**FOCUS** in 2020

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**I Am Not Alone –** *A study in Psalm 23*

***Comfort***



In a mean and **meaningless** world, Jesus calls you into a life of **meaning**.

A life of meaning is not always **comfy**.

Comfy: free from trouble, doubt, stress, and tension

We want to be comfy, but what we really need is **comfort**.

Comfort: to give strength and hope to, help, one person standing alongside bringing encouragement and support

When life is **uncomfortable**, Jesus provides lasting **comfort.**

*…for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

Psalm 23:4b

A shepherd’s rod symbolizes **strength** and **protection**.

A shepherd’s staff symbolizes **care** and **guidance.**

The Shepherd’s rod and staff:

**Counts**

*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.*

*Leviticus 27:32*

**Protects**

*“Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him.  Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.” 1 Samuel 17:34-36*

**Guides**

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6*

**Disciplines**

*For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. Hebrews 12:6*

**Destroys**

*You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Psalm 2:9*

When you have been comforted, you can give **comfort.**

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4*

Three keys to give God’s comfort:

1. Be a sheep before you shepherd.
2. Go to the difficult places.
3. There is a time for a rod and a time for the staff.