

The Fruit of Communion with God

Hymns from "Favorite Hymns of Grace."

Greeting and Opening Prayer

Hymns of Worship

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Devotional Summary: "The Fruit of Communion with God"

Psalm 23 (KJV) (top of page 30 in "Favorite Hymns of Grace")

1 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. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

This psalm of David is a wonderful word picture. He uses natural things familiar to himself and many of those who lived in his day to paint a picture in people's minds of a very beautiful thing: the closeness, the tenderness, the loving care, the preeminence of his God in the lives of His children - His sheep.

God longs for His children to walk with Him in humble, childlike faith. He wants to know us in the context of warm, vibrant fellowship. He is the shepherd...a shepherd watches over His sheep. They may not be all that bright compared to the Shepherd, but they know they belong to Him and that He protects them and feeds them and shelters them. He takes care of their every need! They know this because they know Him. They are walking with Him. The sheep have awesome memories of His protection and His love. The Father's children, the sheep who belong to the Shepherd, are learning to understand that He has taken the responsibility to correct us in our pride or our dishonesty or our greed or our moral lapses. The sheep have a real relationship with the Shepherd. Just look at Psalm 23 again and take stock of what kind of relationship the lamb has with the Shepherd.

No legitimate need in our soul goes unnoticed by our Shepherd. Nourishment and safety are constant in His care. Forgiveness and understanding abound at His feet. His guidance leads to righteousness in our hearts. The perils of this life and the accusations of our enemy, Satan, are answered by God's provision in the very face of it all. Healing in our heart, supply of strength in our soul is abundant and free. The benefits of walking with the Shepherd follow us in this life as He leads us to a new life and a new home in heaven.

This relationship between the Shepherd and the little lamb is the foundation for Christian living. It is not a rigid, rigorous, brittle asceticism that keeps score with an arbitrary list of do's

and don't's! Christian living is getting to know our Heavenly Father in shoe leather and walking with Him in our daily lives - facing all of our circumstances and engaging all of our relationships with our chubby little hand firmly gripped by the King of the Universe! ... learning to love, trust, laugh, relax in His arms!

Out of this Divine, loving, reciprocal relationship, out of this **d**ynamic, **O**ngoing, **C**onversational, **l**oving relationship (a "DOCLOR"), out of a life lived in submission to His authority, comes a plethora, a cornucopia of really priceless benefits - the fruits of living in spiritual communion with our Shepherd, our Heavenly Father, in the person of Holy Spirit!

Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

- Love - an ever upward spiraling love and affection for God and for others that inspires and empowers the following traits.
- Joy - exuberant, energetic light-heartedness that is inexpressible and full of a warm, wholesome glow.
- Peace - a settled rest in God that exceeds our ability to explain or understand it.
- Long-suffering - enduring emotional strength in the face of painful circumstances and relationships.
- Kindness - a generous heart brimming with thoughtfulness and grace.
- Goodness - a wholesomeness in attitude, in motive and in deed.
- Faithfulness - unending confidence in God and endurance in our relationships when under pressure to give up.
- Gentleness - Sensitivity and delicateness that seeks to do no harm to others.
- Self-control - power over temptation and the strength of character to manage the appetites of our fleshly nature.

These are fruits...they bud, they blossom, then they bulge and grow, succulent and sweet. These are developing, maturing consequences that follow our walk with God. They are not prerequisites to being God's child, they are the result of His work in the life of His children. These are the benefits to being the Shepherd's little lamb. You need not stress and strain to produce these fruits, all you need is to rest in your Father's arms, firmly rooted in His love for you and your love for Him. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want!"

Closing Hymn

Jesus Saves p. 01

Prayer Requests and Corporate Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Recessional

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