



# Words

TO LIVE BY

*Valley*

FEBRUARY 2021

## Valley

Valley of Elah (David & Goliath)

Valley of the Shadow of Death (David Psalm 23)

Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37)

Valley of Kidron (Jesus)

*Definition: A valley is a low area between hills or mountains typically with a river running through it. In geology, a valley or dale is a depression that is longer than it is wide. The terms U-shaped and V-shaped are descriptive terms of geography to characterize the form of valleys.*

As 2020 came to a close the word that encompassed last year for me was, valley. When you look at the definition for valley and then compare it to last year, 2020 indeed felt low and long. I have been reminded over and over of the beauty that comes from walking thru a valley.

Pastor Craig Groeschel said, *"We may enjoy God on the mountaintops, but we get to know Him intimately in the valleys."*

This is what was true for me last year. Do I love being on the mountaintops in life? Absolutely! If I'm being honest, when I am on the mountaintop I can too easily forget about God because everything in my life seems to be going well. It becomes easy for me to rely on my own strength. When God takes me thru a valley my love for Him grows in ways I never imagined. I get to know Him more intimately because I realize He is the only one who will see me thru.

## WEEK 1 - DAVID

I'm not a big fan of using the word bully, but for the passage you will read today it seems quite fitting. The definition for bully is: *a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those whom they perceive as vulnerable*. Have you ever taken a stand against someone or something when no one else would? Maybe it was standing up to the bully at your school when you were younger. David is a man who took a stand against Goliath, a giant bully, when no one else would. His own family thought he was crazy. Look at this very familiar story with me in 1 Samuel 17.

*"Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, 'Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.' And the Philistine said, 'I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together.' When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid." 1 Samuel 17:1-11*

The armies of the Philistines and Israel came together for battle and notice where this happened, in the Valley of Elah. It is here in this valley that you are introduced to the Philistine giant, Goliath. Not only was he domineering and intimidating in his looks but also with his words. It says the men of Israel were greatly afraid of this bully. They didn't need to be. It seems that they had forgotten that God was on their side. As you continue reading, David enters the story.

*"Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.*

*All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. And the men of Israel said, 'Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel.' And David said to the men who stood by him, 'What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?' And the people answered him in the same way, 'So shall it be done to the man who kills him.'*

*Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, 'Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.' And David said, 'What have I done now? Was it not but a word?' And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before." 1 Samuel 17:19-30*

Because David was the youngest boy in his family, he was left home to tend the sheep while his older brothers were off supposedly fighting this battle. His father, Jesse sends him to deliver food and provisions to them. When David arrives he sees what is taking place. No battle, just a big bully standing in the valley shouting threats to the Israelite army and defying God. David was not one to just stand back and tremble in fear like the rest of the Israelites, including his own brothers. Someone needed to take a stand and confidently walk into that valley.

To the entire Israelite army that valley seemed like a valley of death, but to David he saw it as a valley of victory. Not because of himself, but because of the God he served. David knew that if he took a stand for God, he would have victory in that valley. Then you see his older brother irritated and annoyed by David. It seemed as if David's confidence was embarrassing his family, but that didn't stop him. After consulting with King Saul and choosing not to wear any armor, David runs to grab 5 smooth stones from the brook. Continue on in verse 38.

*"Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, 'I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.' So David put them off. Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine.*

*And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. And the Philistine said to David, 'Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.' Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, **but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of***

***Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand.'***

*When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.*

*So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron." 1 Samuel 17:38-52*

*"And as soon as David returned from the striking down of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, 'Whose son are you, young man?' And David answered, 'I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.'" 1 Samuel 17:57-58*

And there you have it friends, victory in the valley. Remember David didn't say he was going to be victorious on his own. David's victory was coming from the One who was going to walk into that valley with him and that was God. In David's own words he said, *the battle is the Lord's and HE will give you into our hand*. David had nothing to fear in that valley as he faced this giant bully, Goliath. Why was the Israelite army so fearful? Had they forgotten that their God was more powerful than Goliath? I find it funny that the Israelite army seems to just watch this all happen from a distance and then when they see God use David to be victorious they all of the sudden decide to jump in and pursue the rest of the Philistines.

