

# Focus On the Great Shepherd

## Part 1, The Rod

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; **Your rod** and Your staff, they comfort me.

(Revised: 4/2/2013)

A shepherd has a special rod he uses with the sheep. When he is a young shepherd boy, he learns how to make the rod from a sapling, or a young tree. He makes it to fit perfectly in his hand. He spends many hours learning how to throw it beside or at a target. He and his friends have fun seeing who can throw their rods the fastest and closest to or hit a target. After some time, the shepherd boy becomes skilled at using his rod. He has the training needed to take good care of his sheep.



A good shepherd takes care of his sheep with love and concern. He must learn how to correctly use the rod so he can discipline, protect, examine and comfort his sheep. When a sheep wanders away from the flock, the shepherd finds it and disciplines it with the rod. When there are attacks from animals, the shepherd scares them away with the rod. He uses the rod to examine the sheep's wool and skin, making sure it is healthy. During the examination, he also counts the sheep making sure they are all there. This is all very comforting to the sheep because they have the love and concern of their shepherd.



Our Great Shepherd uses His rod, Bible doctrine, to discipline, protect, examine and comfort us! There are times when we wander off into the cosmic system and take our eyes off our Great Shepherd. We say "no" to His grace. We make ourselves miserable! The moment we realize our danger in the cosmic system, we become insecure and fearful. We aren't using the thinking of our Great Shepherd. It is very dangerous and scary when we don't focus on the thinking of Jesus Christ, Bible doctrine. God wants us to use His word to discipline ourselves - to get ourselves back in His plan.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Page 3

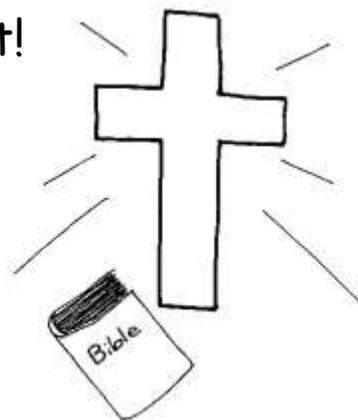


Our Great Shepherd will use His rod, Bible doctrine, to get our focus away from fearful thinking and back on Him. He is very patient and gives us time to adjust our thinking to His thinking. If we don't come back to Him, He will **discipline** us. He knows just what will get us back in His plan. He does this out of love because He doesn't want to see us wander off and be fearful and miserable!



Psalm 23:4 Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Our Great Shepherd never wants us to be fearful. He wants us, His sheep, to know that He always has our backs, or that He will **always protect** us! Through the rod, His word, He instructs us how to live in the plan of God. He teaches us how to handle every situation in life! Through the thinking of Jesus Christ we can be protected from Satan, our old sin natures and the cosmic system; we can be comforted in His thinking! And of course, Satan, our old sin natures, and the cosmic system don't want us to know about the love and grace of God. Therefore, we must learn, believe and use Bible doctrine, the thinking of Jesus Christ, daily! This is His grace gift!



