

SERIES: LIVING THE GOOD LIFE  
PART 6: WHERE'S GOD IN MY VALLEY

Welcome home to your CVCHURCH family. If you are a guest with us, we want you to know that we see you as family. We're excited about getting to know you more. Today, we continue in our series through Psalm 23 entitled LIVING THE GOOD LIFE, which is based on the goodness of God. I want to encourage you if you are a 1<sup>st</sup> time guest, or if you have been coming for a short time or long time, that you take out your teaching notes that I have provided for you. I am getting a lot of positive comments from our guests thanking me for the notes and that you appreciate that they are clear, precise and understandable. One guest and his family told me that they could understand everything I said, and they appreciated that. We are not here to impress but to impact every one of you to surrender your life to Jesus Christ and live out His purpose and plan for your life. That is the highest purpose and best way to live the most productive and fulfilling life possible. We are memorizing the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, which is one of the most, if not the most, famous chapter in the entire Bible. We are now at vs. 24. Would you please read it out loud with me? Let's begin, **"The Lord is my Shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. vs.3 He restores (renews) my soul (strength). He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name. 4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me."** The phrase **"walk through the shadow of death"** is an actual canyon in Israel called **"The Dark Valley of Death."** David was very familiar with this canyon, which was very narrow at the bottom and could be 800 feet tall. When you're looking up on either side, the only time you'd get the sun is actually at noon day. In the middle of the day you could be in the bottom of this canyon and not see the sun. You would be in the shadows of the day most of the time.

Valleys are very important in the Bible. 2900 years ago, the Syrian king decided he was going to depose Israel's King Ahab. The Syrian king lined up 32 nations to destroy Israel, but God defended them, but the prophet who guided Ahab told

him to prepare for battle because the Syrians would come back next year. And they did. Ben Hadad, the king of Syria, told his commandos in 1 Kings 20:23 and 27, **“The Israelite gods are gods of the hills; that is why they won. But we can beat them easily on the plains.”** In vs. 27 the Bible says, **“Israel then mustered its army, set up supply lines, and marched out for battle. But the Israelite army looked like two little flocks of goats in comparison to the vast Aramean (Syrian) forces that filled the countryside!”** There were over 127,000 soldiers for the Syrians compared to the Israelites 7,000. In the natural order of things, the Syrians should have wiped out the Israelites. Israel also won that battle. What I will teach you this morning (afternoon) I can sum up in one sentence: God is the God—not just of your mountaintop experiences—He’s also the God of your valleys, too. “I am the God of your valleys, not just the God of the good times in your life. I am your God when things are going well, and I am your God in the valleys when you struggle.” The word valley in the Bible is also used as a metaphor for extremely difficult times. We will look at four valleys that stand for **failure, fear, conflict, and grief and barrenness**. We’re going to look at three different aspects of the valleys you have experienced, you might be experiencing and you will experience in your life. Loved ones, I don’t know what kind of valley you’re going through right now. It may be a financial valley. Maybe you’re in a relational valley. Maybe you’re going through a physical illness in a valley of disease and sickness. Whatever kind of valley you’re going through you, you’re going to need this teaching this morning (afternoon). If you have ever needed to take notes, it is today. Let’s look at Pt 1...

## **I. Three truths to know about your valley experiences**

### **A. Valleys are a part of life; they’re inevitable**

You can’t avoid them. You can count on them. They’re going to happen. You either just came out of a valley, or you’re in the middle of one right now, or you’re headed into another one, because that’s what life is all about. You’re not to be surprised, shocked or stunned. The question is not, if I go through a valley, but, when. Friends, you will experience disappointment in life. You will experience defeat. Distractions, disturbances, despair and depression. It is a

normal part of life. Did you know that God’s plan for your life actually contains both hills and valleys? That is part of God’s plans for your life. Deuteronomy 11:11 says, **“Rather, the land you will soon take over is a land of hills and valleys with plenty of rain, 12 a land that the Lord your God cares for. He watches over it through each season of the year.”** Metaphorically, what does this mean? It means that even when you’re in the center of God’s will, valleys are a part of His plan. The land God has promised to you is not all mountaintop experiences, but it includes valleys as well. 1 Peter 4:12 says, **“Dear friends, don’t be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in His suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing His glory when it is revealed to all the world.”** Valleys, difficult times, will happen. They are inevitable.

### **B. Valleys happen to everyone; they’re impartial**

In other words, bad things happen to good people. Valleys are impartial. Psalm 34:19 says, **“The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time.”** God is not punishing or judging you. You are human, and valleys, difficult times, disappointing times, and despairing times happen, but God promises in His Word that you will face many problems, but God faces every one with you.

