

Camp Harvest

# 23 Days in Psalm 23

Days 15-23

Harvest 2013

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## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Introduction to the Final Phase of the Devos..... | 2  |
| Day 15.....                                       | 2  |
| Topical Bible Study, stage 1 .....                | 2  |
| Day 16.....                                       | 4  |
| Topical Bible Study: part 2 .....                 | 4  |
| Day 17.....                                       | 6  |
| Topical Bible Study: part 3 .....                 | 6  |
| Day 18.....                                       | 9  |
| Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ .....       | 9  |
| Day 19.....                                       | 12 |
| Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ .....       | 12 |
| Day 20.....                                       | 14 |
| Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ .....       | 14 |
| Day 21.....                                       | 16 |
| Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ .....       | 16 |
| Day 22.....                                       | 17 |
| Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ .....       | 17 |
| Day 23.....                                       | 18 |
| An End and a Beginning .....                      | 18 |

## **Introduction to the Final Phase of the Devos**

For the final week-plus of these devotions, we're going to switch gears once again. We've gone through Psalm 23 in general and then shifted into a more in-depth study. Now that we've come up to the last half of the passage, we're going to begin a personal in-depth study.

When it comes to Bible study, there are a few ways one can go about it. One popular way is expository, which slowly treks through a book of the Bible, digging out truths along the way. This is very useful for getting the main overview of the book, as well as keeping a close eye on context. Remember, context is key! Don't ever cut the end of a verse off because it doesn't fit with your opinion. The Bible should be taken for what it says, not what you want it to say. Expository study helps prevent taking things out of context, for you are treading so carefully and methodically through a book that it's hard to overlook the very clear teachings. This is what we've been doing so far as we went through Psalm 23.

The other method is known as "topical," and usually involves doing a word study or synonym study throughout the Bible to see the entirety of what God thinks on a particular issue. Again, context is going to be key here, because it will be easy and tempting to take a single verse that seems to agree with your premise and ignore either the verses around it or the other verses God wrote on the subject. Remember, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself, and thus Scripture should be compared with Scriptures, lest you take a sarcastic comment by one of the Biblical authors or a facetious statement and make a doctrine out of it. Always read context and other verses to make certain you are understanding the topic at hand. And remember: sometimes what isn't said can be just as powerful as what is said! If God refuses in the Bible to call something a sin, you should note why. It may be because it is a sin when out of balance, or that the act itself isn't sin. Always make sure you line up your thinking with God's on every issue.

What we are going to do in these last few devotionals is learn how to undertake a topical Bible study. Once we have that concept down, we will then seek to finish Psalm 23 by examining what our place is before God – what our identity in Christ is, if you will.

## **Day 15**

### **Topical Bible Study, stage 1**

Read Psalm 23.

Make sure you still have it memorized.

Today we're going to learn how to use a concordance. A concordance is a book that contains most, if not all the words in the Scripture, as well as which verses in which they can be located. A good concordance can be found either using Strong's concordance (which is actually tied in to a lot of Greek and Hebrew words throughout some Bibles), eSword (which is a free Bible program available online) or even just searching for certain words in a google search (caution using this, as not only Bible verses, but other images, text, etc will appear. I would personally suggest the first two options, unless you know

the general idea of the verse but can't remember the exact wording). The topic we're going to flesh out today is the topic of "wine."

For the first part, search the word "wine," "strong drink," "alcohol," "beer," "liquor," and any other words that you think would be synonymous with the topic at hand. (words like "drunk," "drunken," etc would be good to look at as well).

Now, in the space below, write the verses and just a rough idea of what they say (if you already know that they have nothing to do with alcoholic wine, you may exclude them – so "wine of the wrath of God" verses are obviously not talking about our drinking of alcohol, so don't bother writing them down. If there's any doubt, though, keep the verse in play for now.

All right, part two, search again for any new verses you thought of (you may ask others if they can think of any synonyms that you may not have thought of). Write those below as well.

