doing the best that they have a half cup salvation mentality. Let me tell you, you feast on the Lord—particularly in the time of trouble—you will find out the cup is not full, it is overflowing. There is more than meets the eye, but we have to engage with the Lord consistently even in the time of trouble. It is critical. Our confession: we want to—see this is David’s confession: the Lord has spread a table for me. He has prepared a table for me. That is what He said to God. Lord, you put a table actually talking directly to God in Psalm 23:5. It is as if David said, “You put a table in front of me. You feed me. The anointing increases, my cup overflows. I find out in my walk with You that there is more that You are giving me than I understood. There is more that meets the eye.” Wow.

How much more is there? The Lord says, “You just keep feeding on Me. David is excited. Now I just gave you a couple of sentences just kind of to jumpstart you on your journaling of this passage, but you want to declare. Lord, I will feast on You. I will feast on You in the presence of my enemies. There are a number of different statements you could make, but you want to journal these. You want to write them down—the ones that touch you when you say them. I mean even in the next couple of days in the prayer room. As you declare these, say them. Again some of them, we will feel a little bit of the Lord’s presence. Write those down and say those phrases over and over. I love to do this.

It is exciting. You will find out your cup is not half full—it really is an overflowing cup, but you do not know until you get in the midst of the conflict and give yourself to Jesus with a spirit of gratitude and confidence, you will find out you had more than you knew.

“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD” (PSALM 23:1)

Roman numeral III. Let’s start with a couple of phrases for each one of these lines: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” David describes the Lord’s affection, and I want to add attentive leadership as a shepherd. He is consciously recognizing Jesus as the leader of his life. He is not just saying, “Lord, You are my forgiver—that is not what the shepherd is although there is forgiveness. He is saying ‘I am consciously submitting to Your leadership. I am consciously transferring the ownership of my life into Your hands.’” This is a statement of lordship. Psalm 23:1, it is as if David is saying, “You are the shepherd. I am the sheep. You provide the direction. I follow You. Now this is a big statement. Again, it is a statement of commitment to consciously transfer the ownership of your life into His hands. We are talking about your time, your money, your words, your sexuality, your future, and your destiny. “Lord I will obey Your direction. I am coming under Your leadership”.

That is what the first confession is. When the Lord is my shepherd, He gives the next statement in Psalm 23:1: “I shall not want.” I will not lack anything when he says I shall not want. I shall not lack anything necessary to accomplish the will of God, or the destiny of God, the assignment of God in my life. I will not lack anything that is needed for me to do the will of God in my life,

to fulfill the destiny. Beloved, the destiny of God is in God's hands and in your hands. It is not in the hands of your enemy. That was one of David's biggest points if you study the life of David in 1 and 2 Samuel, which are such dynamic stories.

One of the great themes of David's life—there are several main themes—is that David understood that the will of God in his life to be king was not in the hands of the devil, or the hands of his enemies trying to kill him. The devil could not stop: "David." Saul could not stop David. The armies around Israel could not stop David. The only man on the earth who could stop David was David. This is true. Not a human being or a devil could stop you from doing the will of God. The will of God in your life; they can come and hinder for a moment, but you respond to the Lord—that season will pass. You will have victory in that issue, in that resistance—nobody can stop the will of God happening in your life. The will of God in your life is not dependant on the leaders finally finding out how anointed you are, and finally they get it, or finally the mean guy stops. Or finally the money comes. It is not about money. It is not about leaders discovering you. It is not about mean guy stopping. The will of God is in your hands and God's hands. You respond to God; the will of God will happen in your life. You lack nothing when He is your shepherd. David had so much confidence in that. God will give you the emotional strengthening, and He will give you the circumstances to do the will of God. You do not have to wait and long for people to finally open doors for you. You do not need to do that. Now the Lord will open doors. It is not in the hands of people. The Lord Himself will do that.

WHEN THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I WILL LACK NOTHING

Roman numeral III. When the Lord is my shepherd, I will not lack anything. I will not lack anything that pertains to me fulfilling the will of God. It does not matter how mad or unaware that people are—not how mad the bad guys are, or how unaware the other guys are about what I should be doing. Your destiny is in God's hands and your hands. You are the only human being with the power to stop it. That is a major confession David is making. Psalm 23:2: "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters." The green pastures, He leads me beside still waters. The green pastures—that is what the sheep ate and the still waters is what they drank, so he is talking about feasting here.

