

**BETWEEN 6:00 AM—9:00 AM: A CELEBRITY WITH PSALM 23 ON HER LIPS.**

Life is good at slinging mud over the carefully airbrushed images of ourselves that we like to project. As we journey along, we discover how vulnerable and dependent we really are. Thankfully, the Psalms help us to see how unlimited and dependable God is. Psalm 23 is a trusty scope for viewing God and ourselves as we truly are — strong shepherd and weak sheep. It's well-known that all kinds of people resort to these six picturesque verses when they're fearful or worse — tumbling end over end. This is even true of progressive celebrities whom we don't associate with the Bible.



I've never seen an Ashley Judd movie, but I've read about her humanitarian work. Here she is at a glamorous moment — hair and makeup perfect and lighting just right. But as Job said when his smooth life hit the skids: *“human beings are born to trouble just as sparks fly upward”* (Job 5:7).



On a recent trip to the Republic of Congo, trouble hit and Ashley flew *downward*. While doing research on endangered apes, she tripped over a fallen log and broke her leg in four places. This was just the beginning of a 55-hour ordeal to get medical care. Kind-hearted Congolese stabilized her leg, carried her in a hammock-looking device attached to a pole, and then drove her by motorbike over pitted roads to a hospital in South Africa. Catch this, as she faded in and out of consciousness, teeth chattering and battling pain and nausea, she recited these nine words from Psalm 23 again and again: *“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”*

She was right. Orthopedic doctors saved her leg and she's now recovering back in the U.S. In an interview she told the New York Times journalist Nicholas Kristoff that she knew that God was with her in that dark valley. I think so.

Two days ago she posted pictures from her physical therapy and quoted Psalm 84:5-6 with a grateful heart. As the people of God on life-long pilgrimages, let's center our attention on our guiding Shepherd. Read Psalm 23 slowly and with a highlighter in hand. A pen is also fine. Pause at different points and underline the words or phrases that speak to your past and present situation. Then go back later and see if other words and phrases remind you of how your Shepherd has comforted and led you up to the present minute.



**Psa. 23:1** *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

**Psa. 23:2** *He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.*

**Psa. 23:3** *He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

**Psa. 23:4** *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.*

**Psa. 23:5** *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

**Psa. 23:6** *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

**BETWEEN 9:00 AM—12:00 PM: A NAVY SEAL WITH PSALM 23 ON HIS LIPS.**

I was in the church office when my assistant Sherry Lee took Donna's call. Donna and her husband Cordell (Corky) Axelson were well-loved members of First Baptist Church of Los Altos (now Bridges Community Church) where I worked for six years. Sherry was pale. "Donna asked for our prayers. Navy representatives just told them that their son Matthew and three other Navy SEALs are missing." It was June of 2005.



Here's the backstory. Matthew Axelson (second from the left) and three other SEALs (including Marcus Luttrell on the right) had been on a mission called Operation Red Wing to capture or kill an al Qaeda leader. They came under attack and after a desperate battle, only Luttrell made it out. You can read the story in his book *Lone Survivor*, which became a popular movie starring Mark Wahlberg.

Our whole church family rallied around the Axelsons. Our prayers for Matthew weren't answered like we hoped. I'll never forget the memorial service at First Baptist with all the Navy SEALs officers. The next time you're in Memorial Park in Cupertino, visit "The Guardians," a large statue which honors Matthew and another fallen SEAL named James Suh (second from the right).



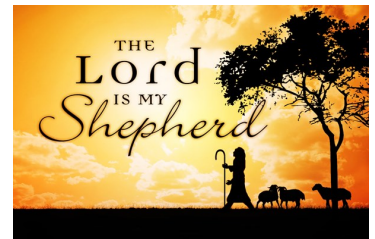
Because of my connection to the Axelson family, I was eager to read Luttrell's book when it came out in 2007. What moved me is how, again, life strips away the images of ourselves that we like to project. Brash and valiant Luttrell talks about being terrified and desperate while fleeing from Taliban soldiers in the Hindu Kush. At that moment, he was nothing but a sheep who needed a shepherd. And he got one. Listen to what Scripture reassured him.