### **C. Valleys are unpredictable**

Wouldn’t it just be easier if you could schedule all your valleys in your life? Okay I’m caught up on my sleep, my health is good, and no one is bugging me. Okay, Jesus, I can take a problem now. It just doesn’t happen like that, does it, friends. They’re inevitable, they’re impartial and they are unpredictable. Have you ever noticed how quickly a good day can become a bad day? One phone call. Disasters come quickly, tragedy comes suddenly and accidents happen in an instant. Though valleys are unpredictable, there are some valleys, I can guarantee you, you’re going to go through them in life. They’re all in the Bible.

The Bible is filled with significant valleys, but I just want to look at four of them with you.

## II. The kinds of valleys you can expect in your life

### A. **SIDDIM: The valley of failure: Where you slip, fall and get stuck**

This is a famous war story found in Genesis 14. Have you read or seen the movie LORD OF THE RINGS? The big climactic battle is called the Battle of the Five Armies. It's a big epic battle. I encourage you to read this story when you get home. This battle included nine kings and two of the rebel kinds were the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. Most of us know the story about how God poured out his judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah for their atrocious immoral sexuality. But before that happen, this incidence happened. Lot, Abraham's nephew, was captured. In the Valley of Siddin there were tar pits. Here is what I want you to see in this example, in vs. 10. **“As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains.”** How do you and I end up in this kind of valley, the Valley of Siddim? You do what the kings did. They ran away from their responsibilities. They ran, and they slipped, fell and became stuck. Has that process ever happened to you in your life? When you ran away from a responsibility that you didn't take care of when you could of, and then you slipped, fell and became stuck. This valley is a slimy, dark tar pit where you stumble and fall. Question? What might you be running from today? You know you need to face it, that conflict, that confrontation that you're running from. What's your dark, slimy tar pit? For some it might be a bar. For some it might be a night club. For some it might be a hotel room when they're travelling. For some it might be a bottle or a compromising situation. Sodom and Gomorra weren't exactly family-friendly cities. They were known as sin cities. I can boldly proclaim this to you this morning (afternoon). It doesn't matter where you've gotten stuck or how you got stuck or what pit you're in. Jesus can get you out. You may feel like, “I'm stuck. I'm addicted, I'm imprisoned, and I can't break free from this relationship or these destructive thought patterns. I've been running, and I have slipped or

fallen, and now I'm stuck." The valley of Sid dim is the place in your life you'd like to forget. It's your public failure. Your Siddim is an embarrassment, and Jesus, your Great and Good Shepherd, says to you, "I can help you rise above this failure, and when you slip, fall and get stuck, I will be there to pull you out."

## **B. ESHCOL: The valley of fear: You move forward or you give up**

The Valley of Eschol story is found in Numbers 13. This is where Moses sends in the spies to find out what the Promised Land is going to look like. Israel had been held captive in slavery in Egypt for over 400 years. God calls Moses to deliver them, and after their miraculous deliverance they headed to Israel, which should have been about a three to four week journey. If you know the story it took them 40 years. Fear and disobedience is what caused them to give up. As they finally come to the edge of the Promised Land God told Moses to send out 12 scouts. The Bible gives us their names. The two most famous because they move forward with faith are Joshua and Caleb. In Numbers 13:23 the Bible says, **"When they came to the Valley of Eshcol, they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes so large that it took two of them to carry it on a pole between them! They also brought back samples of the pomegranates and figs."** After 40 days, the men returned to Moses, Aaron and the whole community of Israel. Here was their report in vs. 27-28, 33b **"We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. 28 But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak!... 33 Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!"** This is what you call an inferiority complex and a profound disbelief in what God said He would do for them. This is what you call the valley of fear. They have to make a decision. Are we going to go in and take what's rightfully ours that God has promised to us, or will we back off in fear, shame and doubt? In the valley of fear, I either move ahead or I give up. What is your valley of Eshcol? What's the place that you're afraid to move forward into? You will go through this kind of valley a multitude of times in your life. You've known for a long, long time that you are to move forward in this area. God's told you to do it,

you want do to it, it's the right thing to do, and you just haven't done it yet. You, my friend, are in the Valley of Eshcol. You must face your fears. You have to take a risk or you retreat in defeat. How can you tell if you're in an Eshcol kind of valley? It is rather simple. Do you see it as an obstacle or as an opportunity? Two of the 12 scouts saw the Promised Land as an opportunity; the other 10 saw it as an obstacle. The Israelites died in the desert because they failed the test of Eshcol because of fear.

