

How to Fall More in Love With Jesus in Your Valley of Dry Bones

Life is full of peaks and valleys, ups and downs, highs and lows. Though we'd love to live on the mountaintop all the time, that's not reality. You will face some dark valleys in life, so don't be surprised or despair. We all experience disappointments, failure, betrayal, conflict, broken relationships, financial stress and the loss of loved ones. That's not negativism—that's realism! We all deal with negative thoughts and emotions, but we must keep walking by faith, not by our feelings. Emotions fluctuate like a yo-yo, but our devotion must remain constant.

Jesus never promised trouble-free living. In fact, He predicted the opposite (John 16:33). In this fallen world, bad things happen to good people and sometimes the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper (Matt. 5:45). Life is not always fair or fun, but God is still faithful. Valleys are spiritually symbolic of trials and tribulations. Peter reminded us, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice insofar as you share in Christ's sufferings" (1 Pet. 4:12-13a).

Valleys are low places. Occasionally, we get down emotionally and even spiritually, but don't stay down. Solomon wrote of Jesus, "I am ... the lily of the valleys" (Song. 2:1). Notice "valleys" is plural. We can make it through every valley we face knowing He is with us. The ancient Syrians miscalculated—"Thus says the Lord: 'Because the Syrians have said, "Thus says the Lord: Because the Arameans have said, 'The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,' I will deliver all this great multitude into your

hand, and you will know that I am the Lord'" (1 Kings 20:28). God helped Israel defeat Syria just to prove that He was with them on the mountains and in their valleys too. Consider eight significant valleys in Scripture:

- The Valley of Baca: "Blessed is the man ... who passing through the valley of Baca make[s] it a well" (Ps. 84:5a-6a, KJV). *Baca* means "weeping" or "sorrow." We can't fully experience God's comfort until we first deal with grief. When David's city, Ziklag, was burned and he and his men's wives and children were captured, they wept until they couldn't weep anymore. Then they blamed him and wanted to stone him. "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (1 Sam. 30:6, MEV), and they pursued after the enemy and recovered everything they lost. The figurative valley of Baca became a well of blessing!
- The Valley of Elah: This valley, meaning "oak," is where David fought Goliath (1 Sam. 17:2-10). After being anointed by Samuel, chosen by God as king and playing his harp in the royal court, David faced his fiercest foe in this deadly valley. David stood strong and tall like an oak tree, and God turned his biggest battle into his greatest victory.
- The Valley of the Shadow of Death: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me" (Ps. 23:4a). Other versions render it "the darkest valley." The psalmist encountered many dark valleys when King Saul tried to kill him, gave his wife (Michal) to another man and chased him as a fugitive for years. God kept David through all the perils and lonely nights of hiding in caves. All along, he was training for reigning. As the song suggests, "Hidden valleys turn shepherds into kings."

- The Valley of Berachah: This was the site where Jehoshaphat defeated the Moabites and Ammonites. He placed the singers and musicians in front of the army and, while they worshipped, God ambushed the enemy. Before the conflict, Jahaziel prophesied, "The battle is not yours, but God's ... It will not be necessary for you to fight in this conflict. Take your positions, stand, and observe the deliverance of the Lord" (2 Chron. 20:15b, 17a). They named this valley "Berachah" (or "blessing") because it took three days to collect all the spoils of war (2 Chron. 20:25-26). God turned their biggest battle into their biggest blessing!
- The Valley Full of Ditches: When Israel and Judah fought against the Moabites, they traveled through the desert and couldn't find any water for seven days. Facing dehydration and certain death, Jehoshaphat called on the prophet Elisha, who told them to dig ditches throughout the valley. God supernaturally filled the ditches with water, gave them victory over the Moabites and turned their shortage into a surplus overnight (2 Kings 3:16-24).
- The Valley of Hinnom: Hinnom was an ancient site of Baal worship and pagan human sacrifice (2 Chron. 28:1-4, 33:6-9). The Greek term *Gehenna* means "the vale of Hinnom." In Jesus' time, it was the garbage dump of Jerusalem where trash was burned and corpses of animals and criminals were discarded. "Gehenna" is translated "hell" 12 times in the New Testament. Jesus used this analogy in His preaching (Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28). Though hell is a literal place, we often use the term figuratively to express going through hellish situations. Winston Churchill said, "If you're going through hell, keep going." If you're facing hell on earth, call on the one who can bring heaven down into your situation.

- The Valley of Dry Bones: God gave Ezekiel (Chapter 37) a vivid vision of a mass graveyard of scattered skeletons. Suddenly, the bones reconnected, sinew and skin covered them, and the corpses resurrected as an “exceeding great army (v. 10). This army represented “the whole house of Israel” (v. 11) and how spiritual revival would come. This speaks of how God can bring life out of death. Just as the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the grave, He can breathe new life into our dead circumstances.
- The Valley of Jehoshaphat: Jehoshaphat means “the Lord is Judge.” God, not man, has the final verdict in our lives. This valley is also called “the valley of decision” (Joel 3:2, 12-14). Sometimes decisions can be difficult and stressful, but God can bring peace and clear direction to our decision-making. Our destiny is not a matter of chance, but a matter of choice.

So, if you find yourself in a low place, remember the “lily of valleys” is with you, and He will give you victory even in your valleys. {eo}

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