

# The Bell Sheep

*For you were like sheep going astray. . .*



When a young lamb continually strays from the flock at the risk of its own life and safety, the shepherd commonly has to break the leg of the wayward one. The shepherd then carries the helpless lamb in his arms and tenderly cares for it until the leg heals. After the leg is mended, he sets the lamb down to walk.

BUT, a wondrous thing has happened! During the restoration period, the lamb begins to understand the caring and comforting heart of the shepherd who spares nothing to protect his flock from dangers. Never again does the lamb doubt the shepherd's care, concern, and wisdom for whatever lies ahead. The humbled lamb stays at the shepherd's side, never to stray again!

Commemorating this new relationship, the shepherd then places a bell around the lamb's neck, designating that lamb as the lead sheep or the "bell sheep." The continual tinkling of its bell draws the rest of the flock to the shepherd's side.



*. . . but now you have  
returned to the shepherd of  
your souls.  
1 Peter 2:25*

*Unto  
you  
who  
believe,  
He is  
Precious.  
1 Peter 2:7*

# *Bell Sheep*

Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture (Ps. 100:3, KJV).

For He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under His care (Ps. 95:7, KJV).

Like a shepherd He will tend His flock; in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; he will gently lead the nursing ewes (Is. 40:11, NASB).

Before I was afflicted, I went astray (Ps. 119:67, KJV).

It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Thy statutes (Ps. 119:71, KJV).

For if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to His abundant lovingkindness; for He does not afflict willingly or grieve the sons of men (Lam. 3:32, 33, KJV).

Let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice (Ps. 51:8, KJV).

Come, let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up (Hos. 6:1, KJV).

So the helpless has hope, and unrighteousness must shut its mouth. Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproveth, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal (Job 5:16-18, KJV).

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20, 21, KJV).

So we Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture will give thanks to Thee forever; To all generations we will tell of Thy praise (Ps. 79:13, KJV).

# GRACE for the Rest of Your Life

## BELL SHEEP

**SHEPHERDING GRACE: Purpose of Discipline; Loving Restoration; Intimacy Developed; Proclaiming Him**

### **Purpose of Discipline**

This lesson deals with a sheep who not only gets itself in trouble, but who is leading other sheep astray, which is the bigger problem. When that is the case, the wayward sheep has the potential of endangering others' lives. The shepherd has to intervene for the sake of the other sheep. He has to discipline the wayward leader so as to avoid further attrition.

The shepherd sometimes brings discipline into the situation. Do you know what he does? He will take that sheep and break one of its front legs, which renders the sheep immobile. That sheep now can neither walk nor can it hobble. The shepherd then gently rubs oil on the leg, puts it in a splint and bandages the broken leg. He binds what he himself broke. *"He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness"* (Heb. 12:10b-11). But what happens to the sheep when the shepherd moves the flock to another pasture? More on this later.

Read the poem entitled **"Sheep and Lambs"** (on the notes and quotes, at end of lesson).

To quote a seasoned shepherd, explaining his method of discipline, "Of all the sheep in my flock, one was most wayward. It would never obey my voice. It would never follow in the pathway in which I was leading the flock. It wandered to the edge of many a perilous cliff. And not only was it disobedient itself, but it was ever leading the other sheep of my flock astray. However, when the sheep is healed, it will be the best sheep of my flock. No sheep will hear my voice so quickly. None will follow so closely at my side. Instead of leading others astray, it will now be an example and a guide for the wayward ones, leading them, with itself, in the path of obedience to my call. In short, a complete transformation will have come into the life of this wayward sheep. It has learned obedience through its suffering." (from James H. McConkey) *"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered"* (Heb. 5:8).

### **Loving Restoration**

How is it that immobile sheep going to get from one pasture to another? The sheep has to be carried by the shepherd. You have seen pictures of sheep on the shoulders of the shepherd, or sometimes you will see a sheep cradled in the shepherd's arms. *"Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes"* (Isa. 40:11).

**The weakest lambs have the largest share  
Of the tender shepherd's care.**

The shepherd knows it will not be easy for him to carry the sheep to the next pasture. Sheep are heavy, hot and smelly. The shepherd is usually seen holding the front legs—the very legs that went astray. But for the sake of the flock the shepherd sacrifices himself. He gives his life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11,15). This is one sheep that he needs to bring back in line, for the sake of the entire flock.

Review this process by reading the story on the Bell Sheep visual.