*"...I was working my way through the forest, through the gutters of the mountain. Much of the time I was just crawling, hands and knees, trying to ease the pain in my left leg. To be honest, I really thought I might be finished now. I was full of despair, wondering if I might black out, begging God to help me. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: For Thou are with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.'"*

*That's the Twenty-third Psalm, of course....And I clung to its message, that even in death I would not be abandoned. 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.'"*

*It was all I had, just a plaintive cry to a God Who was with me...I kept repeating the Twenty-third Psalm in my head, over and over, trying to stop myself from breaking down. I was scared, freezing cold, without shelter or proper clothes, and I just kept saying it...'the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.'*

*That's how far I was in the prayer when I heard the water for the first time...There it was, unmistakable, way below me, a brook, maybe a waterfall."*



It's a good moment to sing to the Shepherd. You can Google "**My Shepherd Will Supply My Need**" and find videos if you don't know the melody. Here's a treat: **Grace Chen** will sing it for us later at Joel Moment.

*My shepherd will supply my need  
Jehovah is his name  
In pastures fresh he makes me feed  
Beside the living stream*

*Thy hand in sight of all my foes  
Doth still my table spread  
My cup with blessings overflows  
Thine oil anoints my head*

*He brings my wandering spirit back  
When I forsake his ways  
And leads me for his mercy's sake  
In paths of truth and grace*

*The sure provisions of my God  
Attend me all my days  
O may thy house be mine abode  
And all my work be praise*

*When I walk through the shades of death  
Thy presence is my stay  
A word of thy supporting breath  
Drives all my fears away*

*There would I find a settled rest  
While others go and come  
No more a stranger or a guest  
But like a child at home*

Also, let's ask God to comfort the Axelson family, and all the loved ones of soldiers who have given their lives for this country.



**BETWEEN 12:00—3:00 PM: PICTURES TO INSPIRE PRAYER.**

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



1. He answered our prayers! The tall guy is Max Dequine, our new Student Ministries Director. We prayed hard for him at JM, esp. MSP.
2. Here's our own Rita Hanna at the Compassion table which will be out again this week. Stop by! Thanks, Rita, for championing this.
3. Here is one of our elders, Femi Olumofin, helping lead communion. Ask God to give our elders wisdom to chart the right course.
4. Doumer Liu, a prospective elder, is sharing as Alex Auer looks on. May God lead Doumer as he discerns the Chief Shepherd's will.
5. Thomas Sorrentino shared a verse with us today in staff meeting that I've never considered before, Prov. 18:1. How did I miss it?
6. Here's our Elsa with a new friend. Helen Gau just started coming on Easter. I'll do a brief interview with Helen at 4:00 PM at JM.

**BETWEEN 3:00 PM—4:00 PM: Join the AFTERNOON Joel Moment Prayer Gathering. Go to Zoom.com and enter Meeting ID and Password.**

**BETWEEN 7:00 PM—8:00 PM: Join the EVENING Joel Moment Prayer Gathering. Go to Zoom.com and enter Meeting ID and Password.**



### 3:00 PM Prayer Gathering

**JOHN KOEKER** [John, a retired Biblical languages professor from Fuller Seminary, will share some insights from this beloved Psalm. Here's a picture from a time I visited him in his home in Boulder Creek back in 2015.]



### 7:00 PM Prayer Gathering



**AUSTIN SOMES** [Austin will share about the God who knows him and who has “rod-and-staffed” him over hills, through valleys and into green pastures. By the way, the woman is Susan’s cousin Edwina who has been praying along with us each week with the Prayer Guide. ]

**Psa. 139:23** Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

**Psa. 139:24** And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

**GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #1 (7 min.): Psa. 23:1** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Are you scared about the future? The Psalmist isn't. Focus on the word “shall.” It's future. He says, in effect, “I would definitely have shortages and be in need down the road — EXCEPT, for one key, amazing, marvelous, fear-killing fact, and here it is: “the LORD is my shepherd.” Tell him what he means to you.

**GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #2 (7 min.): Psa. 23:2** He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

Who is a stressed out, hurting sheep that you know? Picture him or her. (Maybe you're that sheep.) Then ask God to take control of that lamb's life so that he or she gets refreshment and rest from knowing the Good Shepherd who laid down his life.

**GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #3: (7 min.): John 10:16** And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Talk to God as you feel led for all his sheep and their many needs. Pray for the transformation of wolves.