

- ⑨ Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me
He's my Comforter!
- ⑩ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies
He's my Hope!
- ⑪ Thou anointest my head with oil
He's my Healer!
- ⑫ My cup runneth over
He's my Abundance!
- ⑬ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.
He's my Security!

“The Lost Shepherd”

The same way Paul addressed the people about the Unknown God on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22), we can use the idea of the missing name for God (99 is an incomplete number) to transition into the relational aspect of a personal shepherd. This indeed was the very truth that awakened Omar Muhammad of Washington, D.C. in the late 1980's. The following is his story as he told it at Dallas Seminary where he was studying for the ministry.

Omar was a teenager whose father was very influential in the Black Muslim community. Omar was finding that his life was going from bad to worse. He didn't want to dishonor his father, so he decided to turn his life around, but to no avail. In his frustration, he went to a friend to seek advice.

After listening to Omar's sad tale, his friend suggested that he read the Qu'ran to help get him on the right track.

Omar agreed and started reading the Qu'ran, hoping that it would add some influence to

his life. Disappointed at not finding any life change, and instead experiencing a continuing downward trend, Omar returned to his friend to seek further advice. His friend questioned whether Omar had indeed read the Qu'ran. He did!

Then she inquired whether he had prayed the prayer that was to be said before reading the book. Of course, he didn't. He never heard of such a prayer. She went on to quote it to him and suggested that he pray that prayer before re-reading the Qu'ran. He agreed, went home and prayed the following:

**Most High God, The Creator of
Heaven and Earth,
Give me Wisdom, Knowledge and
Understanding—
Show me the Truth of this Book.
Amen**

Anticipating a life change, Omar read on and on, only to find his life still spiraling downward. Is there any hope? What should he do? What if his father found out about his lifestyle? What would his father do?

Omar returned to his friend for advice. Upon listening intently again to Omar, his friend had an idea. Why not try the Bible? See if that book would help! Omar was desperate. He would go home and read the Bible.

Omar pored over the pages of Scripture until late into the night. He was very intelligent and was able to read fast. But still nothing happened. His life was full of confusion as always. Totally depressed and frustrated, he returned to his friend one more time for advice.

After listening intently and empathetically, his friend simply asked Omar, “Well, did you

pray that prayer I gave you for the Qu'ran before you read the Bible? Omar, of course, had not prayed that prayer. He was told that it was the prayer for the Qu'ran, so why would he pray that for the Bible? His friend, however, told him to try praying that prayer. He would have nothing to lose—go ahead.

Omar returned home once more. He was a seeking soul, intent on finding the truth. So, he humbly knelt down and prayed the same prayer as before:

**Most High God, The Creator of
Heaven and Earth
Give me Wisdom, Knowledge and
Understanding
Show me the Truth of this Book.
Amen.**

He again opened the pages of the Bible and started reading. He kept reading well into the night. When he got into the Psalms, he stopped at Psalm 23 and read it over and over again. He even memorized it.

Later, he made these remarks about the Psalm, *“I thought that this was one of the most beautiful things that I had ever read; I realized that it was different than the Qu'ran psalms because I could feel it; I sensed an intimate personal concern of God for me; I received comfort from the words.”*

Omar continued through the night reading the Psalms and the rest of the Old Testament. In the New Testament he came to the passage in John 10 where he learned that Jesus was the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep, and that no one could ever pluck them out of His Father's hands.

Amazing! He read on in John 14 and John 16 to find that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter and Guide into Truth. These were

all collaborating truths! Amazing! He read on and on. When he finished the entire Bible, he closed the covers, held the Bible close to his heart and said that he accepted all Three of them. All Three of them? What did he mean?

- **God the Shepherd Provider** was introduced to him in Psalm 23.
- In John 10, **Jesus the Shepherd Protector** was described.
- In John 14 and 16, the **Holy Spirit** was introduced as the **Shepherd Comforter and Guide!**

Omar found the “**Lost Shepherd,**” or **rather the Good Shepherd found His lost lamb** (see Luke 15:3-7).

He discovered a Relational God with Good Shepherd qualities or attributes—something he had no idea even existed. This Shepherd gave His life for His sheep. In Omar’s religion there were indeed 99 names for God, but could this absent name represent “The Good Shepherd” or “Shepherd of Love?”

Shepherd of love, you knew
I had lost my way;
Shepherd of love, You cared
that I’d gone astray.
You sought and found me, placed around me
Strong arms that carried me home;
No foe can harm me or alarm me—
Never again will I roam!

Shepherd of love, Savior
and Lord and Guide,
Shepherd of love, Forever
I’ll stay by Your side.
Shepherd of love, Contentment
at last is mine;

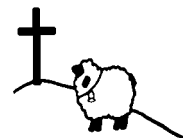
Deep in my heart, there’s peace
and a joy divine.
The future’s brighter, the burden’s lighter,
My cup runs over each day;
Your grace supplied me
now provides me
All that I need for the way.

Shepherd of love, Savior
and Lord and Guide,
Shepherd of love, Forever
I’ll stay by Your side.

by John W. Peterson

In the Book of Hebrews (13:20-21), we also find 13 segments or “pearls” signifying our Shepherd’s faithful involvement in our lives...

- Now the God of Peace,
- who brought up from the dead
- the great Shepherd of the sheep
- through the blood of the eternal covenant,
- even Jesus our Lord,
- equip you in every good thing
- to do His will,
- working in us
- that which is pleasing
- in His sight,
- through Jesus Christ,
- to whom be the glory
- forever and ever. Amen.



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The Parable of “The Lost Shepherd”

“Psalm 23 magnifies the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This wondrous Psalm has been likened to a string of pearls brought up from the depths of human sorrow, trouble, need, and fear; and pearls that are made to shine through truth concerning the Risen Lord Jesus and His victory over the grave.” (Dr. William McCarrell) This Shepherd Psalm may be broken into 13 segments, with each pearl representing a phrase. Start with pearl (1), pearl (2), etc.

- ① The Lord is my Shepherd—
He’s my Relationship!
- ② I shall not want
He’s my Supply!
- ③ He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.
He’s my Rest!
- ④ He leadeth me beside still waters
He’s my Refresher!
- ⑤ He restoreth my soul
He’s my Restorer!
- ⑥ He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
He’s my Guide!
- ⑦ For His name’s sake
He’s my Purpose!
- ⑧ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me
He’s my Protector!