This sheep now chooses to stay next to the shepherd. The shepherd places a bell on the restored sheep. As other sheep are grazing and listening to the tinkling of the bell, they have the assurance that they are near their shepherd. Now the shepherd could have just tied the bell on a rope around his own waist. He did not need the sheep; he could have just let the sheep go its own way—to its own demise. However, the shepherd desires relationship with his sheep.

***The closer you are to the Shepherd,  
The farther you are from the wolves.***

To further the illustration: “How does an eastern shepherd gather up his stray sheep? How does he bring home the wanderers and stragglers? He uses his own bell sheep to gather in other lost sheep. Because they are so fond of being near him and with him, he has to literally go out into the hills and rough country himself taking them along, scattering them abroad. There they graze and feed alongside the wild and wayward sheep. As evening approaches the shepherd gently winds his way home. His favorite bell sheep quietly follow him. As they move along in his footsteps, they bring with them the lost and scattered sheep.” (From Phillip Keller’s *A Shepherd Looks at the Good Shepherd and His Sheep*)

The emphasis is on the shepherd—not the sheep. We may be the instruments through which people believe, but it is not to draw people or draw attention to ourselves. The attention is to be drawn to the shepherd who “*gives His life for the sheep*” (Jn. 10:11). Second Corinthians 4:5 states, “*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.*”

Note that the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia is closely associated with the “Declaration of Independence.” As bell sheep, ours is the “Declaration of Dependence.”

‘HOLY TO THE LORD,’ was inscribed (in Hebrew) on the bells of horses which were set apart for the Lord’s service (Zech.14:20). The bell sheep is set apart also for the Lord’s service. This study (on the bell sheep) covers sanctification—set apartness. Think of this bell as ‘Holy as unto the Lord,’ separated unto the Lord (sanctified). We are restored to be used of Him in a special way even though we went wayward, and even though we may have led others astray. But there is always a welcome to return, there is always a message of restoration with God. “*I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick*” (Ezek. 34:16a).

### **Intimacy Developed**

Read here all of the verses on the back of the card.

In World Team Mission in Italy, the director spent a night out in the fields with a shepherd from whom he first heard the fascinating story of the bell sheep. Since that time, when their missionaries are commissioned to their respective fields of service, each one is given a bell at a special ceremony, setting them apart to lead others to the Savior/Shepherd.

Perhaps the Apostle Peter was the first “bell sheep.” He wrote about sheep going astray, “*For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd of your souls*” (1 Pet. 2:25). And Peter, of course, had returned to the Shepherd of his soul. You know the kind of man Peter was! Bold, impetuous Peter! He needed to be restored after his denial. “The tenderness, the love, the patience that Jesus used to restore Peter’s soul after the terrible

tragedy of his temptations is a classic picture of Christ coming to restore one of His own.” (Phillip Keller). Later, when Jesus met Peter on the seashore after His resurrection, Jesus entrusted His lambs into Peter’s care. These were the Lord’s most precious possessions. To Peter He said, “*Feed My sheep...feed My lambs...shepherd My sheep*” (Jn 21:15-17).

Peter of all people! The one who cut off the soldier’s ear with his sword, Jesus has entrusted to him His sheep? We would have thought twice, but no, the Lord knew. He said, “*Satan will sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your strength fail not*” (Lk. 22:31). He also said to Peter, “*When you have turned again, strengthen your brethren*” (Lk. 22:32). Jesus knew what was going to happen, and prophesied his restoration. But best of all Peter later writes, “*After you have suffered a little while, He will restore, support, and strengthen you, and He will place you on a firm foundation*” (1 Pet. 5:10). And to express his close relationship with Jesus, Peter adds, “*Unto you who believe He is precious*” (1 Pet. 2:7). Peter found his Shepherd precious!

Peter also wrote on shepherding in 1 Peter 5:1-4 (read the passage). The Apostle Paul agrees with Peter as we find in Acts 20:28, “*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*” They both speak of the tending, nurturing and nourishing a shepherd does on behalf of his sheep. This is **Shepherding Grace**.

