



Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23

Dallas Willard

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Learn the secret of living with contentment, peace, and security.

Pause for a moment and ask yourself what your life would be like if it were completely without fear? If you did not fear death. If you did not fear life and what it might bring. If you did not fear any man, or woman, or any living creature. Would you live differently?

In this unique work of never-before-published teaching, Dallas Willard revolutionizes our understanding of Psalm 23 by taking this comfortably familiar passage and revealing its extraordinary promises: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.... I will fear no evil.” The psalmist claims to live without any need and without any fear. How is that possible?

Written with Willard’s characteristic gentle wisdom, *Life Without Lack* reveals the secret to enjoying God’s presence and becoming utterly caught up in his abundant generosity. The more we practice living in his presence, the more we experience the peace and freedom from worry that is promised in the psalm. Based on a series of talks by the late author and edited by his friend Larry Burtoft and by his daughter, Rebecca Willard Heatley, *Life Without Lack* will forever change the way you understand and apply the most well-known passage in all of Scripture.

Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23 Details

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Author : Dallas Willard

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From Reader Review Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23 for online ebook

William Dusing says

Dallas Willard has been instrumental in my life at helping me move from being simply someone who says that believe in Jesus, to someone who actively and intimately loves Christ Jesus. I was presented with Willard's *The Divine Conspiracy* at a point in my life when I was heavily considering walking away from my calling into ministry. I was done. I didn't want to go down that path anymore. I still "believed in Jesus", whatever that really means, but I didn't find significance or purpose in ministry. I'd rather just watch from the sidelines. Exposure to Willard's books changed all that. Not that Willard pushed the for call back into ministry, but his explanation of the intimacy found in Christ Jesus and what he means to truly follow Him, helped me to see life through a new lens, a new perspective. I will forever be grateful and thankful for Dallas Willard.

When Dallas Willard died in May of 2013 I was heartbroken. No one knew it until today, but I cried in my car on my way to work after finding out. Although I knew Dallas was experiencing the wonderful presence of Christ, I grieved the loss of an incredible man of God and the end to his books and teachings.

Thankfully, through the work of Gary Black Jr., Gary Moon, John Ortberg, and more, Dallas' influence and work has continued.

Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23 is another beautiful continuation and extension of Willard's work posthumously. Through the efforts and collaboration of Larry Burtoft (a friend of Willard) and Becky Willard Heatley (Willard's daughter) another public addition to Willard's catalogue has been preserved.

Life Without Lack is a compilation of Willard's eight-week teachings series on Psalm 23 originally taught in early 1991 to a group of roughly thirty people at Valley Vista Christian Community. The teaching was preserved on cassette tape, and transposed into this book, a project that Burtoft had planned on for years, but never found fruition until after Willard's death. As a Dallas Willard enthusiast, I was absolutely delighted to hear the news of the release of this book.

The book is broken into eight chapters, which follow the eight original teaching sessions. Each chapter richly and deeply defines and explains life with God, through the context of God's ever-present character. Psalm 23 provides the foundation of the teaching yet is not overly expounded. If one were looking for a commentary on Psalm 23, this is not the book for that. What is elucidated is the fact that the Good Shepherd as described in Psalm 23, offers true freedom and peace in an intimate relationship with Him.

Life Without Lack is meaty. It is not a quick read. It is a book that is meant to take time to digest, time to apply to one's life, and time to dwell upon. This is not a new concept to those who are familiar with Willard. For me, at least, while reading Willard, to read and re-read the same chapter in a sitting, is commonplace. Good content takes time and reflection to grasp and process.

Overall, I highly recommend this book. Read it slowly. Read it purposely. And read it with the hopeful expectation that you'll be enlightened, encouraged, and invigorated by it. May you grow deeper in your relationship with Christ Jesus through it. If this is your very first Dallas Willard book, then I recommend you borrow or purchase *Hearing God*, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, *The Divine Conspiracy*, or *Renovation of the*

Heart to read beforehand or closely afterward. Dallas Willard writes and speaks with a breadth of knowledge, worth taking the time to ponder and apply.

Life Without Lack releases on February 27, 2018. It will be available in hardcover, ebook, audiobook, and more. You can preorder on Amazon, Christianbook, and through all major book retailers.

