

## **“Surviving the Valley”**

***Psalm 23:3-4***

### **Introduction**

A valley, by definition, is the low, elongated area of land between two hills or mountains. Most of us would rather live our lives on the mountaintops—the high points where we had successes, where we experienced happiness and joy, and where we felt safe and secure. We don’t want to go through the valley. The valley can be full of sadness, pain, fear, suffering, anguish, heartache and grief. The valley can cause us to doubt ourselves and to doubt God.

One thing we can know for certain is that valleys are inevitable. All people will experience valleys in their lives at one time or another. Jesus told us that in this world, we would have trouble (John 16:33), so trouble should not surprise us when it comes. No one is immune to disappointment, discouragement or sorrow. While the valleys in our lives may be difficult, they do not have to defeat us. The encouraging thing to keep in mind is that valleys are temporary and purposeful. The valley we currently find ourselves in may seem endless, but the valley will not last forever. David wrote in Psalm 23 that he was walking *through* the valley. That implies there will be an end to it. Valleys also have purpose; God uses the valleys in our lives to teach us valuable truths, cultivate us into maturity, and prove our faith.

Pay close attention as you are going through the valley. God is giving you an opportunity to learn from Him. Perhaps He will strengthen your trust in Him or teach you patience. He could be using the pain you have experienced to enable you to bring comfort to others. Remember, as David wrote, that God is with you in the midst of the valley. Refuse to panic. Rest in His presence. Rely on His protection. There is nothing to fear because God will always bring you through the valley.

### **Getting Started**

1. What kind of valleys have you or people you know experienced over the last year and a half during the pandemic?
2. What emotion do you think characterizes you the most: sadness, fear, anxiety, anger, joy or something else? What is your default emotion?

### **Let's Get Personal**

1. How did you respond to the Valleys in your life? Share a valley experience with your group if you feel comfortable doing so.
2. How has God shown up in the midst of your valleys, and what did you learn from those experiences?
3. These days, it is hard to find rest. What things make it difficult for you to rest in God? What things have helped you find rest and feel restored?

### **Take the Next Step**

1. How are the valleys that you have been through a part of God’s kingdom agenda for your life? In what ways are you not embracing your God-given purpose, and how can you take practical steps this week to refocus and get back on course?
2. Think of a painful valley experience that you have survived. What are ways that you can comfort others who may be going through the same pain you felt? Pray for God to give you opportunities to comfort people by sharing your experience with them.

3. Do you ever wonder why it seems like some people don't go through valleys in their lives? Do you compare your life with theirs and think it's unfair? How can you combat this form of comparison? Discuss ways that your group can help one another not get caught up in comparison.
4. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the following passages: Matthew 5:45 and John 16:33.

**Renew Your Mind**

*"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I fear no evil, for You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."*

*Psalm 23:4*