Isaiah 41:10 Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

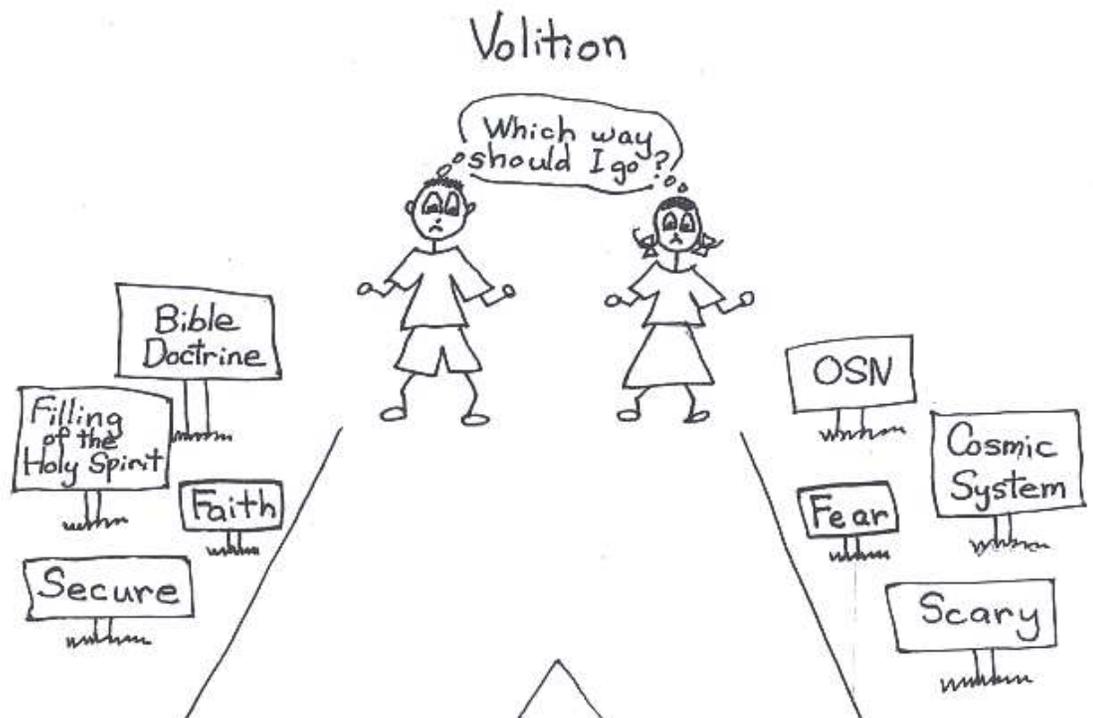


We are silly sheep. Once we are out of trouble, many times we turn away from our Shepherd again and right back to more trouble! In our humanity we are very self-centered. Our Shepherd knows that we are born self-centered. However, He says, "Come to Me." He is **always** there for us. He is always there to **protect** and **comfort** us. His love for us, His sheep, never changes; it is constant! It is immutable.



God's grace gives us **protection** against everything that is evil in this world. When we ignore that protection and take our focus off our Great Shepherd, we let our old sin nature and the cosmic system have power over us. We start fearing things and giving power to the things we fear. Scary! We don't have faith and confidence in God and His word. Very scary! We should only have fear, or respect, for God. We should only rely on God and His word! We should rely on God's protection. We can be secure in His love and grace!

Luke 12: 6-7 Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

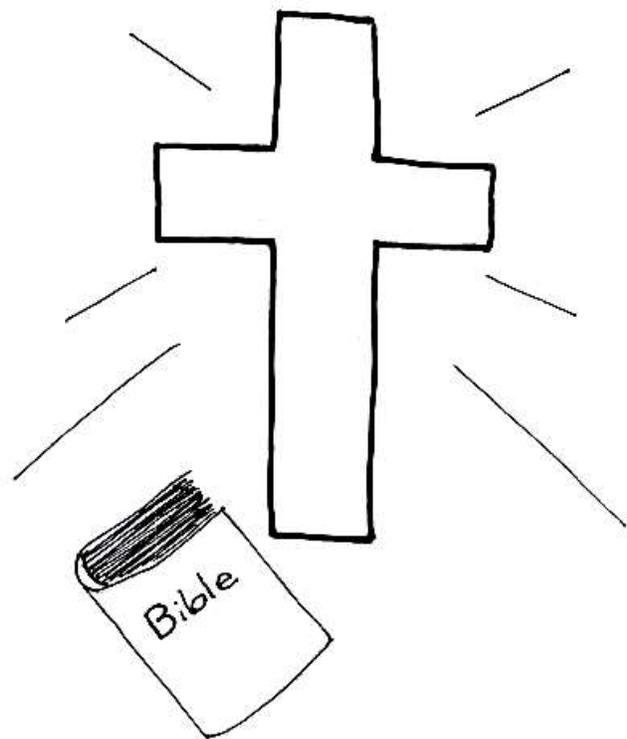


The rod is a symbol of strength, power, authority and security. If we accept the mind of Christ - the rod, Bible doctrine - as our authority, it will give us strength, power and security. We are to use Christ's thinking, Bible doctrine, to **examine or look carefully** at our own thinking. The word of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, shows us the truth of what is going on in our souls. God knows what we are thinking and where we need to grow. The reason God wants us to examine ourselves regularly is so we can make sure our thinking goes along with His thinking. Then He won't have to discipline us to get us back on track. Do our thoughts line up with His thoughts?

