

PSALM 23



Into the Darkest Valley January 28, 2024 | Psalm 23:4 Questions for Study and Group Discussion

*** Before you begin, please read Psalm 23:1-6. (These questions will focus on Psalm 23:4.)*

1. Icebreaker: Share about a time you were traveling and encountered some difficulty on the road (e.g. a flat tire, a significant tour, etc.). How did you respond?
2. In Psalm 23:4, the psalmist enters "the darkest valley" — crisis, trial, difficulty, and/or suffering. How does the reality of the valley challenge the idea that "Christianity should be easy" or "Christians should only experience prosperity"?
3. Make a list of 6-8 examples of "dark valleys" that people might experience in life.
4. What did you learn from the message that helped you understand the severity or seriousness of the "darkest valley" in Psalm 23:4?
5. Psalm 23:4 ultimately points us to the Shepherd (i.e., the Lord) who is with us as we walk through the valley. With this in mind, answer the following questions:
 - According to Psalm 23:4, how does knowing that the Lord is present affect the psalmist?
 - How can knowing the Lord is with you affect the way you experience trial?
 - What do the "rod" and "staff" of the Shepherd indicate?
 - Are there ways you've experienced either the protection of the Lord or His guiding direction, in your own valleys of life?
 - How can you keep your eyes alert to the presence and guidance of the Lord in your darkest valleys?
6. What does it mean that Jesus is our Shepherd who has "overcome the valley"? (Hint: See John 10:11; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58.)
7. How might this truth that Jesus has defeated sin and death give you hope, courage, and confidence as you walk through dark valleys yourself?
8. Are you in the middle of any "dark valleys" right now? How can what you've learned in Psalm 23:4 be practically helpful for you?
9. What other questions or comments do you have about what you've looked at in the Bible?
10. What is your biggest take-away from what you've discussed so far? What practical step will you take to apply what you've seen in God's Word?
11. **Challenge:** Identify one way this passage is challenging or encouraging you. Who can you tell about what you're learning this coming week?
12. **Challenge:** Memorize Psalm 23:1-4: "The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."