Now, go back to the verse you listed above and read the contexts. Is God talking about something you drink or can get drunk with in these verses? If so, leave them. If not, cross them out. You may have to read the context of each verse to make sure it fits. Remember, be as thorough and seek to make as complete a list as possible. Read several verses before and after the one you found.

Once you have completed that step, go on the last step we'll do today. Copy the verses you want to study in the space provided below and summarize the verse (again, include important information from the context if necessary.) As you do so, start noting if God is speaking favorably (F) or unfavorably (U) when He discusses our drinking or having anything to do with alcohol.

## Day 16

### **Topical Bible Study: part 2**

Read Psalm 23

Make sure the passage is still memorized

Read 2 Peter 1 and brush up on your memorization of that section.

Yesterday, we used a concordance to find as many verses about wine and the associated terms as possible. Today, we're going to put them together to fully understand the topic.

At the start, here's a hint. If you don't have a passage out of Proverbs 31 or 1 or 2 Timothy (I'll leave you to find which), you may want to go back, look up the word "wine" again and add them to your lists.

Now let's start examining the terms. Today, you'll need a dictionary. Look up the words "wine," "drunken," "alcohol," "liquor," and any other synonyms you can think of, and write those definitions below. Understanding the meanings of the words will be especially helpful.

FYI: the word “wine” in the Bible can refer to either alcoholic beverages made from the fruit of grapes or just simply grape juice itself with no alcohol whatsoever. (that’s a freebie) So as you read through the verses, try to figure out which one God is discussing.

In the space below, put the verses in which you think God is referring to alcoholic wine on the left and record what He thinks about it. Put the verses in which God is referring to non-alcoholic wine on the right and record a brief explanation explaining why you believe it to be so.

| Alcoholic Wine | Non-alcoholic Juice |
|----------------|---------------------|
|                |                     |

In the space below, put the verses in which you’re unsure of what God is referring to, and explain what you are inclined to think, as well as why you aren’t sure.

Now, as the study for today comes to a close, think about what you've studied so far.

- ▶ Do you think God approves of alcoholic beverages? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ If so, why? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Is God always against alcohol? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ If you answered "yes," to the previous question, then when does God allow it?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ If you answered "no," what verses would you use to back your opinion up?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tomorrow, we'll examine this topic one more time, and dig one more level deeper into this topical study. Remember, this pattern can be repeated for any number of topics – you get a list of definitions and verses, you find which ones actually fit with the topic at hand, and then you slowly glean what God's opinion on the matter is. Remember, it's God's opinion that matters.

## Day 17

### **Topical Bible Study: part 3**

Read Psalm 23

Make sure you still have the verses memorized

Read through 2 Peter 1 and refresh the verses you learned during camp.

As we come to an end of our learning period using the Topical Bible Study method, we're going to zoom in first on the "big picture," and get a feel for what God, in general, thinks about the subject at hand.

After reading all the verses you have read on wine, alcohol, and strong drink (as well as any other synonyms you could think of), does God have much good to say about that stuff?

After reading the passages, what, in relation to wine, is definitely sin? What verse(s) would you use to defend this position?

What are some verses that seem to hint that there is a time to drink wine?

What does that mean to you?

Let's examine the passages that we know are discussing wine. The four verses we're going to examine are found in Proverbs 23:31, Proverbs 31:6, Proverbs 20:1, and 1 Timothy 5:23. A reference verse that will come into play later is 1 Peter 5:7.

Let's finish up this topic.

- ▶ Which verses of these seem to be saying it's "okay to drink"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Under what conditions do they seem to say it? Again, look at the context.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Which verses of these seem to say "no way!" Wine is stupid to get involved in!"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Why do they warn you this way?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Is there any contradiction between these verses?



In the space below, answer the following question. Assuming that each of these verses is indeed talking about actual, alcoholic wine (because at least one may not really be talking about alcohol [the one to Timothy]), what are the two (or at most three) situations in which drinking alcoholic wine is all right?

So, does that mean God approves of social drinking and partying? (hint: look up the word reveling, riotous living, etc to see what God thinks of *that* subject)

If you answered yes to the previous question, try to prove it with a Bible verse?