“To protect the sheep from wolves, which constantly harass the church, the shepherd will cultivate a discernment and sensitivity to truth and righteousness. To heal the wounds of the flock, he pours oil for soothing and healing and gives pure water to quench the thirst. In the fast paced and impersonal world in which we live, we often underestimate the extent to which God’s people are needy, wounded, and broken. Such is the extent of the shepherd’s responsibility, but his position and motives are also defined. He is a fellow elder, first among all the others among the flock. He is motivated not by sense of obligation, not by financial rewards, not for dictatorial power over others, but rather by eager willingness and desire to prove himself as an example to the flock. May God continue to give such leadership to the church today.” (From: *The Nelson Bible note*)

In 1922, Paul Rader, an evangelist, gave a charge to a group of young people ready to serve the Lord, “Lift up the Lord and His work [the finished work of Christ], it’s the only thing that works!” Now you can try everything else, your whole lifetime, but why bother when you know this is the only thing that is going to work? “**Lift up the Lord and His work, it’s the only thing that works!**” This goes along with John 12:32, “*And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to Myself.*” Many Christian organizations began as a result of that focus, reaching thousands for Christ.

### **Proclaiming Him**

Count Von Zinzendorf founded the Moravian movement in the eighteenth century. Their motto was, “Let us win for the Lamb the rewards of His suffering.” Moravians were instrumental in sending more missionaries in that era than any other group since that time. They went forth holding a red crimson banner—on which was the symbol of a lamb holding a cross, and at the bottom of the cross was a shepherd’s crook.

This movement started with a group of nine girls who were ten to thirteen years old. Count Von Zinzendorf was concerned because he did not see any spiritual life in these girls’ lives! So he took the burden to the Lord as he poured out his soul in great agony in 1727. From there an awakening spread. They started a prayer ministry with twenty-four men and twenty-four women praying each hour of the day. That prayer meeting lasted for one hundred years.

“When Moravian missionaries first came to Greenland, they found the people totally ignorant of the meaning of such words as sin, righteousness and justification. So they decided to educate them about various theological terms. The results were so unproductive that after a time the missionaries decided that the situation was hopeless and they might just as well leave.

“Since no ship was due for some time, one of the missionaries began translating parts of the New Testament into the native tongue. Seeking to test the accuracy of his work, he read a passage to those who had been unresponsive to his ministry. The portion he chose was Christ’s suffering and death on the cross.

“After he finished, the chief of the tribe asked him to repeat it. The missionary read the passage again. ‘Why didn’t you tell us about this in the first place?’ inquired the leader. ‘Don’t leave now! We would be happy to listen to the words of a Person [Jesus] who suffered that much for us.’” (*Daily Bread*)

*“That you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9b)*

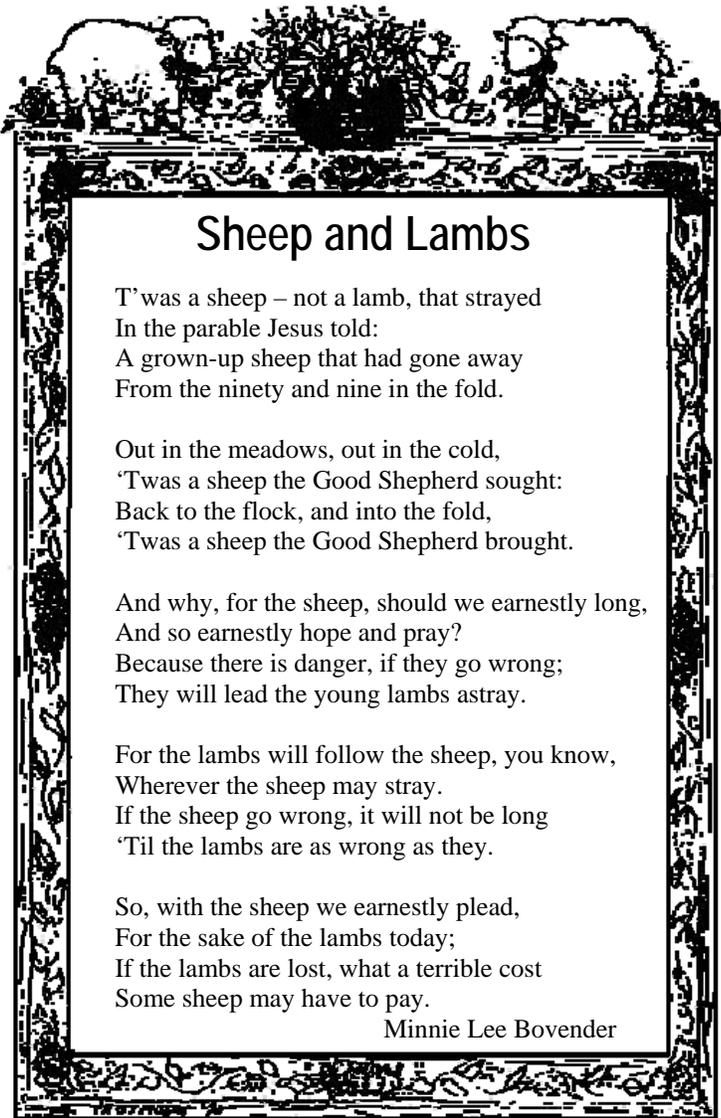
*“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Phil. 3:10).*

