The Rod Came Down on the Shepherd

MARK 15:33-39 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

The Shepherd took the rod of judgment, so his rod and staff comfort us.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 12): Mark 14:27-50, Strike the Shepherd. Its big idea: The Shepherd walked the right path himself, and leads scattered sheep back.
- After this passage (day 14): Mark 16:1-8, He Is Going Ahead of You. Its big idea: Because the tomb is empty, the house of the LORD is home forever.

Open

Recall last time (Mark 14:27-50): the Shepherd was struck and the sheep scattered. Today: the end of Psalm 23:4, “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Ask: How can a club and a stick be a comfort? Read Mark 15:33-34. Big idea: The Shepherd took the rod of judgment, so his rod and staff comfort us. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. Rod and Staff (Psalm 23:4, about 8 min)

The one thing: The rod of Psalm 23:4 comforts because it is pointed away from the sheep.

Ask: Why would a sheep find comfort in its shepherd’s weapons?

2. Darkness and a Cry (Mark 15:33-36, about 12 min)

The one thing: At the cross the Shepherd stood under the rod of judgment that his sheep deserved.

Ask: Micah 5:1 says, “With a rod they will strike the cheek of the judge of Israel.” What does it mean that the rod came down on the Shepherd?

3. The Veil and the Centurion (Mark 15:37-39, about 10 min)

The one thing: The comfort of Psalm 23:4 is the open way to God that the Shepherd’s death made.

Ask: Isaiah 40 says God’s comfort is “her iniquity has been pardoned.” How does the torn veil show that comfort?

Close (never cut it)

Read Mark 15:34, then Psalm 23:4. The Shepherd was forsaken under the rod so that his sheep can say “You are with me.” Say together: “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

PROTECT THE ENDING

If the last section starts late, read v34 and v38-39 and go to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 4, 5, 2, 3, 1 (top to bottom) · Feelings: Jesus on the cross sad, The people when the sky went dark worried, Jesus’ friends watching sad, Us, knowing Jesus did it for us happy · Code: THE SHEPHERD SAVES

Act it out: One child is the shepherd with a broom or long stick, and stands between the “sheep” and a pretend wolf. The wolf comes, and the shepherd keeps the sheep safe by standing in the way.

1. Rod and Staff

PSALM 23:4 · ABOUT 8 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The rod (shevet) was a club against wild animals; the staff was for leaning and guiding.
- The sheep is comforted because the rod is raised for it, not against it.
- Shevet is also the rod of judgment: “the rod of God’s wrath” (Lamentations 3:1).

Psalm 23:4: the shepherd’s rod protects the sheep. Mark 15:33: “DARKNESS came over all the land.”

Shepherds counted sheep as they passed under the rod (Leviticus 27:32). At the cross the CENTURION was counted in.

Discuss: Why would a sheep find comfort in its shepherd’s weapons?

The rod of Psalm 23:4 comforts because it is pointed away from the sheep.

MUST COVER

- Psalm 23:4: “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”
- 2 Samuel 7:14: God promised the rod for David’s sons when they did wrong.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Ezekiel 20:37: “I will make you pass under the rod and will bring you into the bond of the covenant.”

Illustration idea: A guard dog that is terrifying to a burglar and gentle with the children of the house.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: The rod is for me, not against me.
- Listen for: The same rod can judge.

If it drifts: If the talk turns to debates about discipline in parenting, bring it back to the shepherd: the psalm is about the sheep’s safety.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The rod that frightens the wolf comforts the sheep.

Short on time? Drop Ezekiel 20:37. Keep 2 Samuel 7:14.

Bridge → At the cross the rod came down, on the Shepherd himself.

2. Darkness and a Cry

MARK 15:33-36 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Darkness covers the land from noon to three.
- Jesus cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
- Someone holds up sour wine on a reed; earlier the soldiers struck him with a staff.

“My God, My God, why have You FORSAKEN Me?”

“He put it on a REED and held it up for Jesus to drink.”

