



## ~ The Good Shepherd ~

*"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." – John 10:14-15*

Jesus liked to use things culturally familiar with the people He was speaking to. He often would use immediate surroundings and events to illustrate a point. In this instance, the analogy of a shepherd and his sheep stuck to the point that today no Christian can ever look at sheep or a shepherd without thinking about Jesus' words.

Living in the city all my life, I have a hard time conceptualizing this concept that Jesus is giving us in the living analogy of the shepherd and his sheep. My only understanding comes from books, pictures, or movies. It's not something I personally see every day. Yet, after studying about sheep and the concept Christ is using further, I have come to understand and appreciate the beautiful parallels and ideas Christ is trying to help us understand in His relationship with us.

- 1. All sheep must enter the fold thru the door.** A sheepfold is a pen or enclosure area for a flock of sheep. It is built to protect the sheep and keep them together safe. There is only one way in and out. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." – John 10:1, 9 Christ is the door to the fold of God. This fold cannot be joined by any other means. Only by acceptance of Jesus to the life, can one become part of God's fold. Merit, works, or another method will not work. Christ alone is the means for salvation.
- 2. A shepherd knows each sheep of his flock.** In Eastern countries, the process of shepherding sheep was tireless and continuous. Sheep are timid and helpless and require a shepherd's direct care. In order to keep track of them and make sure none are lost, a shepherd learns each sheep. The sheep learn the shepherd and respond to the shepherd's call. Like the earthly shepherd, Jesus knows each of us by name. "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine." – Is. 43:1 Jesus knows the house you live on. He knows your very name and is touched with the feeling of the weaknesses you struggle with. You are not alone.
- 3. Sheep cannot be driven or forced.** They must be called and led. Shepherding methods differ greatly in most regions today than they did in the days of Christ. They didn't use border collies or other methods to herd sheep. The shepherd himself led the sheep. He did

not drive sheep. He didn't depend on force or fear, but instead called them. This is how Jesus relates to His "flock". "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (John 10:27) "The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you." (Jer. 31:3) Christ does not use coercion or fear. He draws us to Him with love and kindness.

4. **The shepherd's path is the safest path.** "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." (John 10:4) As the shepherd goes about the sheep, he removes harmful plants along the way and steps down thorns to make the path easier. He looks to see any dangers they might encounter so that he can first deal with it so they can pass in safety. The same is with us. The Savior's path is the safest one. He goes before us to guide us. The way may seem steep and hard, but Jesus traveled before us. Everything we face, He has faced before and will bring us thru every situation because He knows best how to overcome it. "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen." – Rev. 1:18
5. **The shepherd lays down his life for the sheep because they are his.** "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again." – John 10:14 15, 17 Because you are a gift from the Father to Jesus and a reward for His work to save you, Jesus loves you as His child. There is nothing greater heaven could give you. In fact, the Father loves you so much that He actually loves Jesus more because He died to save you. Today, respond to the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow His lead. You are in His care and under His watch. He knows you by name and will not forsake you. You are His.

Kimberly Mills

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