

# Devotions

## Beside the Water

**1**

Walking with the Lord, through His Word and Prayer

**2**

Standing with other believers to worship God.

**3**

Sitting in the company of other believers, doing life together in groups

### Background:

I work with an elderly population, many of whom have memorized significant portions of Scripture. When we meet together, we often recite texts they remember. Psalm 23, written by the shepherd boy turned King David, is a favorite passage, especially when we recite from the King James Version. It is beautifully poetic and descriptive of an intimate walk with God.

# The Word of God:

Psalm 23 King James Version (KJV)

*23 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*



*3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

*5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

## Discussion:

Recently, the news has been filled with stories about hurricanes. As I write this, Hurricane Florence continues to wreak havoc along the coastlines of both North and South Carolina. Flooding is rampant with major damage to property and a mounting death toll. For those who know people who live near where the hurricanes are active, this is more than a story in the news--it is personal and all too real.

Psalm 23: 2 says the Lord, our Shepherd, leads us beside still, or quiet, waters. Those in the midst of the hurricanes right now might beg to differ. They are praying in earnest for the waters to still so they can stop living in fear and start moving forward with clean-up and reconstruction.

Closer to home, this past August, after a lengthy dry spell, West Michigan received a significant amount of rain in 24 hours. This happened at a time when my son Ben had torn up all the floors on the main floor of his house in preparation for laying vinyl plank flooring. After laboring on this project late into the night, Ben went to the basement for some tools--and stepped into water at the bottom of the stairs. Water was seeping in through the foundation and the rain was far from over.

Ben frantically moved everything he could manage to higher ground and called a water damage control service, who promptly told him they would be out three days later. By this point the rain would be over and there would be no chance insurance would cover the significant damage. Feeling defeated, Ben finally went to bed but laid awake all night listening to the rain pound against the windows and praying for the water rising in his basement to subside.

## Sometimes the hurricanes in our lives are not literal flood waters,

...but rather circumstances that rush into our lives, pouring over us and wreaking havoc in ways as destructive as the waters of Hurricane Florence. It may be a flooded basement, or a life-altering diagnosis. It may be seeing a police officer coming to the door right after hearing sirens in the distance and realizing a family member is late getting home. It may be hearing a



spouse say a marriage is over or a child confessing to an alcohol addiction. It may be reaping the consequences of actions when straying far from the right path. Whatever it is that floods us with despair and heartache, we may relate more to the imagery of Psalm 23:4, walking through the shadow of death, than we do to feeling led beside quiet waters.

In Psalm 23, David describes the Lord as his Shepherd, detailing his own experience of caring for sheep. Sheep are completely dependent on the shepherd for provision, guidance and protection. When things are going well, we don't like to think we are dependent on anyone but ourselves, but when the flood waters begin to rise, we are faced with the knowledge that we can't do it alone. Only the Lord our shepherd can give the peace and calm that he knows we as his sheep so desperately need. The image of being led in Psalm 23: 2 reminds us that we wouldn't need shepherding if we were always already beside the quiet waters, or if we could get there by ourselves. We need a Savior

who stills us from within even when we are being flooded with challenges and difficulties. I'm reminded of the song recorded by Scott Krippayne that states:

**“Sometimes He calms the storm**

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**With a whispered peace be still**

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**He can settle any sea**

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**But it doesn't mean He will**

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**Sometimes He holds us close**

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**And lets the wind and waves go wild**

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**Sometimes He calms the storm**

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**And other times He calms His child.”**

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Songwriters: Benton Kevin Stokes / Tony W. Wood

Sometimes He Calms the Storm lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group, Capitol Christian Music Group

## **Application:**

Oftentimes, it is in the worst occurrences in our lives, when we have come to the end of ourselves, that God speaks to us through his Word. We may not always know what God's plan is, but we can be confident that there is a purpose for whatever happens in our lives. The following verses from Isaiah 43 give us insight into what that purpose is. Even in what seem like impossible situations and devastating circumstances, God is making a way, leading us beside streams to refresh our weary souls so that everyone God has created will proclaim His praise.

