

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

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Six months ago my family entered into a difficult situation that many people often face across the nation. In late June, I received word that our Headquarters was going to eliminate over 700 positions, and mine was one of them.

There are lots of questions that immediately go through your mind; Will I find a new job in time? What if I can't? How will I pay the bills? Will I lose my house? How will I take care of my family?

There are two questions that come to mind that you could ask of God in this situation. Which one you ask will ultimately determine how you go through a tough situation. The first is "Why me God?" or "What did I do to deserve this God?" This question could lead to blaming God for the situation or feeling as if he may be punishing you, or abandoning you. In the end this could leave you feeling hopeless and pulling away from God. The second question you may ask God is "What do you have planned for me now God?" I chose the second question. I knew this was going to be a life-changing event, but I had no idea how much. I knew this would be a test of faith, so my wife Wendy and I resolved to trust God, pray, and let him guide us – and he did.

His messages came in many forms, including the devotional "Our Daily Bread", the Golden Text in our Sunday bulletins, Sunday school lessons that I taught, the praise team's songs, Pastor's sermons, the Daily Verse from my on-line bible, and timely phone calls from friends.

In late July, I had an offer from a contracting company to do the same exact job as my current position. The catch was it was in Djibouti, Africa, where the average year-round temperature is 97 degrees, and my family couldn't go with me. We quickly dismissed it.

By mid-August, I'd applied for many jobs with no results; I was feeling stressed and depressed. My drive was fading fast. God gave me two verses to help me in one day, one from a Golden Text, Phil 4: 6, 7 <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. The other verse came from the Sunday school lesson that same I taught that Sunday Psalm 55:22 - Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken. Needless to say, I felt uplifted and rejuvenated.

The next week I got a call from a friend about that same job back in Africa. He worked for the company that had called me a month ago. He told me it paid double my salary, which made it seem a little more attractive this time. Wendy and I talked very seriously about me going. But God gave me a verse in a Sunday school lesson I taught that Sunday about Jesus's last visit with the disciples before he ascended to heaven. In Luke 24: 49 "The Jesus said <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." In that same week, another friend called me the day before I was to give an answer back about the job in Africa. He said he may be leaving his job soon, and he was selling his boss on the idea for me to take his place. That was enough for us to turn down the job. To me, God seemed to be saying "wait and see what I have in store for you."

I had a bunch of interviews with a company that seemed very interested in me, but my employment depended on whether they could win a government contract that the government still hasn't posted for bidding yet. Things were looking very stale and slow again, but on September 1<sup>st</sup> our Sunday school lesson talked about trials, and my faith was reinforced with a passage from James.

James 1, 2-4: <sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, a passage from “Our Daily Bread” devotional reaffirmed why I needed to put my faith and trust in Him and give control of my life to Him.

Psalms 25: 1-5 says <sup>1</sup>In you, LORD my God, I put my trust. <sup>2</sup>I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. <sup>3</sup>No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause. <sup>4</sup>Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. <sup>5</sup>Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

On Monday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, completely out of the blue, I received a phone call from the Department of Veterans Affairs asking to set up an interview the following day. It lasted 32 minutes and consisted of four situational questions. I thought I did OK, but I didn't put much stock in such a short interview. That Wednesday in Our Daily Bread, a verse jumped out at me: Proverbs 16:9 <sup>9</sup>In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps. I knew God was leading me somewhere.

To make this long story short, my references were contacted on Sept 27<sup>th</sup>. On Oct 1<sup>st</sup> I was called by the VA notifying me that I was selected, immediately followed by the two-week Government shutdown. They couldn't talk to me until it was over. As we know, the Government opened up, the hiring process began, and in 6 days I'll be leaving to start working for the VA in Washington DC.

My testimony is this: Somewhere back in late September, I realized that I was leaning heavily on God, praying a lot, listening really hard, looking to Him to reveal things to me in the subtlest of ways. And guess what? He did. HE DID! I had a real revelation then: Why don't we lean as heavily, pray as much, listen as hard, and look to Him to reveal His Will to us when times are good? Since then I have resolved to rely heavily on the Lord always, in good times or bad, and let Him have control and lead the way.

Besides, who knows His plans for me better, Him or me? In Proverbs 3:6, the Bible says <sup>6</sup>In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

My prayer is that each of you always leans hard on Him and he will make your path straight like he did for me. Thank you.