### **C. ELAH: The valley of conflict: When you face a giant challenge**

1 Samuel 17:1-58. Most likely most of us here in this room are facing a giant in our lives. The Elah conflict is one of the most famous conflicts, because it is the story about how David defeated Goliath the giant. Goliath was the Philistine champion of war. He stood over 9 ft tall and wore a bronze helmet and a bronze coat of mail that weighed 125 pounds. He also wore bronze leg armor, and carried a bronze javelin on his shoulder. The shaft of his spear was as heavy and thick as a weaver's beam tipped with an iron spearhead that weighed 15 pounds. Goliath stood and shouted and taunted the Israelites. He laid out a challenge that Israel send their champion warrior, and, whoever killed the other man, their country would become slaves of the winner. This struck absolute fear in Saul the king and all of the Israelites. The Bible says in vs. 11, "**They were terrified and deeply shaken.**" Some of us are in this valley right now. You might be in the valley of the shadow of death. Maybe you're in the valley of Siddim, the valley of failure or the valley of Eshcol, the valley of fear, and you're tempted to give up, or maybe you're facing Elah, the valley of conflict. What is your giant that you're facing? Come at it in the name of Jesus for His glory and pray to Him to give you the victory.

### **D. BACA: The valley of grief and barrenness: It's dry desert and unproductive wasteland; your joy has dried up (grieving)**

Psalm 84:5-7 says, "**What joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. 6 When they walk through the valley of weeping, it will become a place of refreshing**

**springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings. 7 They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem.”** The pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem passed through the barren Valley of Weeping. The location of Baca is unknown, but it seems to have been a dry place. It was a dry, dirty, arid wasteland, and you would have to go through it to get to the Temple. This is a powerful metaphor that describes what you go through in a dry time in your life when your joy has all dried up. Maybe you’re grieving a loss in your life. You’re in the valley of weeping. Nothing grows there. Nothing’s productive. There’s no fruit in this valley, just tears. The valley of Baca is a dry place. This is where your emotions have dried up. You don’t feel close to God or to your spouse or your children or to anyone. I’m dried up. There’s no energy. I’m depressed and in despair. You might be grieving or even weeping yourself. But God has destined us to be the kind of people where we make our lives like a spring. Water comes when we show up. Last week in our small group some of the group mentioned just how important it is for them to come every Sunday so they can worship with their family and hear God’s Word together and then meet every Monday in our SG to discuss it, share what’s going on in our lives and pray for one another. Several who didn’t make it said they really missed it. Loved ones, when you’re walking through the valley of weeping you need to be in God’s presence with His people and reach out to each other for friendship, acceptance and support. I read a story this week about William Booth who was the founder of the Salvation Army. He had sent a man from England where the SA was based to start the ministry here in America. This man kept trying to reach the people in this community for the Lord, and he kept saying, “I’ve tried everything. I’ve tried prayer, and I’ve tried music, I have tried services and even special attractions, and they’re just not interested in hearing the Good News. William Booth wrote back two words on a telegram. **“TRY WEeping.”** In other words, when you care about someone or some ministry enough to weep over them and it, God moves into action. Vs. 6 is key. The psalmist writes, **“When they walk through the valley of weeping it becomes a place of refreshing springs.”** The key when you’re in the valley of weeping is to turn to Jesus and to His people and keep on walking so you walk into the place of refreshing springs that God has promised. **Jesus leads you beside peaceful streams. He restores and renews your soul and strength.**

**“Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me.”** I just wanted you to see before we look at the solutions of how to walk through these different valleys we will all experience in our lives what it is that God says specifically about each of these valleys. God says they are inevitable, they are impartial, and they are unpredictable, but you will go through these in life multiple times. I want to close our time together today with what you want and need to remember then you’re in one of these valleys: the valley of failure, the valley of fear, the valley of conflict, and the valley of grief and barrenness. What do you do? Loved ones, there are always things that God gives you and me to do. There are action steps for each aspect of our soul. For our minds, there are specific thoughts to think. For our emotions, there are certain feelings God will guide us to, and for our wills, there are specific actions we can take.

### **III. What to actively remember in your valley experiences**

#### **A. Remember God is with me; I’m not alone in the valley**

Psalm 23:4 says, **“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid for You are close beside me.”** God promises me that He will personally be with me as I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The two key words in this verse are the words **THROUGH** and **YOU**. Through means the valley is temporary. You don’t stay in the valley, you walk through it. You don’t walk through it alone because God is with you. David says I don’t have to be afraid because **YOU, God**, are close beside me.

