

Psalm 23

A Transcriptional Aid for Memorization

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Introduction

This booklet is an attempt to aid in Scripture memorization by understanding more than by repetition. As such, you are encouraged to spend time thinking about the text so that you see the natural flow of ideas. As your understanding increases, it is put to the test as you transcribe the text. When you struggle to remember something, don't check the passage immediately. Take some time to try and remember and, if you can't, simply move on. You will learn more by writing all that you remember and then going back in to refill those holes than you will by filling them in as you go along.

1. Read the section interrogatively. This is the most important step, and you might return to it after completing later steps. Arrive at an understanding of why David put each sentence in their sequence.
2. Mark the text itself as you come to some conclusion about how David has structured his thoughts. Get your thoughts onto the text so that you can see them.
3. Reproduce, from memory, the basic sequence of the section. Do this however makes the most sense to you. Check your work and fill in the holes until you can reproduce it accurately from a place of understanding, not merely repetition.
4. With the structure of the section in mind, reproduce the section word-for-word.
5. Come to a place of genuine mastery. String all the sections of the passage together, or start from a random place and continue to a random stopping point. Because you understand the passage as a whole, and each section that makes up the passage, you are able to call to mind any part of any length with accuracy.

This booklet is designed with electronic tablets in mind. I inserted one blank page after the text so that the outline of a passage, or the whole passage itself, can be written out and erased as necessary. If you decide to print the booklet instead, insert blank pages as necessary, or pair the booklet with your preferred notepad.

As a way to orient you in the passage, I offer the following. Psalm 23 is an expression of confident trust in God's personal and pervasive care. David describes the Lord as both a shepherd (vv.1–4) and host (vv. 5, 6) who is attentive throughout life's difficulties. He supplies everything we need so that we will lack nothing, even having an abundant life. This is true not because our lives are problem free, or that we will have plenty of money, but because God is with us. And this reality pervades even through life's most threatening terrains and among those who would do us harm. The final image of dwelling in the Lord's house forever expresses the controlling frame throughout the Psalm: persistent communion with God secures our wellbeing in every dimension of life. For David, God's universe is a perfectly safe place to live. To memorize this Psalm is to attempt a change in our thinking so that we can experience our universe in the same way. What kind of person would you become if you truly believed that the words of this Psalm were always true?

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

Even 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 overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

