

What the Shepherd Holds

July 20, 2025

Scripture: Psalm 23

I. Jesus your shepherd holds a rod to protect you.

- A. A rod is a weapon that a shepherd uses to protect the sheep from harm. It's like a police officer's club. Shepherds have always been soldiers who are prepared to use their weapons at any moment to protect the sheep. The sheep feel comforted by what the shepherd holds in his hands. Jesus himself carries a rod according to the messianic prophecy of Psalm 2:9: **"You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."** Jesus will protect His people and defeat His enemies with a rod.
- B. A shepherd's rod not only protected the sheep by striking the sheep's enemies. It was also used to count the sheep. Leviticus 27:32: **"And every tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord."** The use of the rod to count the sheep made sure all sheep were present and accounted for. Jesus your shepherd has strong hands to save you. John 10:27-28: **"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."**

II. Jesus your shepherd holds a staff to guide you.

- A. A shepherd's staff is like a walking stick. The staff gets the sheep moving in the right direction. The staff rounds up the sheep, directs the sheep and pulls them to where they need to go. The staff is used to guide the sheep to a place where their needs are met. It's a tool that is used to discipline the sheep so that they don't get off the path and bring harm to themselves. Isaiah 40:1-2: **"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins."** The point of the shepherd's discipline is not to harm you or hurt you. It's to guide you back on the right path by the use of the staff.
- B. By using the staff, God protects us from ourselves. My greatest enemy is my own sinful heart. In the church, God uses spiritual leaders to discipline His people. Those leaders are called shepherds. 1 Peter 5:1-2: **"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight."** Stay close to your shepherds. And stay close to your church. It's in church where other shepherds can use the rod and staff to protect you and guide you.

Application:

Get closer to Jesus your shepherd and to your shepherds in church.

Sources:

The Bible

Commentaries by David Gibson, James Hamilton Jr., and Christopher Ash.