Now take a minute and put yourself in this story. Who are you? You would all like to be David, right? But is that really who you are when you come to a valley in your life? One that seems like it could lead to your death? The majority of you would fall into the place of the Israelite army, cowering in fear. I would have to put myself in that same place as well. But why? If you are a follower of Jesus, don't forget who goes with you into your valley? You have the God of the universe, the Creator of all things. You have His power within you given by the Holy Spirit. Claim it! Walk into your valley with confidence. Not because valleys are a fun place to be, but because you know that even in the darkest parts of your life, you are never alone. Joshua 1:9 says, *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*

Maybe as you were reading you felt like you identified more with Goliath. Maybe you are the bully and have lived your life defying the living God. Friend, it's not too late to be rescued from your sinful ways. Scripture says that all you need to do is repent of your sin. Confess it to Jesus and believe in His death and resurrection for you. There is nothing you can do to earn your way into heaven, it is a gift to you, given by Jesus Himself. John 1:12 says, *"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."*

This story is one of the greatest victories recorded in the Bible and it happened in a valley. What looked like a valley of death for David turned out to be a valley of victory to the Lord. Remember, as Jesus follower you engage in battle from Jesus victory over sin and death for you.

## WEEK 2 - VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Who enjoys going thru painful, lonely, dark, depressing times in your life? Any hands out there? I don't think anyone enjoys those times. Those places of difficulty when you feel all alone and forgotten are not usually highlights in your life.

I remember the first few years of my marriage being some of the darkest times in my life because of a personal health issue. I spent hours crying to myself in the dark of night asking God to take away the pain. My poor husband at the time felt helpless as he researched anyway possible to help with the pain. There were times I just wanted it all to end. Why was God allowing me to go thru this? I often thought, *do I have unconfessed in my life? Does God enjoy watching me go thru this pain? Is there something I'm supposed to be learning from all this?*

After many months and eventually undergoing a surgery, I finally found some relief. I felt like I could start to live somewhat of a normal life again. As I looked back on those years I realized how close and intimate I was in my relationship with God. There was part of me that missed it. Mind you, not the pain, but the nearness of God in those moments where I felt despair and total hopelessness.

Psalm 23 is one of the most well known passages of scripture out there. You often hear it at funerals. Today I want to take a deeper look with you at the greater meaning behind these words of truth that bring much comfort at any time in your life. Psalm 23 was written more than likely when David was King over Israel. It gives the idea that David is remembering his former life as a Shepherd and brings to light some comparisons for the follower of Jesus.

*"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters.  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
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.  
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23*

As you look at the first sentence notice who your shepherd is, the Lord. Another translation says because the Lord is your shepherd you will lack nothing. There is nothing you will need or want if the Lord is all you have.

It goes on to say the Lord provides you with rest, *He makes you lie down in green pastures.* Philip Keller in *(A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23)* writes that, *"sheep do not lie down easily and*

*will not unless four conditions are met. Because they are timid, they will not lie down if they are afraid. Because they are social animals, they will not lie down if there is friction among the sheep. If flies or parasites trouble them, they will not lie down. Finally, if sheep are anxious about food or hungry, they will not lie down. Rest comes because the shepherd has dealt with fear, friction, flies, and famine."*

*He leads me beside still waters.* If there is one thing sheep cannot stand it is moving water. If the water is moving they will not drink. The Shepherd knows where to find the still, peaceful waters that bring refreshment.

The Shepherd restores your soul. Here restoration has the idea of rescuing a sheep that has gone astray. In Hebrew the word literally means *bring to repentance*. That is exactly what Jesus did for you when He rescued you from the punishment of your sin that was leading you to death.

*He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* Your Shepherd leads you in the right direction for HIS glory not your own.

