

GOD'S FIFTH STRESSBUSTER

Psalm 23:4

August 12, 2007 Sunday a.m.

INTRODUCTION—READ PSALMS 23:4.

- A. The family of Austin Haley have been walking through the valley of the shadow of death this week.
 - 1. Our city, along with its officials and police department have also been walking through that same valley.
 - 2. As we just read in Psalm 23:4, King David walked through it too.
 - 3. So have we.
 - B. The Bible uses the term “valley” to refer to all kinds of rough times in life.
 - 1. Joshua—“valley of calamity”.
 - 2. Psalms 84-“valley of weeping”.
 - 3. Hosea-“valley of trouble”.
 - C. Today we continue our series called “God’s Stressbusters”.
 - 1. They are found in Psalms 23 along with God’s antidotes.
 - 2. We have already looked at some of these stresses—worry, busyness, emotional damage, and indecision.
 - 3. Today we are looking at another one—dark valleys. How can we handle them?
- ### I. FIRST, THERE ARE SOME THINGS ABOUT DARK VALLEYS WE NEED TO KNOW.
- A. First, they are inevitable.
 - 1. They are going to happen, so we might as well count on them.
 - 2. Jesus confirms this—John 16:33b.
 - B. Second, they are diverse.
 - 1. The phrase in Hebrew literally means “the valley of deep darkness”.
 - 2. Although it can refer to death, its not limited to it. It includes any stressful experience in life—sickness, bankruptcy, divorce, you fill in the blank.
 - C. Third, they are unpredictable.
 - 1. You can’t plan or schedule them.
 - 2. Like a flat tire, they are always unexpected.
 - D. Fourth, they are impartial.
 - 1. No one is immune, not even Christians.
 - 2. The Bible confirms this—Matt. 5:45.
 - E. Fifth, they are temporary.
 - 1. Thankfully, they don’t last forever.
 - 2. King David confirms this by saying he walks “through” the valley, he didn’t live there.
 - F. Sixth, they are purposeful.
 - 1. God has a reason for taking us through the valley.
 - 2. For one thing, valleys build Christian character and God is more concerned with our character than our comfort.
- ### II. WHAT CAN WE DO WHEN WE’RE WALKING THROUGH A DARK VALLEY?
- A. First, we can refuse to become discouraged.
 - 1. David said, “I will fear no evil”.
 - 2. We can’t decide whether we will walk through dark valleys, but we can decide whether we will let them frighten or discourage us.
 - 3. David said, “I *will* fear no evil”. “Will” involves a choice.
 - 4. How can we refuse not to become discouraged? By focusing on God’s power instead of our problem—Col.1:11.
 - B. Second, remember that God is with us.
 - 1. David said, “for you are with me”.
 - 2. At verse four the pronouns David uses change from 3rd person (i.e. The Lord is my Shepherd or he makes me....) to 2nd person (i.e. you are with me, your rod....).

David's perception of God's presence becomes much more personal as he walks through his valley.

3. Isaiah speaks of God's presence in the valley too-Isa 43:2.

C. Third, rely on God's protection and guidance.

1. David said, "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me".

2. A rod was a long stick with a heavy knot on the end. It was used to protect sheep.

3. A staff was a longer stick with a crooked end. It was used to guide and direct sheep.

4. God will guide us if we let him—Proverbs 3:5-6.

CONCLUSION

A. Are you stressed out today—worry, busyness, damaged emotions, indecision, or dark valley's.

B. God's antidote is found in Psalm 23:1-4.