

# THE GREEN PASTURES OF HEALTHY EWES



HEALTHY CHURCH FUNDAMENTALS MESSAGE 5

## 1 The Reality of Green Pastures

The green pastures in Psalm 23 are a true spiritual reality; places to which the LORD who is our Shepherd leads those who trust in and follow him. Green pastures are places of rest, refreshment and restoration along the way everlasting.

1. A spiritually healthy older woman finds herself here in green pastures as she follows her LORD and trusts him to supply her every need.

A. In green pastures she wants for nothing.

- (Psalm 23:1 ESV) **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

B. In green pastures she finds the blessing of refuge.

- (Psalm 34:8–10 ESV) **Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the [woman] who takes refuge in him!** 9 Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, **for those who fear him have no lack!** 10 The young lions suffer want and hunger; **but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.**
- (Psalm 84:11–12 ESV) For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. **No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.** 12 O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!

## 2 Finding and Staying on the Path

In Titus 2 we will learn how older ewes have been able to find and stay on the path that brings them to green pastures; how they have learned the necessity of eating spiritually healthy food and avoiding parasites.

1. A spiritually healthy older woman practices and maintains the spiritual discipline of receiving words from shepherd/teachers which promote healthy, correct doctrine, 2:1.

- (Titus 2:1 ESV) But as for you, teach what accords with **sound** doctrine.

A. The word “**sound**” in 2:1 means to be correct, accurate, **healthy** — conceived as being free from infirmity or disease. Sound, healthy doctrine is free from any mixture of error.

B. Titus received a two-fold commission: 1) To speak words that promoted spiritually, nutritious doctrine and 2) to directly oppose the parasitical, spiritually unhealthy approach of false teachers.

C. All faithful under-shepherds of Jesus Christ are commissioned to feed the flock under their care with healthy doctrine and to guard the flock against parasites.

- (Titus 1:9 ESV) **He must hold firm** to the trustworthy word as taught, **so that he may be able to** give instruction in **sound** doctrine **and also to rebuke those who contradict it.**
- (Titus 1:10–11, 13 ESV) **For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers**, especially those of the circumcision party. 11 **They must be silenced**, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ... **This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply**, that they may be **sound** in the faith.

D. False shepherd/teachers are parasites who feed on stray, foolish sheep.

A parasite is an organism that lives on or in a host organism and gets its food from or at the expense of its host; an organism that benefits by deriving nutrients at the expense of the host.

E. Unfaithful shepherds are parasites who feed themselves at the expense of the sheep.

- (Ezekiel 34:10 ESV) Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and **I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.**

2. Because she disciplines herself to receive healthy teaching from faithful shepherds a spiritually healthy older woman is reverent in her behavior, 2:3a.

- (Titus 2:3a ESV) **Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior**, not slanderers or slaves to much wine.

A. She is (*and is becoming*) other than she was because she eats spiritually healthy food that transforms her by the renewing of her mind.

B. She is (*and is becoming*) reverent in behavior.

C. Now having a deep reverence for God she is able to trust him with her whole heart and fully submit to his shepherding care of her life.

D. The LORD is her shepherd **and** Lord of her life.

E. She thrives in a growing awareness of the blessed privilege she enjoys and her sacred place as a holy woman of God in the eyes of God.

3. A spiritually healthy older woman is not a slanderer or a drunkard, 2:3b.

- (Titus 2:3 ESV) Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, **not slanderers or slaves to much wine.**

Although this text is speaking to older women, it does not exclude younger women. **The specific insight** we receive is that being a slanderer or a drunkard reveals the nature and behavior of a woman who is not reverent. She is not spiritually healthy and is vulnerable to parasites.

**The further insight** we receive is that since **these words are directed specifically to older women** then we must recognize this as a real danger or tendency in which older women may find themselves.