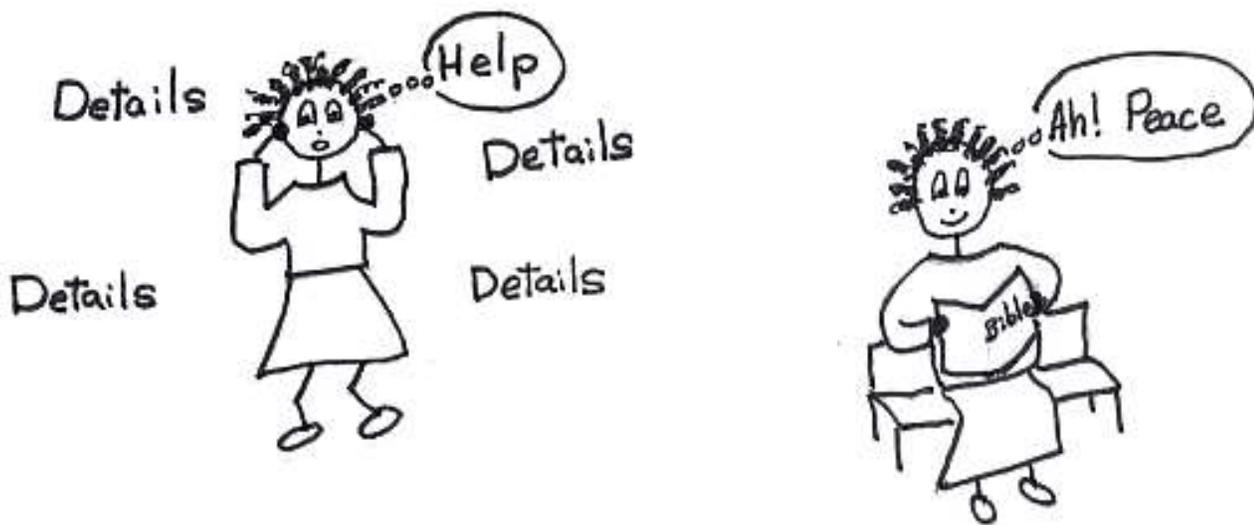
1 Corinthians 11:31 But if we judge ourselves rightly we won't be judged.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every [divine] good work.

Page 8



Our Great Shepherd will use the rod, Bible doctrine, to **examine** us. Because of His love for us, if we don't examine ourselves and follow Him, He will discipline us to get us focused on Him again. He never loses a sheep; the count is always the same and will be the same in heaven! He knows how we are born terribly arrogant or self-centered. He wants us to put aside the things that trap us in the cosmos - the details of life. When we are caught in the details of life we can't see God's grace; we can't see Him taking care of our every need!



Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Our Great Shepherd uses the same standard to examine or judge us as we are to use to judge ourselves - the word of God. It is **comforting** to know that if we don't catch all of our spiritual "sores", He will! If we let Him, He will heal us through His thinking so we can focus on Him! Our Great Shepherd will use the rod, Bible doctrine, to discipline, protect, examine and comfort us. He has so much love and concern for us that He never wants us to be away from Him and His thinking. It is up to us to accept His grace gifts and fall more and more in love with our Great Shepherd. **Focus on our Great Shepherd!**

Psalm 10:14-15 "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."



## Points to Remember



- A shepherd boy has a special rod he uses with the sheep.
- A good shepherd takes care of his sheep with love and concern.
- He must learn how to correctly use the rod so he can discipline, protect, examine and comfort the sheep.
- Our Great Shepherd uses His rod - Bible doctrine - to discipline, protect, examine and comfort His sheep.
- Our Great Shepherd will use His rod, Bible doctrine, to get our focus away from fearful thinking and back on Him.
- Our Great Shepherd never wants us to be fearful.
- Once we are out of trouble, many times we turn away from our Great Shepherd again and go right back to more trouble!
- God's grace gives us protection against everything that is evil in this world.
- The rod is a symbol of strength, power, authority and security.
- Our Great Shepherd will use the rod, Bible doctrine, to examine us.
- We are to use the word of God to examine ourselves.
- Our Shepherd uses the same standard to examine or judge us as we use to judge ourselves - the word of God.

