



## [Psalm 23:4](#)

(4) Yea, 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.

*A Faithful Version*

Most frequently, the staff is used in three ways. The first is drawing sheep together into an intimate relationship. This is of special interest during lambing season, because in a large flock there are often dozens or scores of lambs being born at the same time. It is easy for the ewe to lose her lamb in all of the confusion. The shepherd has to make sure the right lamb gets with the right ewe.

For those who have just a few sheep, that would be no problem, but when there are hundreds and sometimes thousands of ewes in one flock, the staff becomes very important. As much as he is able, the shepherd watches the lambs being born. Then, if there is any confusion at all between the lamb and the ewe, he uses his staff to hook the lamb around the neck through the body (a very deft maneuver), picks the lamb up by his staff, and carries it to the proper ewe. He cannot touch the lamb. If he touches the lamb, the ewe will not suckle it because there is a wrong odor—the smell of the man—and the ewe fears it too much. It will not feed it. These are the lambs one may see people feeding with a bottle. The staff, then, is used to bring the lamb into an intimate relationship with its ewe.

Secondly, the staff is used to reach out and grab a lamb for close inspection. In this way, it frequently precedes the passing under the rod. The shepherd hooks it by the neck or leg and leads it to where he will examine it.

Thirdly, the staff is used in guiding the sheep as they are moving along, because sheep tend to wander off. They always think the pasture is greener somewhere else, and they start to wander away. The whole flock will be going one way, but there will be one that heads in her own direction. The shepherd will frequently use the blunt end to jab the sheep in the ribs and nudge it back in the direction of the flock.

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Psalm 23:4 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

The staff represents [God's Spirit](#). It indicates gentle guidance, whereas the rod suggests sterner measures such as offense or defense—protection. [God](#) leads, guides, by His Spirit. Recall [John 16:13](#), where [Jesus](#) told His disciples that He would not leave them to fend for themselves, but He would provide another guide: "However, when it, the Spirit of [truth](#), has come, it will guide you into all truth; for it will not speak on its own authority, but whatever it hears it will speak; and it will tell you things to come."

— John W. Ritenbaugh

**To learn more, see:**

[Psalm 23 \(Part 3\)](#)



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