

Dark Valleys

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

Life in general is filled with highs and lows, but it can especially be apparent for those in Christian ministry leadership positions. Just look at how many pastors, youth ministers, and worship directors eventually leave ministry. The work wears on a person. The constant complaints of doing too little of this or too much of that can drain anyone. As a leader, you are expected to be there for everyone at every moment of the day. No one is able to be there at all times. Still, guilt fills the mind and causes you to doubt your ministry and your effectiveness.

Yet, we are not left alone in this world. Through the darkest valleys of life, through the most difficult times of ministry, God is with us. As we lead his people, we can rest knowing that God leads us. When things get tight, the problems don't seem to go away, and we struggle with guilt—the false guilt of not being able to be there for everyone—God will comfort us. He shields us even during the assaults of bitter people and harsh words. He will always lead us in a path meant to protect us and keep us strong.

When the road is dark and tough, God will guide and protect you. When you feel overwhelmed with loneliness, the Lord is close beside you. When your heart is asking hard questions and you feel beaten down, God will sustain you. We don't need to live in fear, for God is always with you. He is willing to comfort and protect you. He guides you through every mountain and valley of life. He is your true Leader/Shepherd. And the more you trust him as Lord, the more you will experience the

wonder of having a Shepherd.