



# pursuing the presence of **GOD**

## **EXPERIENCING GOD'S PRESENCE UNDER THREAT & PRESSURE**

**Main text: Psalm 23**

**Supporting texts: Deuteronomy 2:7, John 10:11, 1 Peter 2:25**

This weekend, Pastor David spoke about the life-defining question 'where is God in my life?', particularly when things get hard, dangerous, or dark. Identifying and embracing the present presence of God is highly subjective, even when it is not, even when there is overwhelming external evidence of God being near. The Bible is full of examples of people who saw the fire and cloud, who witnessed the miracles, who felt the power of God's presence only to discount, forget and dismiss those experiences in the days that followed. How much more challenging is it to take hold of the reality of God being with us in times when we are overrun by fear, need, or weakness? Psalm 23 testifies to a faith and trust in God's shepherding presence that extends protection, provision and guidance through the deepest valleys and darkest days of our lives. David's 3 points about this Psalm were: Like the Psalmist, we find God near and present in deeply sustaining and ultimately fulfilling ways as we:

1. personalize not generalize God's relationship with us
2. understand God stands against not with our enemies
3. rely on not run from the directive guidance of God in our lives

### **Questions:**

- This is a very familiar psalm. Do you have any memories or associations that this psalm brings up? How has it been important in your life?
- "The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing"? Do you lack nothing? How can this be a true confession in a time of need?
- The psalm shows a picture of a caring God that supports rest and refreshment: "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul." Do you experience this in your relationship with God? Does this match your view of who God is and how he cares for us? What are your green pastures? What are your quiet waters? How does God refresh your soul?
- There is a paradox in the psalm: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;" Why is the presence of God so important in the darkest valleys of life? What is the relationship between fear and the presence of God?
- "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." David made the point that God is against our enemies, but maybe not the ones we think of that we're against. What are some true enemies that God is against?
- "You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever." God's guidance leads in the direction of God's goodness and love. Discuss how this hope gives help in the midst of suffering and darkness.