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# STRESS BUSTERS

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40 DAYS WITH THE SHEPHERD

## Session 5

### *The Secret to Courage*

*“Even 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

### OPENING

1. Finish the sentence. The thing I fear the most is...

### BIBLE STUDY

Read Psalm 23

1. How do the pronouns used to refer to God shift from verses 1-3 to verse four? What does this suggest about David's source of courage in the valley of the shadow of death?

2. There are many things that cause us to experience a dark valley in our life. For example:
  - Death of someone close
  - Severe or life-threatening illness to yourself or someone close
  - Addiction
  - Marriage strife or divorce
  - Children in trouble
  - Loss of job or job stress
  - Financial stress
  - Strong fears or phobias
  - Making a major mistake
  - Loneliness
  - Chronic Depression
  - Suffering for choosing to live for Christ

Think of a valley time in your own life. What things did you fear when you were going through that time?

3. When you were going through a dark valley, what factors helped you, or are helping you, make it through?
4. Going through a valley can take a lot of emotional energy. As a result, your true self is often revealed because you have little energy for pretending and wearing masks. What did you learn about yourself, good and bad, when you were experiencing a dark valley?

5. What did you learn about the strength or weakness of your faith in Jesus when you were going through a valley of the shadow of death?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-7, James 1:2-4 & 12, and Romans 5:3-5

6. According to these verses what can be gained from your experience in the valley of the shadow of death? How can these things strengthen and protect you from being crushed in the dark valleys?

Read Luke 9:23-25, 2 Corinthians 5:15-17 and Philippians 3:10-15

7. How can the suffering we experience in the dark valleys be used by God to help us mature as Christians, die to self, and become more like Christ?

## **APPLICATION**

1. Review the steps of growth you have already learned from Psalm 23. How can each of these steps build your confidence in God so that you will have the courage needed to make it through the valley of the shadow of death?
2. What can you do in peaceful times to strengthen your faith in God so that when you enter a dark valley you will have a reservoir of courage and confidence to draw from?

Read Philippians 4:4-9

3. Practicing the instructions in these verses will prepare you for the valleys so that you can experience peace and courage going through them. What do these verses guarantee? What are some concrete things you can start doing to put these instructions into practice?