

TOPIC: LIFE'S JOURNEY IN THE VALLEY

Regardless of what you are going through on this journey called life, God's presence is always with you.

KEY POINTS

- ▶ Mountaintop experiences are wonderful. Once you get there, you forget everything else: tension, stress, bruises...the car stalling on the way to get up there. You are somewhat at peace.
- ▶ Yet, that elevation on the mountaintop is but for a moment because we do not live on the mountaintop. Life's journey can take us to the mountaintop, but most of our life experiences happen below the mountain and between the mountains, in a place that is considered the valley.
- ▶ David said the following in Psalm 23: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death..." (verse 4).
- ▶ He is only at the valley of "the shadow of death". If there is a valley of the shadow of death, then that tells us that there has to be a valley of "death".
- ▶ The valley of death itself is not the only valley of gloom into which we are led as we pass through life. It may sometimes be the gloomiest, but there are other valleys of gloom such as sickness, job loss, addiction problems, etc.
- ▶ If life is happening, then the valleys of gloom are not the only valleys that we go through. If there is a valley of death, then there must have been life before death came.
- ▶ So then there must be a "valley of life". We do not have to be on the mountaintop to experience joy, peace, victory, or restoration.
- ▶ That's the journey of life. Life happens in the valley.
- ▶ The word "valley" always seems to come with a negative connotation. Some people will say they are going through the valley, and we immediately think of some type of trouble, depression, sickness, or worry.
- ▶ However, valleys are considered to have very fertile soil. And what does this fertile soil produce? Wheat, barley, fig trees, pomegranates, olives, and honey (Deuteronomy 8:7-9).
- ▶ Good things happen in the valley! Great things happen in the valley!
- ▶ The valley is a place where one flourishes, where the blessings of the Lord flow. It is a place of beauty and a place of provision.
- ▶ The Psalmist, in praising God, said in Psalm 65:13: "...The valleys also are covered with grain...." Grains represent blessings (i.e. jobs, education, money, family, friends, love, life, etc.).
- ▶ God pours out his blessings in the valley and makes provision for His people. If God is blessing you with grains, then it means that God's presence is with you in the valley.
- ▶ But while life's journey in the valley has beauty and provision, it can also be a place of negative influences and associations (see Jeremiah 19:4-6).
- ▶ If you are associating with the enemy, it means you are becoming weaker while he becomes stronger because you are giving him influence over you. He has your gaze.
- ▶ But know the following: "There are things that are worth glimpsing at in life, but nothing is worth your gaze but Jesus" (M. Kovach, Faith Sanctuary).

KEY SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 20:23-28; Psalm 23:4

- ▶ When you begin to associate with the enemy, an erosion of your heart occurs, where the good is being replaced by the bad, and the spiritual with the physical or the natural things of the world.
- ▶ All this time, God and the angels are standing by and trying to get your attention, trying to bring you back to the pomegranates, wheat, barley and the honey, to the fertile soil in the valley.
- ▶ When you acknowledge the error of your ways, the enemy has to release his grip on you. Sometimes it will not be that easy. There is going to be a fight for your soul.
- ▶ But know that battles are fought and victories are won in the valley.
- ▶ When your valley becomes black as midnight, guess who is present with you? When that fertile soil seems to be shaking under your feet, guess who is present with you?
- ▶ "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).
- ▶ No matter how dark it is you can lean on Jesus.
- ▶ Regardless of what you are going through on this journey called life, God's presence is always with you.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. "Mountaintop experience". What words come to mind when you hear this phrase? With these definitions in mind, what are some of your "mountaintop experiences"?
2. "The word 'valley' seems to come with a negative connotation...however, valleys are considered to have very fertile soil." When you hear the word "valley", do good things come to mind, or bad? Explain why.
3. Have you ever had a negative experience that you considered a "valley"?
4. Have you ever had a "valley" experience where you were able to flourish, and where the blessings of the Lord were able to flow? Share with the group some of the things you have experienced.







Prayer Time

Heavenly Father, thank You for the fact that You are not only God of the mountaintop, but that You are also God of the valley. Thank You for always being with me in this journey called life.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2016

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

-  (Reminds me/Confirms)  (New idea)  (Think about)
-  (Do this)  (Speaks to my heart)  (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Life Group ice-breaker: Have you ever been on a difficult journey? Was it something you undertook willingly, or did you have no other choice?