Discuss: Micah 5:1 says, “With a rod they will strike the cheek of the judge of Israel.” What does it mean that the rod came down on the Shepherd?

At the cross the Shepherd stood under the rod of judgment that his sheep deserved.

MUST COVER

- v33-34: darkness and the forsaken cry; Isaiah 53:5: “the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.”
- Mark 15:19 and 15:36: “staff” and “reed” are the same Greek word.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Centurions carried a vine-wood stick as a badge of rank.
- Psalm 22, which Jesus quotes, sits just before Psalm 23.

Illustration idea: A shepherd who steps between his flock and a charging animal and takes the blow himself.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: The blow fell on him.
- Listen for: Even forsaken, he says “My God.”

If it drifts: If someone asks how the Father could forsake the Son, keep it simple: he bore judgment in our place, and the Trinity did not break apart.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The rod came down on the Shepherd, so it would not come down on the sheep.

Short on time? Drop the centurion’s staff. Keep v34 and Isaiah 53:5.

Bridge → Then Jesus dies, and two things happen at once.

3. The Veil and the Centurion

MARK 15:37-39 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus breathes his last with a loud cry.
- The temple veil is torn from top to bottom.
- The centurion says, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

“And the VEIL of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”

“Truly this man was the SON of God!”

Discuss: Isaiah 40 says God’s comfort is “her iniquity has been pardoned.” How does the torn veil show that comfort?

The comfort of Psalm 23:4 is the open way to God that the Shepherd’s death made.

MUST COVER

- v38: torn from the top, no human hand; Hebrews 10:19-20: the new and living way through his body.
- v39: the first human in Mark to name him Son of God is a Gentile soldier.

IF THERE'S TIME

- 2 Corinthians 1:5: “through Christ our comfort overflows.”

Illustration idea: A locked gate that has stood shut for centuries, found one morning standing wide open.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: The way is open.
- Listen for: Comfort was paid for.

If it drifts: If the talk turns to the temple’s architecture, return to v38: what the torn veil meant.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The Shepherd took the rod of judgment, so his rod and staff comfort us.

Short on time? Drop 2 Corinthians 1:5. Keep v38-39.

Bridge → So hear the psalm line again beside the cross.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Start with a strange comfort. Ask: How could a club and a stick comfort anyone?
2. Read the psalm. Read Psalm 23:4: “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”
3. Read Mark. Read Mark 15:33-39 together.
4. The rod falls. At the cross the rod of judgment came down on the Shepherd, and the veil was torn.
5. Leave the question. Ask: What does it mean that the rod fell on him? Leave it with them.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

“What were the rod and staff?”

The rod was a club to drive off wild animals; the staff was a long stick for leaning and guiding the sheep.

“Why did Jesus cry “Why have You forsaken Me?””

He was bearing judgment in our place (Isaiah 53:5). He was quoting Psalm 22, and he still called God “My God.”

“What did the torn veil mean?”

The curtain kept people out of the Most Holy Place. Torn from top to bottom, it showed the way to God was open (Hebrews 10:19-20).

“What does this mean for me?”

For those who belong to Jesus, the rod of judgment has already fallen on him. His rod and staff are now only comfort.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).
If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.
If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.
If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.
If you've taught for years: Don’t lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.
If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.
If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn’t serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).
If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?
If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Make it concrete

Mark names the hours and the objects.
If you're new: Bring a stick and a long staff and show what a shepherd carried.
If you've taught for years: Use Psalm 23:4 and Mark 15:19, 36.

2. Let the Bible do the talking

Jesus’ cry carries the passage.
If you're new: Read v34, then Psalm 22:1 and Psalm 23:4, back to back.
If you've taught for years: Let the class hear the two psalms side by side.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

It is the death of Jesus.
If you're new: Do not rush to Easter.
If you've taught for years: Leave a moment of silence after v37.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you’ll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: How could a club and a stick be a comfort?

