



Walking Through Life's Valleys

"Yea, 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 (NKJV)

Number 12 in the series "The Lord is My Shepherd"

Growing up in Scotland for the first thirty years of my life, and having ministered there several years, I have seen a lot of sheep. No shepherd keeps his sheep in the valley continually. He leads them to the valley for a time, and then takes them up hills and mountains. It is impossible to go up the mountain without first going through the valley. So many Christians want mountaintop experiences with God, but they constantly murmur and complain when they go through a valley situation. Some fall into depression and self-pity. Some become bitter and angry with God and accuse Him of deserting them.

God's Word in Joshua 1:5b (NASB) reads, *"I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you."* Hebrews 13:5b (NIV) reads, *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."* Beloved, we all go through valley situations. However, it is our choice how we go through them. Will we believe and obey God's Word, allowing Him to build His character in us and glorify Jesus, or will we react like the unbelievers all around us?

Before a shepherd leads his sheep anyplace, he always goes over the area before them, checking to make sure that there is enough good grass to feed them and a sufficient supply of clean water for them to drink. The sheep are very valuable to the shepherd. He will never send them into a place of poisonous weeds and dirty, polluted waters. He will never send them anyplace that he has not gone himself. And he does not *send* them anyplace; he *leads* them. He is always in front of them, always in their midst.

Hebrews 4:15-16 (NASB) reads, *"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* Whenever I go through valley situations, it is a great comfort to me to remind myself that Jesus, my High Priest and Shepherd of my soul, has gone through more tests, trials, persecution, rejection, loneliness and physical pain than I ever have or ever will. He will never send me into a valley situation alone. He will always go with me.

Beloved, like some of you, I have gone through many painful, dark valleys, but I have always experienced God's amazing grace. The time in the valley was a special time of growth in my relationship with Jesus. Each time I learned to trust Him more and more, and He has never failed me. Jesus my Shepherd always led me to the green pastures and living waters of His Word. He always supplied my need in the midst of the valley. Beloved, whatever valley you are going through just now, I can assure you from the Bible and personal experience that Jesus is with you, and He will lead you through it.

— *Janice McBride*

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