



One of the most disorienting experiences a Christ follower can have is to feel as if they are obeying God's will, and yet run into trouble. How do we make sense of pain and trials in our lives when we are following God? Walking with the Good Shepherd does not ensure an easy or painless life. Shepherds often lead their flocks through dark and dangerous territory to get them to something worthwhile and beneficial on the other side of the journey.

Read: Psalm 23:4

We see a shift in this verse compared to the previous verses in the chapter. This verse transitions into a much more intimate tone, talking directly to the Good Shepherd himself. A shepherd walking his sheep through a dangerous valley requires intimate care, and for the shepherd to stay incredibly close to the sheep to protect and guide them.

Read: Proverbs 3:5; Romans 8:38-39

What difference does intimacy with God make when walking through a dark or painful period in life?

What dark valley have you walked through with God? How did maintaining intimacy with Him impact you? Share with a small group or trusted friend, if you feel comfortable.

What did God teach you in the process of walking with Him? What did he have for you on the other side?

A skilled shepherd uses his rod and staff to protect and defend his flock, as well as guide and correct sheep who are going astray, but another use is one of care and intense inspection of the sheep for any signs of illness or dysfunction.

Read: Psalm 139:23-24

How do these spiritual practices of the Good Shepherd provide comfort and help?

What would the Good Shepherd find upon deeply searching your heart?

Apply it:

Ask yourself these questions:

-Do you trust Him enough to lay bare your soul, your thoughts, and your true condition before Him, knowing his care for you has your best interests at heart?

-If the answer is no, tell Him, and ask Him to increase your trust in Him.

Pray Psalm 139:23-24 each day this week, and take note of any differences you notice at the end of the week.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for your intimate guidance in our life. Thank you for walking so closely with us that we don't have to be afraid. We know that anywhere you lead us, you've already gone before, and we can trust that any dangers we encounter will not destroy us when we're walking hand in hand with you. Help us take comfort in both your guidance and your discipline, because we know that they're for our own good and protection. Thank you for caring for us. Amen.