- use an object: Hold up a shepherd’s staff, or a long walking stick, and ask what it was for.
- raise a problem: If God’s rod is also the rod of judgment, how can anyone find it comforting?

CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: The Shepherd took the rod of judgment, so his rod and staff comfort us.
- call back to the opening: Return to the club and the stick, and read Isaiah 53:5 beside them.
- pray the text: Thank Jesus for taking the rod in our place, and pray Psalm 23:4 back to him.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone feels that God is punishing them through a hard season.: Point to the cross: for those who belong to Christ, the rod of judgment has already fallen on him. Hardship is real, but it is not God’s wrath against his own.
- Someone is grieving a death.: Be gentle. Jesus’ own death was real and terrible, and he walked through it ahead of his people. Let them stay with v37 before you go further.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: “Thanks. Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t spoken yet.” Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can’t answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: “Great question. Let’s catch it after class so we can finish the passage.”

READ THIS WEEK

- Psalm 22
- Isaiah 53
- Hebrews 10:19-25

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/mark/15-33-39/lesson

The Rod Came Down on the Shepherd

MARK 15:33-39 (BSB) · THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: “Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4

THE BIG IDEA

The Shepherd took the rod of judgment, so his rod and staff comfort us.

1. ROD AND STAFF · PSALM 23:4

- The rod (shevet) was a club against wild animals; the staff was for leaning and guiding.
- The sheep is comforted because the rod is raised for it, not against it.
- Shevet is also the rod of judgment: “the rod of God’s wrath” (Lamentations 3:1).

Psalm 23:4: the shepherd’s rod protects the sheep. Mark 15:33: “_____ came over all the land.”

Shepherds counted sheep as they passed under the rod (Leviticus 27:32). At the cross the _____ was counted in.

Discuss: Why would a sheep find comfort in its shepherd’s weapons?

2. DARKNESS AND A CRY · MARK 15:33-36

- Darkness covers the land from noon to three.
- Jesus cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
- Someone holds up sour wine on a reed; earlier the soldiers struck him with a staff.

“My God, My God, why have You _____ Me?”

“He put it on a _____ and held it up for Jesus to drink.”

Discuss: Micah 5:1 says, “With a rod they will strike the cheek of the judge of Israel.” What does it mean that the rod came down on the Shepherd?

3. THE VEIL AND THE CENTURION · MARK 15:37-39

- Jesus breathes his last with a loud cry.
- The temple veil is torn from top to bottom.
- The centurion says, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

“And the _____ of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”

“Truly this man was the _____ of God!”

Discuss: Isaiah 40 says God’s comfort is “her iniquity has been pardoned.” How does the torn veil show that comfort?

Read this week: Psalm 22 · Isaiah 53 · Hebrews 10:19-25

For Kids: The Rod Came Down on the Shepherd

MARK 15:33-39 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus took the hit to keep us safe.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

☐ The temple curtain tears in two.

☐ A soldier says Jesus is God's Son.

☐ Jesus calls out to God.

☐ Jesus dies on the cross.

☐ The sky goes dark at noon.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

Jesus on the cross: happy · sad · worried

The people when the sky went dark: happy · sad · worried

Jesus' friends watching: happy · sad · worried

Us, knowing Jesus did it for us: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

U B U S R O D B C
B S T A F F G N V
O J E S U S V H V
C O N K F H Y V O
B S O L D I E R K
G Y Y V D A R K H
H P N C R O S S D
K D C U R T A I N
S H E P H E R D F

JESUS · CROSS · DARK · CURTAIN · SOLDIER · ROD · STAFF · SHEPHERD

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=D 3=E 4=H 5=P 6=R 7=S 8=T 9=V

___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
8	**4**	**3**	**7**	**4**	**3**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**6**	**2**	**7**	**1**	**9**	**3**	**7**

5. DRAW IT!

Draw a shepherd standing between his sheep and a wolf, holding up his rod.

6. MEMORY VERSE

"Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Psalm 23:4 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

The Shepherd keeps me _____. _____