Disclaimer: I received an Advance Reader Copy from the publisher. (This in no way affected my honest review of the book)

Randy says

I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all spiritual seekers and those who would like to grow in their faith. Much of the content is the material that Dallas taught during the first retreat of the Renovare Spiritual Formation Institute. This material in particular had a tremendous positive impact on my spiritual life as I became deeply convinced that in God I have everything I need and that this world is a perfectly safe place to be. I have loved and benefited from everything that Dallas wrote, but I really enjoyed the conversational tone of "Life Without Lack" since it is mainly the transcript of a series of his talks. As I read it I could hear his voice and his characteristic way of using inflection and pauses as he spoke. What a treat!

Megan Ericson says

I am only part of the way through this book but it is already life-changing and life-giving. I really cannot express how this book is blowing my mind right now.

I have never read a book from Dallas Willard before, though many people have recommended his books to me so I jumped at the chance to receive an advanced reader's copy from the publisher.

Life Without Lack seeks to reveal how you can live completely content. Now, I realize this is an enormous claim, one that - though we wish could be true - we cannot bring ourselves to believe wholeheartedly.

The book deep dives into Psalm 23, ("The Lord is my shepherd....") and reveals how God is with us at all times whether we believe it or not. As the author puts it:

"This book is a series of in-depth meditations on the Twenty-third Psalm intended to help you really see it, really believe it, and to live as if it were true."

And another one of my favorite quotes so far:

"A life without lack is a life in which one is completely satisfied and sustained, no matter what happens."

I am writing my review before I'm completely through the book because it's not something you can just skim. My copy is already bathed in highlighter and margin notes. However, I wanted to give my impressions thus far to help convince others this is a book that everyone should read!

Lisa P Clement says

I read this book with pen and paper close by. The author shares a great perspective on how to live a life that is full, and abundant with the peace that comes when walking out your Faith and trust in God.

His explanation of walking closer with God is refreshing to me. We live a life that is full of lack and we don't even realize it. We do this partly because we aren't always taught how to walk deeper and more trusting with God. We are taught to "Trust God" and to "Have Faith" but this book takes you on a journey to better understand how we get there. Once we understand this then we can walk out the scripture that says "I will fear no evil" because we have total trust in who God is.

This is a book I will be reading again as I go on a deeper in my walk with God finding complete rest in him as my Shepherd.

I was given an advanced copy of this book by the publisher and I was so glad to be able to share my honest opinion.

Richard Bates says

In 1991, Dallas Willard gave a series of eight talks over as many weeks to a study group at Valley Vista Christian Community, where he and his wife, Jane, worshipped. The talks presented the Twenty-Third Psalm as "an accurate description of the kind of life that is available to anyone who will allow God to be their Shepherd" (xi). The pastor of Valley Vista, Larry Burtoft, had arranged to have those talks recorded and suggested to Dr. Willard that he "turn the talks into a book." Dr. Willard responded by saying he was too busy to take on a writing project and that perhaps Mr. Burtoft himself might use the recordings and give it a go.

Life without Lack is Mr. Burtoft's rendering of Dr. Willard's spoken words into written form. He acknowledges, in the preface, his debt to his coeditor, Rebecca Willard Heatley, Dr. Willard's daughter and literary executor, who by drawing on her deep knowledge of her father's work, gave "invaluable suggestions that clarified and enlarged the teaching" presented in the book.

The book captures the cadence and tone and wry humor of Dr. Willard's voice, and while reading it, you feel as though you're sitting at Dr. Willard's feet, thinking with him and learning from him. And what is it we're learning? In the introduction, Dr. Willard says, "This book is a series of in-depth meditations on the Twenty-Third Psalm intended to help you *really* see it, *really* believe it, and to live as though it were true" (xvi).

To that end, Dr. Willard covers the nature of our shepherd-God and his endless love for us and his inexhaustible ability to provide for us. He also addresses why God created people and why he desires to live in relationship with us. Related to that, Dr. Willard explains how Satan attempts to disrupt God's plan for human history. He finally "examines three conditions that must be present in our own lives if we are to experience the fullness of the wisdom, power, and love of God: faith, death to self, and agape love" (xvii).