This next sentence has much truth packed into it. *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.* Do you realize who ultimately went thru the valley of death for you? Jesus did. He chose to go thru that dark valley that led to His death on the cross, taking the punishment for your sin. You should have been the one to die, but God out of His love for you sent His only Son, Jesus to take your place. 1 Peter 2:24 says, *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."*

Jesus didn't stay dead. Three days later He proved victorious of sin and death when He rose from the dead. This is why you can place your faith and trust in Him. Repent of your sin and receive this free gift today. Then when you walk thru dark valleys in your life, you can know that you are never alone. You have nothing to fear with the Shepherd at your side.

It may feel like the valley you are in is your death but often it is just a shadow. Charles Spurgeon said, *"Death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains.... Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man's pathway even for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of a sword cannot kill; the shadow of death cannot destroy us."* If you are a follower of Jesus you don't have to fear death. Your death here on this earth only brings about your eternal life in heaven with your Shepherd.

The Shepherd's rod and staff bring comfort. These objects were used to protect against predators, but they were also used to guide and correct the sheep when they were straying off course.

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* Here you see the Shepherd as a host. Notice the table spread is in the presence of his enemies? Pastor David Guzik says, *"The goodness and care suggested by the prepared table is set right in the midst of the presence of my enemies. The host's care and concern doesn't eliminate the presence of my enemies but enables the experience of God's goodness and bounty even in their midst."*

The Psalm closes with these words, *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.* Whatever valley you walk thru here on this earth be reminded, the Shepherd's goodness and mercy will follow you wherever you go. Brothers and sisters, at the end of your life you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. There is no greater gift than that.

Valleys can be seen as some of the most difficult places and yet God's provision is always seen in the valley. It might not always be seen immediately, but when you look back, you will see His goodness and mercy was always there. Any valley you walk thru on this earth will be worth it when you keep eternity at the forefront of your mind. This is why I can look back on those dark, difficult days years ago and smile as I remember the nearness of God. Psalm 73:28, *"But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works."*

## WEEK 3 - EZEKIEL

When you see a bone you think of something that is dead, totally lifeless. Then you ask the question, *what did this belong to?* Living out in the country it's not unusual when my family is out hiking that my kids will find bones. Their curiosity and imagination set in wondering what animal the bone belonged to? If you have a dog like we do, your dog may also bring you bones that they find. Today you will read about a valley of dead, dry bones from Ezekiel 37.

As you read thru the Bible you will see that biblical valleys were a place of judgment, sacrifice, restoration and hope. Valleys were also known in scripture as places of fertility and warfare.

*"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' And I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.'*

*So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.' So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army." Ezekiel 37:1-10*

Ezekiel was a priest and prophet of God. He is known for some of his remarkable visions of God. In this chapter it is likely that this was another vision God gave him. God leads him into the middle of a valley. It wasn't just any valley, it was a valley full of dead, dry bones. Ezekiel doesn't just stand in one place either, God leads him around so he can fully see and feel how dark and full of death this valley was. Then God asks him a question. *Can these bones live?* This honestly seems like a ridiculous question. All you have to do is look around and the answer is pretty clear. Ezekiel knew God was trying to teach him something thru this. Ezekiel puts his answer back on God saying, *only You know the answer to this.* Notice he never questioned God.

God tells Ezekiel to prophesy over these bones, telling them to *hear the word of the Lord.* Then God explains what is going to happen. He will cause breath to enter them, they would live again and know that *He is the Lord.* There is no hesitation on Ezekiel's end. He obeyed immediately as he was commanded. Can you imagine what it would have been like to witness

what happened next? Ezekiel hears a rattling sound throughout the valley and watched as these dry, dead bones came together. Then he sees skin forming around the bones, but there was no breath in them.

This gives me chills just reading it because all Ezekiel did was be obedient to what God commanded him to do. Because of his obedience he got to witness one of the most unbelievable sights. Imagine what God could do thru you if you were simply obedient to Him in your valley.