This is talking about feasting when everything is going well. If we feast when we are in an easy season, this is great, as we are much more likely to feast on God when the enemy approaches. If we do not feast on God in the easier seasons of life, chances are we will just yield to despair, when the enemy draws near. It is as if David said in Psalm 23:2, "the green pastures is what the sheep would eat, and then the still waters that is what they would drink. You make me lie down." Now the sheep—David knew this well—because he was a shepherd; sheep lie down only when they are satisfied after eating and only when they are not afraid. Sheep will not lie down if they are hungry or they are afraid. Under normal circumstances, they will not lie down. They are such fearful animals that until they are secure, they cannot lie down. I mean man if there is a flock of sheep, you know there are about twenty of them over there, and some young you know just a young kid comes running by; they will all scatter! Then they will just flee. You know the shepherd gets them back together and says, "Hey, he is just a little guy. He did not even notice you were there. Then the sheep: He is going to get us. If there is any disturbances, those twenty

will just all start running. They cannot lie down, if they are not satisfied, or they are not at peace, if they are not free from fear. David said, “When the Lord is my shepherd, He feeds me in a way where I have the ability to rest on the inside. I have an ability to have confidence in God.” He satisfies my spirit in communion with Him, and He takes the anxiety level where I can actually have confidence with God. That is what it means to lie down. I can be at rest.

HE MAKES ME TO LIE DOWN: PEACE INSTEAD OF ANXIETY

Roman numeral IV. Psalm 23:2-3: “He leads me by still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” Now “still waters” are interesting because you might miss what David’s point is. Sheep cannot drink from a fast flowing stream. If you bring the sheep up to a river that is flowing or even a brook that is fast moving, they cannot drink from it. They will just die of thirst before they will do that. The water has to be gentle, or they cannot assimilate it. They cannot go near it to drink it. David is making a statement; the statement is not peaceful. The statement is that the Lord, His leadership is so sensitive that He will feed them, and He will give them drink in a way that suites their ability to receive. The Lord will give us drink, which speaks of the ministry of the Spirit. He knows He has to do it at the level at which we can receive it. That is what this still water means. It means that He gives the drink to the brand new believer and He says, “I can meet the need of your heart. I can give you what you can receive according to the need and according to your abilities.” That is what he is talking about: the sensitive leadership of the Lord. Some people might say, “Well I am just so new in the Lord, and the Bible does not make sense. None of it makes sense. I do not get it.”

It is as if the Lord says, “I will lead you by still waters. I will bring you drink that you can actually partake of.” So it is really a statement about the Lord’s sensitive leadership that He will give us drink that we can actually assimilate—that is what it is talking about. If you brought that flock of sheep to a rushing river, they would die of thirst. They could not assimilate. The Lord says, “I know who you are. I know your needs. I know what you understand. I know the language of your heart. I can touch your heart. I can give you the ministry; I can release the ministry of the Spirit in that way to you. This is an important one: He leads me. Sheep are very dependant by nature. They have to be guided. If there is not a shepherd who cannot find food and water on their own; they will run into the wild beasts, and they will fall over cliffs. They really will. Left to their own, they will starve. They will get stuck in the thickets. The lion will get them, and they will run, fall over a cliff that they did not know was there. They will go running, “Ahh . . . there is a cliff.” No. I mean it is a disaster for their life. This is true though. This is true. They have to have a shepherd, or they will lose their way. Isaiah 53:6-7, the prophet Isaiah says: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.” We are all like sheep who go astray by nature. By nature, we lose our way—all of us. I mean there is not a human being on the earth who does not, by human nature, lose their way, and spiritually we all, by nature, get disconnected with God.

We disconnect from the food. We disconnect from the right path by nature. What David was saying was a humility statement; he says, “I call on His leadership. I know I am prone to get out

of alignment. I am prone to lose my focus.” Do not beat yourself up. That is the nature of a fallen human being. It is as if David said, “I take that into account. I call on His leadership. Lord, You have to feed me. You have to lead me to the pasture to feed me. I need You to intervene, come, and touch my life right now.” I mean if a man with David’s experience knew that need for the intervention—the whispers of God to give direction to his life.