Life without Lack is a very practical book. If I were given charge over the discipleship of new converts in a parish I would lead them through this book as well as Dr. Willard's *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* as foundational texts that the Holy Spirit might use to establish those converts in the Christian faith and an interactive relationship with the Trinity.

I've been reading Dallas Willard's books and articles for years now. Not long ago I enrolled in a cohort for

an eighteen-month program in spiritual formation and we had readings that we'd been assigned. One of those readings was A. W. Tozer's *The Knowledge of the Holy*—that chapter titled, "Why We Must Think Rightly About God." And as soon as I came upon the sentence, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us," I was overwhelmed with irritation. Surely, I thought, what anyone thinks about God can't be the *most* important thing about them. The *most* important thing? *Seriously?* Even if what someone thought about God turned out to be nothing more than base idolatry wouldn't the most important thing about that person be the fact that he or she was created in the likeness of God? Christ died to redeem people who are mistaken about all sorts of things. I wanted to kick Tozer in the pants for being such a sloppy thinker.

The day before, I'd bought Dallas Willard's *Renewing the Christian Mind: Essays, Interviews, and Talks*, edited by Gary Black, Jr. It was sitting on my desk within easy reach and although I had to get down to the assigned readings, I thought that at that moment reading anything else would be preferable to having to endure Tozer. I tossed Tozer on a pile of papers and opened Willard to the first chapter, "Transformation of the Mind," and began to read. Not far into the essay my eyes landed on this sentence: "The single most important thing *in our mind* is our idea of God and the associated images" (italics mine), dovetailed into a quote from Tozer's "Why We Must Think Rightly About God."

How like Dallas Willard to adjust Tozer's unfortunate phrasing and get to the heart of what that mystic most surely intended to say without drawing attention to his fuzzy thinking; without correcting the inaccuracy of Tozer's original statement. Confronted with the gracious response I had before me on the page, I teared up, and my heart was flooded with the desire to be good to others—not only in deed, but straight off the bat, from the depths of a good and gracious heart.

I wanted the sort of heart Dallas has, which I believe is to say, I wanted the sort of vision of life that leads to having the goodness of heart Jesus possesses. Living into the fullness of Psalm 23 is a way of getting a heart like that. As is true of anything Dallas Willard writes, you'll encounter in *Life without Lack* some ideas that will bake your noodle. But you'll also receive practical instruction regarding what you can do to live into those conditions of trust, death to self, and love that make possible a life without fear and anxiety.

[I was given an advanced reader's copy of *Life without Lack* by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.]

Anna LeBaron says

This is the book my heart and soul needed in this season of my life. I literally finished the last chapter and went to my knees with a heart full of gratitude and knowing that I was experiencing God's presence and peace. This book reconnected me with the Shepherd-heart of God and forever changed the way I read and understand the 23rd Psalm.

There's depth to Dallas Willard's teaching style, but the way he builds one concept on top of the other makes it easy for anyone to follow along.

I have loved Dallas Willard since I discovered him in the book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, back in 2000. I truly feel like he has mentored me spiritually through his work.

This book is based on a series of talks given by the late author and was edited by his friend, Larry Burtoft

and his daughter, Becky Willard Heatley. Having read so many of the authors other books, I felt they did a really good job of re-creating the written "voice" of Dallas Willard.

I'm delighted to have received an Advance Reader Copy from the publisher.

Sarah Poling says

Do you want to gain practical strategies to focus your life without lack? Living life as the Great Shepherd proposes in Psalm 23? I found that in this excellent resource, strategies to develop the mindset and lifestyle of fullness in all God's goodness for those who fully trust Him. It is practical, well grounded in the Word of God, and will guide you to growth spiritually, and will teach you how to spend the day with Jesus. It was so much more than I expected, so helpful, made me pause, ponder, re read, think, and process. I only finished it in a short amount of time because I've been fatigued and had to stop and rest, so I rested with this book. Reviewing Psalm 23 with each chapter and taking notes and highlighting as I went. Now to stop, synthesize and apply. Blessed to get an ARC of this amazing book, I didn't expect it to be this unique and amazing.