Okay, so what's your conclusion? After studying out the issue, what would you say to the following statement – “there's nothing wrong with having a beer once in a while, as long as I don't get drunk!” Would you agree with it? Would you partially agree? Would you disagree? Whatever you answer is, back it up with Scripture.

All right, now time for the author's two cents. See if you could study the Bible and come to the same conclusion. Using the verses I referenced above, see if the Bible backs up my conclusion. Getting drunk is wrong, no matter what. God has an overwhelmingly negative opinion of alcoholic beverages. Wine, if indeed each of the verses above are actually talking about alcohol, is permissible for three reasons – to forget the pain and sorrow that comes into life, to numb the pain that comes with death, and for health reasons to kill contaminants in the water or calm the stomach if it is poisoned or infected by contaminates. This completely rules out the social drinking/partying lifestyle, as no verse even hints that that's okay. Besides, this lifestyle usually involves drunkenness, which directly contradicts the Bible's teachings. While alcohol may have been excusable (according to Prov. 31) in times of great sorrow, the other verse I referenced (1 Peter 5:7) gives us a follow-up to that thought, and says we should not go to alcohol to solve our problems. (Here's another freebie: look at the context of Prov. 31 – Lemuel's mother is wisely saying “wine is for the sorrowers, and you're not sorrowing. Don't drink it.” She's not even saying it's okay to drink wine, she could just be saying “most sorrowing people are the ones who drink this stuff, and so you don't even have that excuse.”)

Perhaps, the reason God doesn't seem to come right out and say "wine is wrong" is this: many medicines actually contain alcohol (think of NiQuil). God permits use of the medicinal properties of the alcoholic process. He, however, clearly condemns becoming drunk on it and being deceived by it in any fashion. Also, God seems to permit the medicinal process of numbing the pain and so allows for wine to provide that "comfort" to the dying (as that's what it was used for in the past). Consider the paragraph, and see if there are any points that contradict the Scripture. Every point in that paragraph was gleaned from the verses you could have come across, and every fact could have easily been arrived at by simply praying over the verses, seeking counsel, and studying the simple wording (and sometimes lack of wording) of the Bible.

One might conclude from their study the following Biblical standard: "I will never drink alcohol, beer, or wine." Some also hold themselves to a personal standard to stay away from foods that have been fully cooked, medicines that contain alcohol, or restaurants that serve it.

## Day 18

### **Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ**

Read Psalm 23

Review to make sure it is still memorized

Read 2 Peter 1 once more.

Read Psalm 23:4-6 two more times.

Write down several things God does for us, as listed in vs. 4-6.

Vs. 4

Vs. 5

Vs. 6

Look at vs. 4. One phrase that sticks out is “I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

Today we’re going to study out to ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. A great study (which will take far too long to go through in this devotional) is to read through the book of Acts and highlight or note every time the Holy Ghost is mentioned, either directly or by implication (as in, He’s working but we don’t see the name itself). Acts is absolutely peppered with the work of the Holy Spirit! So, I would suggest starting there. In the space below, find some of the jobs the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit, Comforter) does in our lives.

Now that you’ve come up with a list of verses, start applying it to yourself. God promises that at salvation, we receive the Holy Ghost, so what are some things that we receive when we have the Holy Ghost in our lives?

What are some thoughts you've had that are contradicted by the verses you just read? For instance, someone may think that they're utterly alone, but God says "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

How will understanding the Holy Ghost's presence in your life help you to continue for Christ?

## Day 19

### Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ

Read Psalm 23

Make sure you still have the passage memorized

Read 2 Peter 1

Read Psalm 23:4-6 one more time

Read the last part of vs. 4. You will see the passage “for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

Now we’re going to do a topical study on the issues of reward and punishment. In the space below, make a chart. On the left hand side, right “punishments,” and on the left “blessings.” Under the *punishments* side, find verses throughout the Bible (preferably about 10) that discuss some of the curses or punishments or judgments that God will either bring into our lives directly or will allow to come into our lives as a result of our sins. Under the other column, chart some of the blessings God gives when He is obeyed.

