



Week 5: The Valley of the Shadow of Death

Patrick Mathenia, Student Ministries Director – September 27, 2026

Questions...

1. **Read Psalm 23:4**

Psalm 23 says *“Even though I walk through the valley,”* not *“if I walk through the valley.”* How does accepting that valleys are a normal part of life, and even the Christian life, affect the way we respond when they come?

2. The message points out another important word: *“through.”* The valley is part of the journey, but it isn't the destination. What can cause us to “camp out” in a difficult season rather than continuing to follow the Shepherd through it?
3. In dangerous terrain, sheep would press toward the shepherd and one another rather than separating themselves. When you're going through something difficult, is your tendency to move toward God and Christian community or withdraw from them? Why?
4. David says, *“I will fear no evil.”* This doesn't mean there is nothing frightening in the valley. What is the difference between experiencing fear and allowing fear to determine how we live?
5. The central phrase of Psalm 23:4 is *“for You are with me.”* Interestingly, this is also where David changes from talking *about* God to talking *to* God. Why do you think hardship often changes the way we relate to or pray to God?
6. The message describes the rod as an instrument of protection and emphasizes that the Shepherd primarily leads His sheep with His voice. How does that picture affect the way you think about God's guidance and care for you?

7. Jesus says, *“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.”* With so many voices competing for our attention, how can we become more familiar with the voice of our Shepherd? What practices have helped you recognize God's voice more clearly?
 8. One of the message's central ideas is that *“the valley is a lesson in listening.”* Have you ever gone through a difficult season in which you eventually realized God was teaching you something you might not have learned otherwise?
 9. The sermon asks us to consider changing the question from *“How do I get out of this valley?”* to *“Am I listening to my Shepherd?”* How might those two questions lead us to approach hardship differently?
 10. Think about whatever “valley” you may be walking through right now—large or small. What would it look like for you to “keep walking, keep listening, and keep following” this week? Is there a specific step of trust or obedience you sense God asking you to take?
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Closing Challenge

Spend a moment quietly identifying the loudest voice competing for their attention right now: fear, circumstances, other people, their own preferences, or something else. Now consider...

“What is your Shepherd saying that you need to hear above those other voices?”