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Ransom Notes



Yanni the Shephard

The Shepherd and His Crook or Rod

A pair with smiling faces hug a shepherd they met along the road one day while on their trip around the world. The day of the photo, David and Renee were visiting Chania, Greece. The bearded one could not speak English, and my niece and husband drew a blank when trying to use the language of the locals. Regardless, in spite of verbal silence, they made friends somehow. This Shepherd drew them in closer.

Psalm 23:1 flashes before my eyes. *"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul."* Reread that verse again and think of the key words: I lack nothing — I'm led into quiet spaces — Still waters refresh my extremely crowded 21st-century life and soul. What wonderful promises!

The challenge is remembering to implement the Shepherd's directions.

Lie Down, Rest, Seek Quiet: The Psalmist thinks of green pastures and quiet waters, each of which would be present where the sheep are nibbling away. Where are the silent spots in your life? Occasionally, I play a round of golf by myself. Golf greens, perhaps a stream or a pond, and generally attractive trees and flowers provide an ideal spot for meditation while also keeping active. Rarely is any sound heard when I wake in the middle of the night. For me, that is another perfect time to let my mind focus on The Good Shepherd. Occasionally, I just lie there attempting to enumerate the blessings I received from God that day, or the challenges He helped me survive and conquer.

Where and when do you find moments for prayer and meditation? Perhaps an early morning cup of coffee while part of the family is still snoozing. Others reflect on God's care for them when negotiating the early morning traffic on the way to work. For others, a walk in the park, twenty minutes pulling weeds around their petunia plants, or drowning a worm in the lake provide an alone moment with God. Each of us must personalize the unique spot and time for our talk, sharing, and reflection time with our Shepherd.

Rest does not necessarily mean total immobility or solitude in a cave with flying bats flitting about. It is a time when our minds focus solely on God's love for us and for others. Words of thanks, pleas for help, or acknowledgment of support and calmness in the petitioner's life find opportunity to burst forth in our minds as we turn off the world around us for a few minutes. Stop and just remember the Man Above who considers us His children. Our soul and our mind should become calm. Occasionally tears may smear your makeup. We rejoice. Peace like a silent river should envelope us.

Anticipate and Expect Refreshing of Your Soul: What happens when a parent attends a school or church event in which one of their own children will be participating? Generally, the adults can hardly wait to smile, applaud, or write a text to a faraway grandparent sharing the joys of the event. Shirt buttons are popping off with pride.

Hopefully, the end result is a child internally recognizing and maybe even verbally acknowledging, "My parents love and care for me." They then silently smile and drift off to sleep peacefully or whatever else the wee one loves to do.

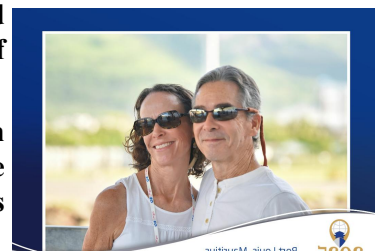
Now reflect on your own being. Even as adults, we need that sense of peace knowing that all is well with our Father in heaven. Visualize God peeking into your spot on earth and winking or just quietly cheering that one of His own reached out for a helping hand and a word of peace and rest. ". . . Your (God's) rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Ps.23:4).

Know His Rod and Staff are Ready to Rescue You: David and Renee sighted the shepherd, and friendship was established, thus the hug. The sad part, however, Renee and David did not see their new friend rescue one of the flock. That would have been a joyous occasion to actually view the hook of the staff reach up and assist a four-legged, furry creature caught in the thorns and thistles.

Likewise, God's sheep (children) sometimes are rescued, helped, or even given moments of relief or a friendly hug. No long staff physically reaches out and grabs you by the leg, helping you to plant your feet once again on solid emotional or spiritual ground. Peace is hard to describe, but trust that He cares seems to calm our soul and help us breathe deeply.

Keep Your Eyes and Hearts Alert. Recognize His Helping Hand in Your Life. Trust.

God Often Accomplishes His Will Through the Hands of Other Caring Humans Living Around You.



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