

LIVING

IN

GOD'S

GOODNESS

P S A L M 2 3

## TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- **KEEP DISCUSSIONS CONFIDENTIAL:** Confidentiality is the key to building trust in relationships. Here are a few mottos to remember to be confidential: *“What is said in small group, stays in small group.”* **Nothing, nobody, never...** *“Share nothing, to nobody, never”* outside of the group.

## Week 4: Our Protector and Comforter

### ICEBREAKER

Where do you feel most comfortable? Who do you feel most comfortable with?

### INTRODUCTION

When we become a Christ follower and tap into God's goodness we can feel like everything will be different. Unfortunately, even though we can change in Christ, the world will stay the same. This week we will be looking at how our trust in Jesus as our protector and comforter can see us through the valleys of life and the attacks of the enemy. When we give our lives over to the trust and care of Jesus as our Shepherd, He works in us to transform our hearts and minds to better see the path set before us.

## READ |

The first three verses of Psalm 23 reads like the first act of a play; the set up. With God as our shepherd we are cared for, restored and prepared to walk in the path our creator intended. Then reality strikes as we head into our second act:

*Even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me!"*  
--Psalm 23:4 (ESV)

Life is coming at you and it doesn't matter how close to the Lord you are. The world doesn't change just because we are Christian. We will all be tested by our valleys.

*My dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful test you are suffering, as though something unusual were happening to you.*  
--1 Peter 4:12 (GNT)

Tragedy and adversity are inevitable, impartial and unpredictable. God ensures us **we will all meet valleys** in our lives. While we can't change the circumstances, we can change how we view them, and choose not to face them alone.

**Have you faced an emotional or relational valley in your life? How does it make you feel to know that God wants to walk with you through the valleys?**

## READ |

*The most important thing we can remember while we are in our Valleys is that **God is in Control and God is not finished**. Here are three things to remember while in a valley:*

### **God Works in our Valleys**

Even when you are in the darkest valleys and feel isolated and all alone; God is with you. He is working in that space to reveal things and bring them to light for your benefit.

*"He uncovers the deeps out of darkness and brings deep darkness to light."*  
--Job 12:22 (ESV)

In our painful valleys we often want God to explain why these things are happening to us. We cry out for Him to show himself or to make our circumstance hurt less. However, God doesn't always give us what we want, but he does give us what we need.

So, instead of fixing your eyes on why you're going through a problem, look for what He is trying to show you through it. Ask what He is bringing to light through the darkness, and how you can follow His light to move closer to Him through your valley.

## **We are Refined by our Valleys**

We are **not defined** by our Valleys, we are **refined** by them. We have no fear of evil because of our hope and faith that God is in control and working for good. God will *win*.

*...we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and **hope does not put us to shame**, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* --Romans 5:3-5 (ESV)

Sometimes our valleys can be a source of shame because of what others may think or what we still think. Remember, God put you through that valley for a purpose and you making it through **is a source of hope not shame. It is a victory, not a defeat.**

So turn your trauma into *testimony*. Let God make your weakness into His strength and become a light that can **help others through their next valley. Be refined and shine.**

## **Our Valleys Aren't Forever**

Sometimes we feel like our valley will never end and that our suffering will go on forever. We say, "Well, God didn't work in the time I gave to him so I am going to go try something else." But God doesn't work in our time, he does **all things in His time.**

*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!*** --2 Corinthians 4:17 (NLT)

Pain is temporary, glory is forever. While our valleys can hurt a lot in the moment, God has better things ahead and Christ can shepherd us to them. When we are faithful to God through our valleys, He promises an eternity of joy with Him in heaven. So, don't give up, even when all seems lost. God is preparing a mighty platform on the other side.

**Which of these 3 reminders above is most helpful to you in this season and why?**

## **READ |**

As the verse continues and we walk with God through our valley we find that he is not empty handed: ***Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*** --Psalm 23:4 (NIV)

Like any Good Shepherd, Christ is equipped with a customary *rod* and *staff*, the tools needed to protect and guide a flock. These tools are being used for our benefit to comfort us through our valleys. Let's look at both tools and what they mean in Christ:

**Rod:** a symbol of protection and authority. The rod represents God's power to guard us from evil and see us safe from advances and attacks of the enemy.

Sheep are prey animals and without protection they are eaten by local predators. In the darkness of our valley, the predator is the devil. Christ knows this and His rod is ready.

*Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*  
--1 John 3:8 (ESV)

The devil will use people and our thoughts to tempt us into doubt and into leaving the protection of our shepherd. We can take comfort in knowing that Christ came to destroy the enemy and that when we are close to Him, they have no power.

**Staff:** a symbol of guidance and direction. The staff represents the compassion and dedication that Christ has in leading and caring for His sheep.

*"When Jesus saw the crowds, his heart was filled with compassion for them because they were hurting and didn't know where to get help. They were like sheep without a shepherd.*  
--Matthew 9:36 (NIV)

Christ uses his staff to nudge us when we start to stray and bring us back when we are lost. He wants to lead us in the right direction and around every obstacle.

**How do you find comfort in Christ's protection and leadership through your valleys?**

## **WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

Look back at valleys in your life and try to see what God was bringing to light through the darkness. Allow yourself to be refined by the experience and take comfort in Christ that you are better prepared to get through and help others through the next valley.

## **ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS (Optional):**

- Do the daily devotion S.O.A.P. each day this week, found on the next page.

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER:**

Heavenly Father, thank You for being the God of the valley, thank You that everything You do is for a purpose. Help me to have eyes to see what You are doing in my struggles and allow it to bring me closer to You. Give me comfort in what I do not understand, destroy the enemy's works in my life and lead me safely along Your path for my life. Refine me and let me be a light that shines for others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



## Make Time to be in God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S - Scripture**
- O - Observation**
- A - Application**
- P - Prayer**

### Here's an example:

**S:** *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*

*--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)*

**O:** Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

**A:** Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

**P:** Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

## SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

### **Day 1:**

***The man of God came again. He said to the king of Israel, "This is what the Lord says: Because the Arameans said that the Lord is a god of the hills but not a god of the valleys, I will hand over their entire army to you. Then you will know that I am the Lord."***

***--1 Kings 20:28 (GW)***

### **Day 2:**

***I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.***

***--Romans 8:18-19 (NIV)***

### **Day 3:**

***But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and keep you safe from the Evil One.***

***--2 Thessalonians 3:3 (GNT)***

### **Day 4:**

***Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."***

***--Deuteronomy 31:6 (ESV)***

### **Day 5:**

***So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

***--Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)***