Isaiah 43

*1b: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;*

*I have summoned you by name; you are mine.*

*2 When you pass through the waters,*

*I will be with you;*

*and when you pass through the rivers,*

*they will not sweep over you...*

*19 See, I am doing a new thing!*

*Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?*

*I am making a way in the wilderness*

*and streams in the wasteland...*

*20b: I provide water in the wilderness*

*and streams in the wasteland,*

*to give drink to my people, my chosen,*

*21 the people I formed for myself*

*that they may proclaim my praise.*

*By Cindy Nyhoff*

# Day 2

## Beside the Water



### **The Word of God:**

Psalm 23: 2 (KJV):

*“He leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul.”*

## Discussion:

My sister Cheryl has gone white water rafting a number of times. After the first time she went, she told me about her experience: "We had just gone through very rough, rocky rapids. It seemed like we were through the worst when the raft hit a rock and popped me out and immediately under the raft as it continued moving forward. I don't recall any panic, but I do remember thinking about the instructions we had been given on what to do if we suddenly found ourselves under the boat. The instructor had told us, 'Walk your hands along the bottom of the raft to the edge.' I did that and popped up on the side of the raft. Everyone on the raft looked very panicked when I popped up on the side. At that point the water was calm and others in the raft helped me back in. It all happened so fast that I remember asking, 'What happened and why did I end up in the river?' The others told me the rafting guide was celebrating getting through the rapids and not paying attention when the raft hit the rock. They saw my head come within inches of hitting the rock, and then they lost track of where I was. I was with a church group, and I know there were many quick prayers spoken on my behalf! It all happened so fast that I didn't have time to get scared or worried, but I certainly was glad for the calm waters!"

A dear friend of mine had a Christian counseling ministry for many years named "Still Waters." I asked how she decided on that name, and she said that most people who come into counseling feel like they are swirling in white water rapids, fighting to stay alive, fearing being overturned and thrown from the raft and drowning as they're pulled under by the strong undercurrent. When someone is in those rough waters for an extended length of time, panic and fear are normal responses. In Christ-centered counseling, they are helped to look ahead to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who promises to lead us beside still waters and refresh our weary souls. By using the calm waters as their compass, they will know how to maneuver through the current, and the Good Shepherd will guide them through the whitewater rapids unharmed.

When we think of still waters, we might picture a stagnant, motionless pond, the kind that is a breeding ground for the mosquitoes that were rampant earlier this fall. But that's not what's on David's mind as he writes Psalm 23. He's picturing a stream of water that is refreshing and accessible,

not turbulent and swift and dangerous. Most sheep won't drink from a stream whose water is swift and whose current is fast-moving, nor should they wade into swampy, bug-infested ponds for the refreshment they need. Both stagnant water and white water can lead to death, but the Good Shepherd leads us to and offers us full accessibility to living water!

Like the sheep approaching the stream that won't sweep them away, and like the whitewater rafter who keeps their eyes on the calm streams ahead, we can rest assured our Good Shepherd will lead us to streams of living water. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, he will pour that refreshing, sustaining, life-giving water into us as Jesus promises (John 7:37). Even when the heartaches of this life threaten to sweep over us and unexpected rocks pop up and throw us overboard, we know we have a Shepherd who has never taken His eyes off of us. A day is coming when the troubles of this world will not even be a distant memory, and we will be led beside refreshing waters beyond what we can imagine – celebrating safe passage and enjoying springs of living water forever in the presence of the Shepherd, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **Revelation 7:**

**16 Never again will they hunger;**

**never again will they thirst.**

**The sun will not beat down on them,**

**nor any scorching heat.**

**17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne**

**will be their shepherd;**

**he will lead them to springs of living water.**

**And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**

## Application:

The hymn “Be Still My Soul,” written in the 1700’s, reminds us that “In every change He [God] faithful will remain. This hymn was recently recorded by Kari Jobe, about 300 years after it was first written, and its words have remained true through the ages. Contemplate how God leads you to “still waters” and peace in him as you read these lyrics. You can also listen to the hymn at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mq59iE3MhXM>.

### **Be Still My Soul (In You I Rest)**

*Be still, my soul, The Lord is on thy side*

*Bear patiently, the cross of grief or pain*

*Leave to thy God, to order and provide*

*In every change, He faithful will remain*

*Be still, my soul, thy best thy heavenly friend*

*Through thorny ways, leads to a joyful end*

*Be still, my soul, thy God doth undertake*

*To guide the future as He has the past*

*Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake*

*All now mysterious shall be bright at last*

*Be still, my soul, the waves and wind still know*

*His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below*



*In You I rest, in You I found my hope*

*In You I trust, You never let me go*

*I place my life within Your hands alone*

*Be still, my soul*

*Be still, my soul, the hour is hastening on*

*When we shall be forever with the Lord*

*When disappointment, grief and fear are gone*

*Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored*

*Be still, my soul, when change and tears are past*

*All safe and blessed, we shall meet at last*

*In You I rest, in You I found my hope*

*In You I trust, You never let me go*

*I place my life within Your hands alone*

*Be still, my soul*

Songwriters: Kathrina von Schlegel/Jason Ingram /Kari Jobe

Be Still My Soul (In You I Rest) lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Essential Music Publishing, Capitol Christian Music Group

***By Cindy Nyhoff***