A. She is not a slanderer and/or a drunkard.

B. Her religion is not worthless.

- (James 1:26 ESV) **If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.**

4. A spiritually healthy older woman is to teach what is good, 2:3c.

- (Titus 2:3 ESV) Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. **They are to teach what is good.**

A. Slandering is set in contrast to teaching what is good.

B. Succumbing to slander obscures a person's own identity and role in the plan and purpose of God.

C. Succumbing to the temptation to slander results in self-deceit in which she forgets who she is—a woman chosen by God to be a holy influence and to speak healthy words into the lives of those around her.

D. Turning from her God-given role she unwittingly becomes an accusing voice in the church and attacks the reputation of those who oppose her.

E. Slander here is the word διαβόλους [diabolos] ... prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely;

someone who opposes the cause of God and may be supporting the cause of the devil.

F. Older women in the church who are not spiritually healthy (sound) often find themselves speaking against the leadership from their own authority and in contradiction to the will of God.

G. What sometimes happens is that the slanderer carries her anger past sundown to the next day and verbalizes the accusations of the devil toward someone in the church fellowship.

- (Ephesians 4:26–27 ESV) **Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.**

H. The Apostle Paul commissions Titus to sound the warning of this grave danger specifically with older women in mind.

I. Older women who fail in this way undermine the voice of the faithful ones who are speaking words that promote true spiritual health.

5. A spiritually healthy older woman is to teach and train young women in what is good, 2:3-5.

- (Titus 2:3–5 ESV) Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. **They are to teach what is good, 4 and so train the young women** to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, **that the word of God may not be reviled.**

### 3 When the LORD Is My Shepherd

When we obey and trust in the LORD as Lord, he shepherds us to the abundant life of green pastures in every place and at every stage of our lives. Rest areas along the path of life abound.

1. When the LORD is my shepherd, he supplies everything I need, 23:1-3.

- (Psalm 23:1–3 ESV) **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

A. REST: I lie down and rest in him and trust him to provide all my needs in every circumstance for the journey now and later.

- (Philippians 4:12b–13 ESV) **In any and every circumstance**, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 **I can do all things through him who strengthens me.**
- (Philippians 4:19 ESV) **And my God will supply every need of yours** according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

**B. PEACE: He leads me beside the overflowing, calm waters where his peace rules in my heart.**

- (Isaiah 48:18 ESV) **Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river**, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.
- (Colossians 3:15 ESV) **And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

**C. RESTORATION: He restores my soul.**

- (Psalm 55:18 ESV) **He redeems my soul in safety from the battle** that I wage, for many are arrayed against me.

**D. RIGHTEOUSNESS: He always leads me in the right way—in the way everlasting.**

- (Psalm 139:23–24 ESV) Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, **and lead me in the way everlasting!**
- (Isaiah 32:17 ESV) And the effect of righteousness will be peace, **and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.**
- (Hosea 10:12 ESV) **Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love**; break up your fallow ground, **for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.**

**2. When the LORD is my shepherd, I am ready for life, 23:4-6.**

- (Psalm 23:4–6 ESV) **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. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence

of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

**A. I am ready for life on this cursed planet of deepest darkness because my Shepherd is with me.**

- (Romans 3:10–12 ESV) As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

**B. I am ready for life and will not fear evil because when I am afraid I will trust in the LORD’s all-powerful, sovereign, providential shepherding of my life.**

- (Psalm 56:3–4 ESV) **When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.** 4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?
- (Psalm 56:8–9 ESV) **You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle.** Are they not in your book? 9 Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. **This I know, that God is for me.**

**C. I am ready for life because I know the LORD will provide my every need even in the presence of my enemies.**

- (Romans 8:31 ESV) What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?**
- (Romans 8:37 ESV) No, **in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**

**D. I am ready for life because I know that the goodness and mercy of God have become an integral part of my life and will be forever.**

- (Ephesians 2:7 ESV) So that in the coming ages he might show **the immeasurable riches of his grace** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.