HE RESTORES MY SOUL AND LEADS ME

Roman numeral V. Psalm 23:3: “He restores my soul; He leads me in paths of righteousness.” We are constantly in need of our soul restored. Our vitality in God restored. Our peace is restored. Our purity is strengthened. We need to get restored. I mean daily, weekly, and all the time. I do not care how great your life is in God in the last year, or ten years. You have a proneness to lose your way—all of us—that is not a problem because we have an attentive shepherd. The problem is will we give ourselves to that shepherd and say, “Hey, I am in need. I constantly am losing my way.”

It is as if the Lord says, “Good. You lose your way. I am the shepherd who knows your way. It is a match made in heaven. Let’s do it together.” Average believers do not really think about themselves that way. They do not really put it together. They moan when they lose their way, but they do not really think. They are guaranteed to lose their way in the next week, two, or three guaranteed; so if you know, it changes your dialogue with the Lord. You are talking about restoring regularly. “Lord, restore my passion and my vitality. Lord, last week I felt connected. Next week, I might not; but You will restore me. Here I am. I am constantly in the mode of You renewing me. You could put the word *renewing*. He leads me in paths of righteousness.” Righteousness does not just mean moral virtue. It does mean that, but it also means correct paths, or right paths. We lose our focus. We lose our direction in our life, our family, our marriage, our ministry, our children, and our money. We are constantly losing our focus and enlightenment. The Lord says, “I will give you right paths. I will give you the hints. I will whisper. I will give you many impressions. I will show you how to realign week after week.”

You know one guy I talked to said, “I have you know, it feels like every week, I have to realign my heart.” That is exactly how it works. If that is new to you that means you have been in a little bit of deception for the years before that. Not deception, just kind of a little bit out of touch. Of course, you have got to get realigned. OK, good. I never thought about that. I assume I will get out of focus and out of alignment. I assume it. Therefore, I talk to God according to these kinds of truths. I say, “Lord lead me, lead me. I am in need of leadership.”

People get the Word of the Lord, they come to IHOP-KC, and they been here three months. I do not know why I am at IHOP. I am not talking about the interns. I am talking about the staff and the main leaders. They think, “What am I doing in the Bible school? What am I doing in the worship team? I do not know why I am here.” That is a human and a very normal human response. They think they are the only one who does not know why they are here. In the next months, almost everybody will ask that question in the next couple of months because we are sheep. We lose our way. He says, “I will realign you. I will refocus you. I will restore you, but

you have got to talk to Me. You have got to feed Me. I mean feed on Me. I will give you whispers. I will realign you just in small ways all the time if you know that you have need of it.”

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Roman numeral VI. Psalm 23:4: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” The good news is it is not the valley of death—it is a shadow. A shadow cannot kill us. A shadow means we are close to the substance. It is not the valley of death; it is the shadow of death. Now the devil tells us it is death, but it is only a shadow because Jesus is the victor over physical death, but He is also the victor over the devil and the devil’s attack. It appears like the valley of death, but it really is not. It is a shadow. It is passing. It is not the substance. It actually will lead to a greater experience in God. It is not the valley of death. It is actually a valley that will lead to life. It only looks like a valley of death, but if you are feeding on the Lord, you see through the Lord’s eyes, and you see it differently.

David says in Psalm 23:4, “I fear no evil; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Your rod and Your staff—these were two instruments that the shepherd used regularly. The rod was the club to fend off the wild beast—that is protection. The staff was a different instrument. That was to guide the sheep. That was to nudge the sheep to show them the sheep who were going to the left—to the right, to the left, and they would nudge them with the staff to say “no. The water is that way.”

The sheep would think, “OK;” but they would go off track. The shepherds would nudge them back to where the water and the food were and away from the cliff. So the rod is protection. The staff is direction. The nudging and the shouts from heaven are mostly just nudging. They are just small adjustments in our lives regularly. What David says is, “When I am in the valley of the shadow of death, I have confidence. I am comforted by this: He will fend off the wild beast, and He will give me the midcourse corrections constantly to get me through that period of time. I am positive. I am comforted knowing He will intervene. He will stop the wild beast from devouring me and from destroying me. He will keep me from going right and left when I should go on the straight path. I am positive of it.”