You’ve come up with a chart. Now go back over your passages and try to determine whether the promises are universal (they apply to everyone at all times), local (as in, given to a specific church, Israel, nation, etc), or both (at times, a promise is given to a specific group, but is meant to be a general challenge). After you’ve done this, determine what we can learn about God from these passages. Write your conclusions below.

When we have the concept of a rod and staff, we have a comforting and a guiding and a judging. How can a judgment be “comforting”? How can it be a guide for us?

What can we learn from our study today?

## Day 20

### **Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ**

Read Psalm 23

Make sure you still have the passage memorized

Read 2 Peter 1

Read Psalm 23:4-6 one more time

Read Psalm 23:5. What does God do for us in this passage?

Who are our enemies in the Bible? Good question, right? Start a topical study. Find ten verses that tell us what (or who) should be our enemies, according to the Bible and write them below.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Under what circumstance should these things be our enemies? (For instance, sin should always be our enemy, but what about certain people – will they always be our enemy or is there a way for them to be “redeemed”?) Write your findings below.

Repeat the first two steps, only studying out the idea of “friendship” instead of “enemy.”

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

How should we treat our enemies? (again, study out the different types of enemies. Some enemies aren't people, so we would treat them differently than we would people, and vice versa).

Understanding what you do about “enemies” in a Biblical sense, what do you think the passage is saying when it says that God sets a table “in the presence” of our enemies?

How is this comforting to you?



## Day 21

### **Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ**

Read Psalm 23

Make sure you still have the passage memorized

Read 2 Peter 1

Read Psalm 23:5-6 one more time

In vs. 5, the Bible says that God anoints our heads with oil. The topic we're going to examine today is "anointing." As before, do a Bible search of the word "anoint," as well as any other synonyms or associated words you can think of. For instance, you may look up "oil" because that word is commonly associated with "anoint." The word "Messiah" also means "anointed one." Write those verses below.

What is the significance of being "anointed"?

Who were some "anointed" people through the ages?

Look up the word "chosen" in regards to our being "chosen." Write those verses below.

Isn't it amazing to think that God chose to put His Spirit in us at salvation? Isn't it fantastic to consider that He chose to die for us? Just think of what He knew that you would do, and yet still chose to die to save you, still chose to sacrifice so much to redeem you, and still loves you, no matter what!

What verse sticks out the most when you consider the wonderful things God has done for you?

What does the idea of "anointing" our heads with oil mean in terms of our identity with Christ? What are some assurances that God gives us?

## Day 22

### **Topical Study: Our Identity in Christ**

Read Psalm 23

Make sure you still have the passage memorized

Read 2 Peter 1

Read Psalm 23:6 one more time

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

Now let's study this idea of "forever." Search the Scriptures and write down any passages that you think express this concept of "forever." Other words you may want to examine are "everlasting," "without end," "from everlasting to everlasting," "enduring," "sure," and others.

What are some things that are "forever"?

Why can David say that he'll dwell in God's house "forever"?

How can we be assured of that promise as well?

What comfort does the concept of eternity bring to you? What caution does it give us?

## **Day 23**

### **An End and a Beginning**

Read Psalm 23

Read 2 Peter 1

Read Psalm 37

Today's devotional is going to be a little different. It is a summary. If you have not yet done the "two-week" check on your decisions, return to day 14 of the devos and fill that out. Then skim over the devotionals that you've completed so far in this journey. Once that is done, below write two things:

- 1) What are some promises of God I can learn from this passage?

2) What are some challenges from God that I need to heed from this passage?

The Bible is going to comfort and challenge us. We must rise to the challenge at every occasion. James will compare a person who ignores the clear teaching of Scripture to a person who looks at his muddy face and walks away thinking “man, I look good!” When you come in contact with the Bible, always look for areas to change in your own life.

Meditate upon these truths.

Note: If these devotions have been helpful and you would like more, please send us an email to let us know that we have been and could continue to be a help: [campharvest@cibcnh.org](mailto:campharvest@cibcnh.org)