There is still no breath or life in these bones, so God commands Ezekiel again to prophesy to the breath. When he did, the breath came into these bones and they lived and stood on their feet. This next part is awesome. It says there was an *exceedingly great army*. Nothing friends, no-thing, will ever be too hard or impossible for God. If He could use an ordinary man like Ezekiel to speak life into this valley of dry bones, He can use YOU. The key is that you have to be willing and obedient.

This valley seemed hopeless, full of death and despair. Follower of Jesus, because you have the Lord on your side, there is no valley too dark, deep and full of despair that God can't bring back to life. God finishes this portion of scripture by explaining to Ezekiel who these bones represent.

*"Then he said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.'"* Ezekiel 37:11-14

Have you seen or been in a valley that looks or feels like it's full of depression, despair and death? God can take all of those things, put them together and raise up an army of life. The main takeaway from Ezekiel's vision is this, you speak and God will bring life. All of this was done so that Ezekiel and Israel would know that the Lord is God. It was God's work, done God's way, for God's glory.

The same is true for you. You don't have to understand all the details in your valley, but as a follower of Jesus you *do* have to be obedient to His commands. When you are obedient, you will see God do the impossible. Where you saw only death, God sees life. The same is true when you think about the death of Jesus on the cross to pay for your sin. It's easy for you to only see Jesus' death, but God saw eternal life being brought about thru the death of His Son.

The darkest valley that every person is in is the valley of sin. You were born dead in your sin, separated from a holy God. The only way for you to be brought back to life and forgiven was

thru the death and resurrection of God's perfect Son, Jesus Christ on your behalf. Ephesians 2:1-10 says,

*"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

Did you see why God stepped in to rescue you? It was because of His love for you. If you choose to repent of your sin and receive this free gift, you can be made alive in Christ. None of this has anything to do with good works on your end. It's all because of Jesus.

If you have this new life in Christ, don't be discouraged when you walk thru a valley. Remember, you are never alone. God can do something great in you and thru you during those times if you let Him.

## WEEK 4 - JESUS

I lived in the Ohio Valley for almost 10 years of my life before moving to MI. People who live in the Valley can often feel the death, gloom and despair of many. Even those who have never been to the valley have told me it's not a place they would want to go to or live in. While there can be extremely dark times felt physically in the Valley due to overcast weather in the winter months, domestic abuse, drug abuse, depression and much more, there is a beauty among the people that you won't understand until you go and personally experience it.

When I first moved there with my husband to work in youth ministry, one thing I always heard the teenagers say was, *"I can't wait till I grow up and move away from here."* Funny thing is, almost all of the teens who made that comment either, left for a while and then returned, or never left at all. They seemed to find a kind of comfort in the valley. I say all of this because while valleys in your life can feel like dark places, God can use them to bring His life.

Today I want to share the significance behind the Kidron Valley that you read about in scripture. Three times in the old testament during the divided kingdom, the temple was cleansed. This was done to remove altars and idols to other gods that Israel had put in place when they were backsliding in their sin. All of these idols were either burned, ground to dust or thrown in the Kidron Valley.

King Asa was the first King who destroyed the idols and burned them in the Kidron Valley. 1 Kings 15:12-13 NIV, *"He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his ancestors had made. He even deposed his grandmother Maakah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah. Asa cut it down and burned it in the Kidron Valley."*

Two hundred years later, King Hezekiah had the temple cleansed again. 2 Chronicles 29:16 NIV, *"The priests went into the sanctuary of the Lord to purify it. They brought out to the courtyard of the Lord's temple everything unclean that they found in the temple of the Lord. The Levites took it and carried it out to the Kidron Valley."*

Around one hundred years later, King Josiah had the high priest remove the idols and grind them to dust in the Kidron Valley. 2 Kings 23:6 NIV, *"He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the Lord to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people."*

Did you know Jesus walked thru the Kidron Valley the night before His crucifixion? Read about it in John 18:1-11.

