

*Yea, Though I Walk*

Psalm 23

**KEY VERSES**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>3</sup> he restores my soul.<sup>[b]</sup>

He leads me in right paths<sup>[c]</sup>  
for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the darkest valley,<sup>[d]</sup>  
I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup> Surely<sup>[e]</sup> goodness and mercy<sup>[f]</sup> shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
my whole life long.<sup>[g]</sup>

As we move into the third of four weeks of immersing ourselves in Psalm 23, we hope it's been helping you. The first week we looked at the significance of why David addresses God as Shepherd, and considered how He guides and leads each of us through all seasons of life. In week two, we explored the spiritual task of recognizing the blessings in our lives by lying down in green pastures and being led beside still waters. Today we move into the fourth verse and recognize how He is with us through the darkest times, as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

Today we focus on this fourth verse, and as Dallas Willard has said, "we move when we're supposed to stop, and we stop when we're supposed to move." In times of grief and despair, our human tendency is to feel alone and lost, and "freeze." He says it's through these very times that we are NOT to stop; but rather to place one foot in front of the other with the hope and faith that we will emerge on the other side. **What valley, darkness, or pain are you currently walking in? What does it mean to hear the voice of the shepherd who tells us how to walk in these places?**

We can think about the significance of verse four in these three ways:

1) The **"valley of the shadow of death"** is actually a real place. In biblical times, it was likely referred to as the "valley of death," or "valley of shadows," between Jerusalem and Jericho. It offered shade, but also provided lots of places for thieves and robbers to hide. It is no surprise that it is the likely setting for the parable of the Good Samaritan. Understandably, if you were to walk through this valley, you would not want to walk it alone.

2) The **number sequence, 26-2-26** of this Psalm adds up to 54, the number of Hebrew words it contains. Two words are set apart, in the center, which anchor the entire Psalm and change the trajectory of the prayer: "For You are with me." God is referred to as He until this change in verse four, noting a shift to intimacy and closeness with God. This reminder of "God with us" essentially encapsulates the entire gospel story and was the first description of our Savior as "Emmanuel."

3) **You are never alone.** No matter what valley you are walking through, the One who is with us has already made the journey and emerged victoriously on the other side. We will not naturally be brave or fear no evil, but our confidence lies in His presence with us. Knowing that we and those we love are mortal, we don't have to "freeze," but rather keep going, trusting that we will emerge from this place to something more glorious than we can imagine.