



Overview

A common fear among children is being afraid of the dark. Most of us can remember not wanting to go to bed as children without the comfort of a nightlight so that the darkness would not overtake us. As adults we've outgrown the need for a nightlight, but if we were all perfectly honest, we would admit that darkness is a fear that we really never outgrow. In the dark times of life we are met with uncertainty, potential for peril, and sudden, unforeseen attack. These dark and difficult days are even more real than the vain imaginings of monsters under the bed that we had as children. These are not fictitious or figurative perils, but rather very real ones. These are the perils of dangerous, real-life circumstances including the fear of death. Thankfully we have a guide, an escort, a shepherd. His name is *Jehovah Shammah – the Lord is there*. Brighter than a nightlight, the radiance of Jehovah Shammah's presence lights our paths, makes our uncertainties certain, and causes death to be but a shadow. He wards off our potential attackers, and He guides us to safety. In fact, it is in our darkest hours that we are really the most secure, for it is then that we find ourselves in our Good Shepherd's constant, ever-watchful keeping.

Going Deeper

Our focal verse this week is Psalm 23:4 – *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.*

We know that because we have a shepherd, He will guide us at all times and in all places. But when darkness comes, because we are forgetful sheep, we tend to forget that God is escorting us into the darkness.

Using the following verses, discuss why we can “fear no evil” and why we can be certain that our “Shepherd is with us” through these dark times.

- Psalm 139:1-12
- Isaiah 41:10
- Isaiah 54:17
- Psalm 91:1-3
- Psalm 46:1
- Psalm 138:7

Talk about the certainty we have in:

- God's understanding and complete knowledge of us in the darkness (His Omniscience)
- God's presence with us in the darkness (His Omnipresence)
- God's power to guide and protect us through the darkness (His Omnipotence)

Making It Stick

Discuss these truths with your group.

Truth: God Guides In Our Moments of Fear

Moments of peril and uncertainty are surely coming our way ("Even though ..."), but God's promise is to guide us through.

Knowing God and His guidance does not mean we will never face the possibility of enemy, injury or adversity. It comes. – David H. McKinley

- What fears are you currently experiencing?
- How can understanding that God guides help you? Does it change your perspective?
- How could you use these promises of God's guidance to help a friend who is struggling with fear and uncertainty?

Truth: God Guides In our Moments of Grief

Moments in "the valley of the shadow of death" cause great pain, but God's promise is to guide us through.

Death, though undeniably dark, is a place of passage from the hurts, struggles, and pains of this life to the place of God's promise and presence. – David H. McKinley

- How can understanding the hope believers have as they face death, comfort you or someone you know during a time of grief?
- Do you think understanding this "passage through the valley of death" could help a non-believer with the concept of death and lead them to salvation through Jesus Christ?

Truth: God Guides Us with His Present Care

Moments when God is not "with us" do not exist; *Jehovah Shammah* is always there to guide us through.

Greater than hired security, God's presence and promise are for you. – David H. McKinley

- In what place of darkness do you need to experience *Jehovah Shammah (the Lord is There)*?
- Who can you share the promise of God's presence with this week? Will you share *Jehovah Shammah* with them this week?

Living It Out

Let this be your prayer this week ...

Psalm 23:4

*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.*

Jesus, my ever-present Shepherd, thank You for always being there for me. Thank You for the certainty of Your constant care for me. I praise You for Your rod that protects me and Your staff that comforts me and keeps me near You. I am grateful for the assurance I have in You to escort me through the dark valleys, even the valley of the shadow of death. For I know that because I am in You, this valley is but a passageway to being with You forever. Hallelujah, amen.