#### **B. Remember God has a good purpose for my valley**

Psalm 23 is all about the goodness of God. God is a good God. He cannot do evil. It’s impossible. God can only do good in your life. God has good plans for your life. So I must remember that even in the problems I’m going through, the valleys I’m going through, the valley of failure, fear, conflict and grief and barrenness, God has a good purpose for my valley. Romans 5:3-5 says, **“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that**



they help us develop endurance. **4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. 5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.**” In the valley, God is building character because it is Christ’s character in you that will outlast everything else. Steven Curtis Chapman has written a new book called **“BETWEEN HEAVEN AND THE REAL WORLD.”** He discusses all the valleys he’s been through, including the loss of his little girl. Steven says in an interview, “Jesus tells us in this world, you will have trouble. Take heart because I’ve overcome the world.” He’s saying that there’s another story being told that we don’t always see. Steven says, “If I didn’t believe that, I’d be an extremely bitter and angry man. My little girl’s death underlined and solidified what I knew and believe, but it made it more real. When there was nothing else to hold on to, I heard myself say, ‘God, I’m going to trust You and worship You, and it’s not because there’s an audience watching. I will bless Your name whether You give or take away.’” I love Hosea 2:15—God says to Israel who has tragically rejected and abandoned Him, **“I will transform the valley of trouble into a gateway of hope.”** Some of you are going through the Valley of Trouble, but God Himself says to you this morning (afternoon), I will transform your trouble into a gateway of hope. One translation says, **“I’m going to turn trouble valley into hopeful valley.”** What do you do when you are in one or multiples of these valleys I have discussed: you **remember that you are not alone. God Himself is with you, and you remember that God has a good purpose for the valley you’re in.**

### **C. Remember that the reward will last forever**

Here is the good news, friends. This is not the end of the story. You’re going to be rewarded for being faithful to Jesus in the valley of failure, in the valley of fear, the valley of conflict and the valley of grief, brokenness, and the valley of trouble. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 says, **“For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! 18 So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things**

**we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.”** We won’t be in heaven for one second and wonder, “Why did I complained so much? Why did I gripe so much? Why did I worry so much when I was going through these different valleys of life?” I don’t know what kind of valley you’re going through, but regardless of the type of valley, I know that it’s not going to last. There is a way out, and you have a Shepherd. But you’ve got to decide to make Him your Shepherd. The Lord is not your Shepherd unless you’ve asked Him to be your Shepherd. Unless you’ve surrendered your life to Him. Unless you’ve said, “God, I can’t make it through this valley without You.” When you do that, now the Lord is my Shepherd; I have everything I need. He does all these things for me. I’m going to ask you to pray with me. You’re in the valley of decision right now. What are you going to decide? Are you going to decide to say, “God, I’m going to follow You, not my plan anymore. I want You as the leader and Lord of my life, not me anymore. I confess You are my good Shepherd.”

I encourage you to make that decision right now as we pray. “Father God, I know that valleys are a part of life, that they’re inevitable. I’ve been through a lot of them. I know I shouldn’t be surprised when it happens. I know that valleys happen to everyone. I know that they’re unpredictable. Lord, as we’ve looked at Your Word today, I see some of this valley I’ve been in and will probably be in again. I’ve tried to run from something and to avoid a battle. I’ve stopped, I’ve fallen and I’ve gotten stuck and then had public failure. Lord, I’ve been in the valley of Eshcol also, the valley of fear, where I have refused to take risks and move forward with Your purpose and plan for my life. I have also been in the valley of Elah where I’ve had conflict, and I have faced giants. Lord, some of us are in the valley of Baca, we’re all dried up. We’re barren, or we are weeping and grieving. I ask You to help me and all of us here to remember that we are not alone, that You have promised to go through all of our difficulties with us. I ask You to help me to remember that You have a good purpose for even the bad things that happen in my life. You can turn my troubles around and use them for Your purpose and my good. God, I ask You to transform my valley of trouble into a gateway of hope. I want to be a person of hope that infuses others with hope. Jesus Christ, I’m asking You to be my Good Shepherd. I take the

hand off the wheel of my life and I ask You to sit in the driver's seat, be the lead of my life from this day forward. I thank You, God that You are not the God of the mountain top experiences only, but You are also the God of the valleys. You are the God of my valley. I choose to honor You, and I want to love You the rest of my life. It is in Your name I pray. Amen.”