



A LIFE IN BALANCE

PSALM 23

Group Study Guide

Letting Go: Facing Fear

Psalm 23:4-5a

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

How much of our agenda is driven by our fears? Our worries and anxieties (failure, acceptance, conflict, future, my dream) can rob us of energy and joy in our daily lives. Knowing we do not face our fears alone can free us to choose paths that bring blessing and peace into our life.

Scripture Readings:

Matthew 7:24-27; John 10:1,12; 1 John 5:4-5,18

Sermon Notes:

Walking through Dark Valleys

- what are the dark valleys? – relationships, finances, disease, mental health, death, loss of a dream
 - we hold on tightly to our idea of what ought to be – what my ideal life is supposed to look like
- Matthew 7:24-27 what are we using to measure wellbeing? – are our foundations of rock or sand?
- FEAR – loss, failure, identity, reputation – these can all be understood as lesser kinds of death...
- 2 Timothy 1:10 - *“God’s grace has now been revealed through ... Jesus, who has destroyed death...”*
- Hebrews 2:14-15 *“[Jesus] shared in their humanity....and free those... in slavery by their fear of death.”*

I Will Fear No Evil, For You Are With Me

- we never walk alone – Jesus is the Good Shepherd who does not abandon us - John 10:1, 12
- those who are in Christ are overcomers and conquerors – the devil cannot touch us - 1 John 5:4-5, 18
- walking with God requires submitting ourselves to the ways of God – repentance - James 4:7-8

Your Rod and Your Staff – They Comfort Me

- Rod – correction, reminder of which way is correct, get my attention – move me in a different direction
- Staff – rescue, separate me from entanglements, pull back from edge – bring me closer to shepherd

You Prepare a Table Before Me

- vindication - who are my enemies? Doubters, those who disparage my faith?
 - more likely - my own human weaknesses, my fears, the systemic and spiritual powers, the adversary Satan
- Revelation 7:17 – *“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

What does it look like to like this way?

- Thriving and balance in the spiritual sense – the measure is whether we are faithful and reflect God’s glory – not our own accomplishment, fulfilling our dreams, or living a happy and comfortable life
- Galatians 2:20 *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”*

Discussion Questions:

1. What is a dark valley that you have walked through in your journey? Are you in the midst of one of these times of difficulty and fear right now? What are some of the fears that you encountered in these valley experiences?
2. It can be terribly difficult to let go our conceptions of how things ought to be in our lives. What is one dream for your life that you have had to let go of? Do you currently have a sense of a dream that God is giving you for this chapter of life?
3. Describe a time in which you identity as a child of God brought you peace and resolve in the face of difficult circumstances. How did God reveal himself and his power to you through that experience?
4. The text from James reminds us that submitting to God's will through repentance is an essential component in facing the spiritual challenges from the enemy. What is something in your life right now that is hindering your capacity to live victoriously?
5. The psalmist refers to the rod and staff as tools by which the Shepherd demonstrates his care for the sheep in his flock. Share about a time when you have experienced both of these reminders of God's care for you.
6. As you reflect on the texts and sermon from this week, describe in your own words what it looks like to thrive spiritually in the midst of difficult circumstances. What does God desire from you?

Action Steps:

1. This week to identify and name one of the fears that drives your agenda and determines choices that you are making in your daily life. Then take some time each day to search out and read what the Scriptures have to say about the power of this kind of fear in your life.
2. Create an action plan to face this fear. Who can I talk to about this? What is one concrete step can I take to limit it's effect on my daily choices? Where will I find some help or resources to let go of my fear?