Meshach Kanyion says

This books represents a lecture that Willard gave at a church. The danger with those kinds of books is that it reads like a lecture and not like a book. They did a wonderful job transferring what he said into book format. It is very readable and, in classic Dallas Willard style, it makes the reader see the tremendous beauty of God.

Dallas teaches on Psalm 23 by looking throughout the Bible and highlighting how different people came to experience this "Life Without Lack." From Job To Jesus, Dallas highlights the similarities, and lays forth a helpful map for those who also want to experience such a life.

My soul was blessed by this book. I was privileged enough to get a pre-released copy. I hope when it is actually released many churches and individuals will make it a study.

Connie Hellmuth says

I am in the process of digesting this book. This is not a quick-read book, but it is oh so satisfying! For me, it is expanding my view of who God is and how much He loves me. I committed to reading the book and reviewing it having never read anything by Dallas Willard and I was taken by surprise at the depth of the writing, but it's good food for the soul and spirit. I will come back and submit a more complete review of the book when I finish. I am reading an advanced reader copy which I received from the publisher.

George Carter says

Dallas Willard changed my life With his gentle wisdom and cutting assessment of reality he has changed the way I understand Jesus. This book is no different. In much the same way that Brother Lawrence has helped numerous people practice God's presence, Brother Dallas helps lead the reader into a new kind of life, a life

without fear, a Life Without Lack and he explains clearly how it is possible to live as such.

I highly recommend Life without Lack as it will prepare you to embrace a journey where God is with us and we have no lack. To quote Dallas in his own words from the book,

"This abandonment of the self to God is the way to experience abundance in God. It means that, in God's hands, we are content for him to take charge of outcomes. And in that posture we make way for him to live in us and be with us, in order to achieve what is best for us and for others far beyond anything we can even imagine."

I received an Advance Reader Copy of Life Without Lack from the publisher and am grateful that I have been able to read yet another work from one of the best authors of our time.

Jon says

Dallas Willard is inspirational and thought provoking as he explores the 23rd Psalm in "Life Without Lack." He draws a sharp contrast between the complete sufficiency of God and the complete futility of mankind's efforts to meet their own desires. His own words say it best when he writes: "Human desire is infinite by its nature; it cannot be satisfied." In other words, it is futile to think that we can ever meet our own wants. It's just not possible. No matter what you want, or what you have, it's never enough. Our desires are insatiable. But the good news is that God provides for us as our shepherd. In fact, he provides everything we need. Everything. With God, there is no lack.

Although he passed away in 2013, his family and friends wrote out Willard's thoughts on Psalm 23 based on video tapes of his original lectures. Typical of his famous book, "The Divine Conspiracy", this one is written with insight not found in other Christian authors. He writes with clarity and a profound understanding of scripture that makes the text infinitely important for the reader to internalize and fully understand. One wants to pause after each paragraph and let the words soak in so as to allow the reader to fully grasp each concept.

All the points made in "Life Without Lack" build upon one another, so that by the end of the book the reader fully realizes just what the psalmist meant when he wrote those now famous words: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Willard inspires and lovingly confronts the reader with the reality of Jesus Christ and the very nature of God.

"Life Without Lack" concludes with Willard writing about the total sufficiency of God's love for each of us. While that may sound trite in a book review, it's the honest truth of his exemplary life.

I was very pleased to have read this important book, and I recommend it highly.

I received an Advance Reader Copy from the publisher.

Jason Kanz says

On May 8th 2013, Dallas Willard died of cancer and the world lost a great thinker and writer. Although a

philosophy professor at USC by profession, he was perhaps more widely known (and certainly in the evangelical subculture) for his published works regarding Christian spiritual formation. Interestingly, I once heard him say that he never set out to write a book; a remarkable statement for one whose books have been so influential.

Often, when the world loses a well-respected author, one grieves their death, but also laments the realization that there will likely be no more published works. Occasionally, a posthumous publication may appear; for example, Jerry Bridges' beneficial *The Blessing of Humility*. But in Dallas's case--due in large part to a large corpus of unpublished works and the perseverance of his family and friends to see his works come to light--new books continue to appear. I'm grateful.

Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23 (2018) is the latest offering. In the book's preface, Larry Burtoft wrote, "Twenty-six years ago, I was introduced to the possibility of a life in which I was never in need. Of anything. At any time. From anyone. A life that knows no fear or fluster. No anxiety or angst. No perturbation of any sort. It was, in short, the offer of a life with lack" (p. vii). Burtoft goes on to talk about how this book was born out of an 8-week study of Psalm 23.

The book's 200 plus pages progress through eight chapters in addition to some supplementary material. Willard writes of the importance of renewing the mind to truly live into the reality of a glorious, all-sustaining God as an essential characteristic of the Christian life. One of the sentences that captured me early on was this: "One of our greatest needs today is for people to really see and really believe the things they already profess to see and believe." As I thought about the importance of renewing our minds, the truth of that sentence landed hard upon me. Do I merely give assent to the truths of God, or do I live my life, fully and completely, as though those truths matter? Willard unapologetically believed that what God said in His word could actually change our lives, not only that we could live a little less anxiously or angrily, but that we could live without anxiety, without anger. In other words, we could live a life without lack.

Through the book, he carefully explores what a Psalm 23 life could look like. There is no naivete here; he addresses the threats to this peaceable life. His discussion of "Satan's Three Weapons of Temptation" in chapter 4 was exceptional. I was particularly struck by the ways in which he connected these three weapons described in 1 John 2:16^{Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)}, with the temptations of Eve and Jesus. He made a three way connection that I had never even considered before, but seems clear and accurate.

However, Dallas did not stop with these three weapons, but went on in the latter chapters to describe "the three things that must be working in us before we can truly experience the sufficiency of God: faith, death to self, and agape love," devoting a chapter to each. In the final chapter, he lays out the practicalities of living this way. I was particularly appreciative of his plan for spending a day with Jesus where he identifies several particularities one may wish to consider as they put this life into place.

As I stopped to reflect upon what I had read, I felt challenged, hopeful, and invigorated. Challenged to consider whether I believe that a life without lack was really possible, hopeful in envisioning that it might be, and invigorated as I ponder how I might put this into practice.

Though Dallas's earthly life concluded nearly four years ago, his words remain as fresh as ever. If you get a chance, pick this book up and read it. Talk to others about it. And then begin to put it into practice. You never can tell what could happen.

*I received a proof copy of this book in exchange for my review. All of the viewpoints expressed here are my own.

Hannah Hansen says

This book is changing the way I think about God. Willard's explanation of Scripture is profound, but so easy to understand! What a gift it was to read this!

Willard talks about the truth of an all-sufficient God— a truth that I so often forget. My favorite portion of the book was the last chapter in which he walks through a practical method of living day after day with Christ.

So thankful I received this advanced reader's copy from the publisher.

Neil Coulter says

(I received a free copy of this book from a Goodreads Giveaway.)

Life Without Lack, a posthumous publication of talks Dallas Willard gave to a church group in 1991, is simply tremendous. The talks are nicely edited into book form by Willard's pastor, with input from his daughter. I don't know if everyone who reads this book will love it as much as I did, but this was exactly what I needed right now.

Though the book's subtitle suggests that it will be a commentary on Psalm 23, in fact that psalm is more of a general backdrop for Willard's reflections on the full life that Jesus promised to his followers. That is, there is little in this book that is a line-by-line analysis of Psalm 23. Willard guides the reader through reflections on who God is, what the world is like, what faith and trust mean, and how to mindfully and whole-heartedly live day by day with Jesus. It's a lot for one book to cover, and some sections take time to work through.

For me it was a great reminder of the perspective I should have on life and people around me. I tend to lose that perspective embarrassingly easily. I imagine I will return to *Life Without Lack* again and again to refresh myself and return to who I'm meant to be.

I recommend this book very highly to any Christian willing to be lovingly challenged to a fuller, more Christ-centered life.

Scott Rieger says

I'm on my second reading of this book. In my opinion this book takes Dallas Willard's immensely beautiful understanding of what Jesus is doing right now in your corner of the universe, and explains how you can join him in that work. True inner goodness, peace and overflowing joy is the reward!