He says, “I do not know how to do it. I will get off the path, but His rod and His staff, they comfort me because I have the assurance that God will constantly intervene to give me a midcourse correction.” Then David says in his final statement in Psalm 23:6: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME

Roman numeral VII. Goodness and mercy: mercy is the forgiveness of the past, but it is more than that. Goodness is provision for the present and the future. Beloved, mercy and goodness are following you all the days of your life. Now the word *follow* is the Hebrew verb of an animal pursuing another animal. Mercy and goodness are pursuing you. They are running hard after you. Now here is the important thing: they are running hard after you. That is a fact. If you do not

know it, then you live without the enjoyment and assurance of that always wondering if goodness is going to come, or if mercy is going to be there. I am just going to get wiped out. I have sinned too much. I am over. It is as if David said to the Lord, “I am positive mercy is chasing me down in my future failures: in my past and future failures, mercy is chasing me down when I repent.”

Goodness: the provision of the Lord is chasing me down. Now if you cannot feel it, you cannot see it, and you cannot enjoy it, so you will end up in despair; you will end up cancelling out some of the will of God in your life. We have to make this confession. When the devil says, “there is no mercy and there is no goodness,” you say, “it is written mercy and goodness are chasing me down.” I am going to feel it. I am going to enjoy it. I am going to see it because when you feel it and see it, even a little bit, you make different choices. You stay connected to the Lord.

WE CAN BE OUR OWN WORST ENEMY

If you do not feel it, you get into despair, and you cancel yourself out. The devil did not actually defeat you—you are the one that took yourself out of the game. The number one temptation I am convinced in the whole Body of Christ is the temptation to quit. Every human being believer and unbeliever faces that temptation many, many times, the temptation to quit whatever is before them.

The devil wants to convince us mercy and truth is not—mercy and goodness are not chasing us down. It is as if David said, “I do not care what it feels like. I am in the valley of the shadow of death. I see death coming near me. The enemy is in eyesight, but my confession is this: mercy and truth are chasing me down and they will outrun the enemy and overtake me. That is his confession.

In his final statement he says, “This will happen all the days of my life.” Not just in the good seasons and when you feel like it. This is the truth of the Word—when you do not feel it and you cannot see it—it is the truth of God’s Word. You must get this confession into your dialogue with the Lord.

MAKING THIS OUR CONFESSION

David says, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:6). Now in David’s day, I mean let’s say it this way, the house of the Lord in the Bible is a big subject. In David’s day, the very specific way he engaged to minister to God was in worship and prayer; Psalm 27:4 David talks beholding the beauty of God in the house of the Lord. Singers, musicians, it was a ministry to the Lord; it is as if David said, “I am not going to get offended. I am not going to get distracted. This is my confession. I will be engaged with God in deep, debt way all the days of my life in this age, in the age to come I am not backing up. I am not quitting. I am engaged in the house of God. I am going to live with a spirit of prayer and worship. I am going to develop it. I am not going to choose a side and be distracted by it because when I do, I am calling on the Lord regularly to correct me with His rod and His staff.”

He is feeding me. He is leading me, and I am sure my testimony is this: I will stay connected to God in worship and prayer in this age and the age to come all the days of my life. “That is my confession”—is what David is saying. Those are the confessions of a man after God’s own heart. We can make those our own confessions.

MINISTRY TIME:

Amen. Let’s stand. I just trust you will journal this. I do not mean journal my stuff. I am talking about in just an open notebook, and you will go in the prayer room with Psalm 23. You might take a few notes to kind of get used to it, if you are not familiar with what the phrases mean. It might kind of take a day to get familiar with them; if they are new to you, you have to say these statements to God, and you write what comes to you. I tell you the Lord will speak to your heart in powerful ways. Let’s just stand and for a moment, put everything down. Let’s just wait on the Lord for a minute. I want to ask the Lord to touch you right now.