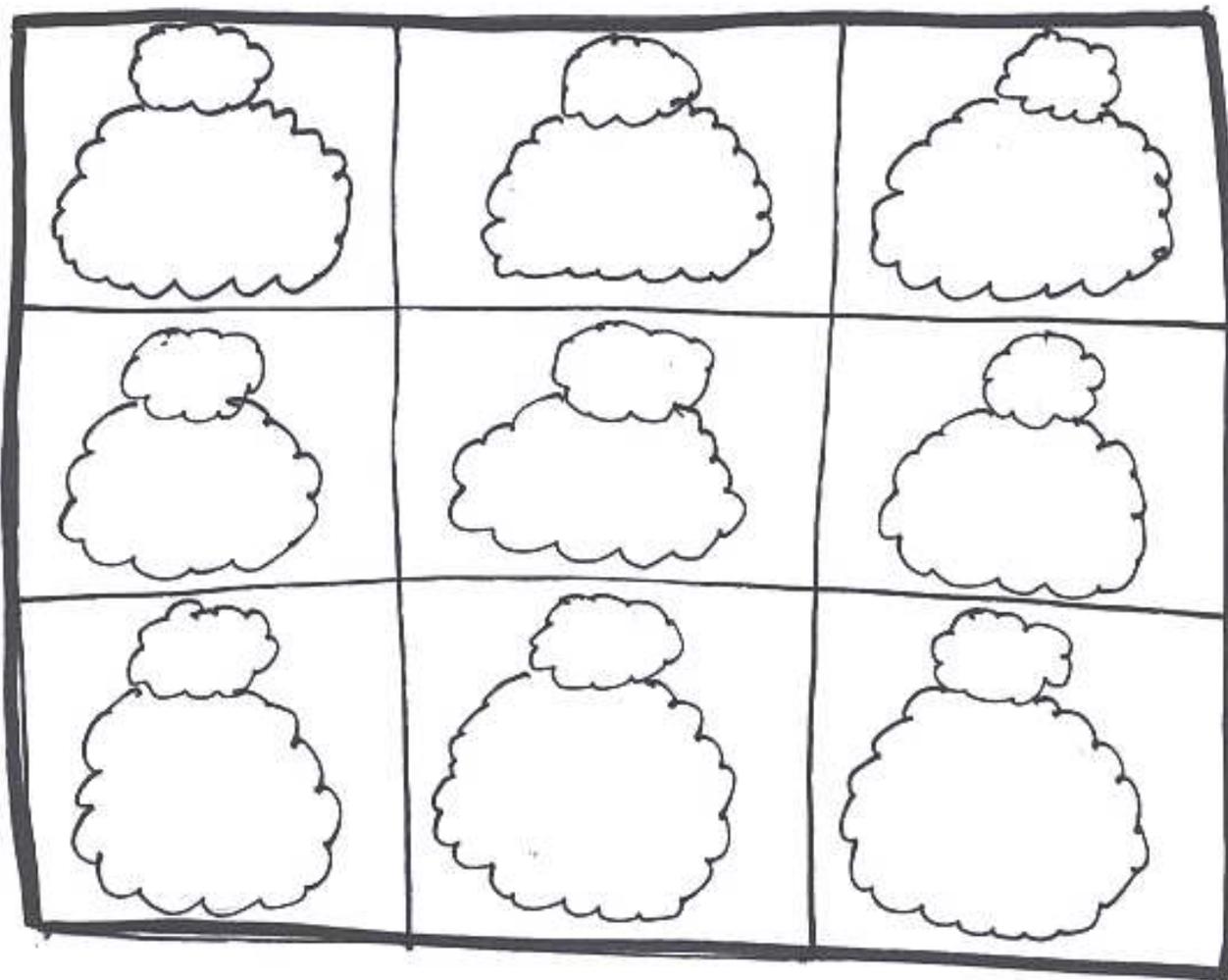
## Questions for Discussion

1. How and why does a shepherd use his rod?
2. What is our Great Shepherd's rod?
3. How does He use it?
4. What does it mean to examine or judge ourselves?
5. What do we use to examine or judge ourselves?
6. What are some details of life?
7. What does our Great Shepherd use to examine or judge us?
8. How does the "rod" protect us?
9. How does it examine or judge us?
10. How does it comfort us?

Psalm 25:5 Show me Your ways, O LORD, teach me Your paths; guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long.



PUT A WORD FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE IN EACH LAMB AND PLAY BINGO USING BUTTONS OR BEANS. EACH PERSON WILL HAVE A DIFFERENT BINGO SHEET SO YOU CAN TRADE SHEETS AND PLAY MORE GAMES. HAVE FUN!



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