*"When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas*

came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, 'Who is it you want?' 'Jesus of Nazareth,' they replied. 'I am he,' Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, 'Who is it you want?' 'Jesus of Nazareth,' they said. Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.' This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: 'I have not lost one of those you gave me.' Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?'" John 18:1-11

Another name for the Kidron Valley is *The Valley of Suffering*. This valley is now a cemetery that is called "The Valley of Jehoshaphat". It is the valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. The Garden of Gethsemane is on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. It is directly west of the temple in Jerusalem. Because the temple is the highest point in Jerusalem, it directly overlooks Gethsemane. It is very significant that Jesus had to walk thru this valley to get to the garden where He would be betrayed by Judas.

To help further understand why this valley is so unique I want to remind you of some specific events that would have been taking place. The afternoon before the Passover, which would have been Thursday, the priests would have been sacrificing lambs on the altar in the temple as a way to cover the sins of God's people. God gave specific instructions to Moses about the sacrificing of lambs in Leviticus 17:11, *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."*

Sacrificing a lamb is what covered the sins of the people in the old testament. It had to be a blood sacrifice because life is found in the blood. You have to have blood before you can have life. John MacArthur writes in 'Experiencing the Passion' that *"Historical records of Jesus' time indicate that as many as a quarter-million lambs were slain in a typical Passover season, requiring hundreds of priests to carry out the task."* There would have been a massive amount of blood and water from the ritual cleansing that would have been drained.

Imagine all the blood and water that would be drained from these 250,000 lambs in the temple. Where would all this blood and water have flowed? It was likely drained into the Kidron Valley because it was positioned right outside the temple mount walls. The word Kidron also means, *black* or *gloomy brook*. Remember what came from Jesus after He breathed his last breath on the cross? The soldiers pierced His side and scripture says blood and water came out. John 19:34, *"one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water."*

People probably avoided going near the Kidron valley around the passover because of all the sacrifices being made. It literally would have been viewed as a valley of suffering and death. This practice was done year after year in the old testament as a way to cover the sins of the Israelites as they waited for their Messiah and Savior from sin.

Hebrews 9:22 reads, *"In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."* Just as the lamb in the old testament had to be sacrificed to bring about forgiveness, so Jesus (The Lamb of God) was sacrificed and died in your place. He shed His blood for you on the cross to bring about the forgiveness for your sin.

Are you seeing the symbolism and the reason for why Jesus would have walked thru the Kidron Valley? Scripture says of Jesus that He is the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Twice John the Baptist calls Jesus the *Lamb of God* in John 1:29 & 36, *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'...When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'"*

Jesus knew, walking thru that valley, what was about to take place. First, that he would be betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, then put on trial, mocked and beaten and finally crucified. All of this Jesus willingly did for YOU. You deserved to be the one on the cross, paying the punishment for your sin. But, Jesus chose to die in your place and then rise again to give you eternal life. Jesus brought eternal life to this dark and gloomy Kidron Valley.

Do you see how life can come out of a dark valley? Jesus walked thru the valley of death for you. He knew what was waiting for Him after His death. God the Father was going to raise Him back to life to prove to the world that Jesus is who He says He is.

Have you accepted Jesus in your own life? Do you recognize your need for a Savior from sin? There is nothing good that you can do to earn eternal life. It's all been done for you and it is a gift from God. Romans 6:23, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Every valley you are in can lead to life, whether that is life here on this earth or eternal life in heaven. It is up to you to keep your heart and mind fixed on Jesus.

As I think back to the years I lived in the Ohio Valley I am reminded of much heartache and even death that I saw. BUT, I also got to witness life come out of the valley as people surrendered their hearts to Jesus. Jesus can bring life to your valley. This, my friends, is the comfort I found in the valley. Valleys in your life are not always a fun place to be, but as a follower of Jesus and with Him by your side you can always know that LIFE will come out of your valley, whether it's here on this earth or in heaven for eternity. That is why my heart will always be for the valley.

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