



Week 6: Rod, Staff, Table, Cup, and Oil

Pastor Stephanie Ehmke – October 4, 2026

Questions...

1. **Read Psalm 23:4-5**

Pastor Steph began the message by asking us to consider the words and ideas we naturally associate with God. What are some of the first words that come to your mind when you think about God? Where do you think those perceptions came from: Scripture, family, church experiences, circumstances, or somewhere else?

2. A.W. Tozer wrote, *“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”* Why does our view of God's character matter so much? How can an inaccurate picture of God affect the way we follow Him?
3. David says God's *rod and staff comfort him*. The rod represents the Shepherd's protection, while the staff represents His guidance and rescue. Which of those pictures of God, *Protector or Rescuer*, is easier for you to trust? Which is harder? Why?
4. Sometimes God's protection may look like a closed door, an unanswered prayer, a relationship ending, or something we wanted not working out. Have you ever looked back on a disappointment and wondered whether God may actually have been protecting you? What did that experience teach you?
5. The message acknowledges that the Shepherd's staff may sometimes create discomfort as He redirects us. How can we distinguish between God being unkind to us and God lovingly leading us away from something that isn't good for us?

6. One of the challenges in the message is to **“assume the best” of God**, especially when we don't understand what He's doing. What false story are we tempted to tell ourselves about God when life doesn't go the way we hoped? What truths about His character can help us challenge that story?
7. Psalm 23:5 moves from the imagery of the Shepherd to the imagery of a generous host preparing a feast. What do the prepared table, anointing oil, and overflowing cup reveal about God's character and the way He receives His people?
8. The message connects *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”* with the father welcoming the prodigal son home despite the judgment of the surrounding community. What does that story teach us about the difference between God's grace and other people's opinions of who deserves grace?
9. Jesus repeatedly shared tables with people whom the religious community considered unacceptable. If God's table is characterized by extravagant grace, how should that affect the way we welcome and treat people in the church, especially people whose past or present lives may make us uncomfortable?
10. The message summarizes the Shepherd's character this way:

Rod = Protector
Staff = Rescuer
Table & Cup = Provider
Oil = Comforter

Which of those aspects of God's character do you most need to trust right now? What would trusting Him in that area look like this week?

Closing Challenge

Before ending your time together, finish this sentence...

“When I don’t understand what God is doing, I can still trust that He is _____.”

Then encourage the group to pray for one another specifically around the attribute of the Good Shepherd each person most needs to trust this week.