*“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him” (Jn. 12:26).*

Jesus invites us to follow Him. “He does not demand that we embark on some grandiose schemes of our own design to do His work in the world. He does not suggest that we become embroiled in some complex organization of human ingenuity to achieve His goal of gathering in lost souls. He simply asks me to be one who will be so attached to Him, so fond of Him, so true to Him, that in truth I shall be like His pet lamb [or **bell sheep**]. No matter where He takes me; no matter where He places me; no matter whom I am alongside of in my daily living, that person will be induced to eventually follow the Shepherd because I follow Him!” (*Phillip Keller*)

One great missionary statesman put it this way: “If you want to follow Christ, you must follow Him to the ends of the earth, for that is where He is going.”

**Review and reinforce this lesson by incorporating the following notes and quotes pages and by reading the Scriptures.**



## Sheep and Lambs

'Twas a sheep – not a lamb, that strayed  
 In the parable Jesus told:  
 A grown-up sheep that had gone away  
 From the ninety and nine in the fold.

Out in the meadows, out in the cold,  
 'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd sought:  
 Back to the flock, and into the fold,  
 'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd brought.

And why, for the sheep, should we earnestly long,  
 And so earnestly hope and pray?  
 Because there is danger, if they go wrong;  
 They will lead the young lambs astray.

For the lambs will follow the sheep, you know,  
 Wherever the sheep may stray.  
 If the sheep go wrong, it will not be long  
 'Til the lambs are as wrong as they.

So, with the sheep we earnestly plead,  
 For the sake of the lambs today;  
 If the lambs are lost, what a terrible cost  
 Some sheep may have to pay.

Minnie Lee Bovender

## The Shepherd's Voice

"...the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice" (John 10:4).

*A man in Australia was arrested and charged with stealing a sheep. But he claimed emphatically that it was one of his own that had been missing for many days. When the case went to court, the judge was puzzled, not knowing how to decide the matter. At last he asked that the sheep be brought into the courtroom. Then he ordered the plaintiff to step outside and call the animal. The sheep made no response except to raise its head and look frightened.*

*The judge then instructed the defendant to go to the courtyard and call the sheep. When the accused man began to make his distinctive call, the sheep bounded toward the door. It was obvious that he recognized the familiar voice of his master. "His sheep know him." Said the judge. "Case dismissed!"*

*Those who belong to Christ know and respond to His voice.*

Henry G. Bosch

## The Deserted Lamb

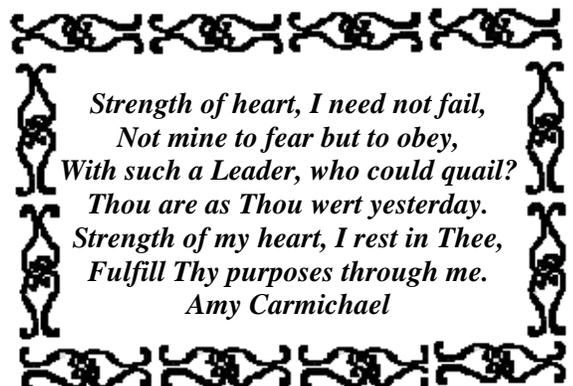
*Walking through the field on a winter's morning, I met with a lamb, as I thought dead, but taking it up I found it just alive; the cruel mother had almost starved it to death. I put it into my bosom, and brought it into my house. There I rubbed its starved limbs, warmed it by the fireside, and fed it with warm milk from the cow. Soon the lamb revived. First it feared me, but afterwards it thoroughly loved me. As I mostly fed it with my own hand, so it followed me wherever I went, bleating after me whenever it saw me, but never so pleased as when I would carry it in my arms.*

*Jesus is a shepherd, the Shepherd of souls, and of Him it is said that He carried the lambs in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young (Isaiah 40:11). If you desire to love Jesus, read that blessed book, the Bible. There you hear such things of the love of Christ to poor ruined sinners as I hope will melt your eyes to tears, and your heart into love.*

From: Christian Treasury

## HUMBLeness – GENTleness

**No man ever lost anything  
 in God's work by humbling  
 himself, or by dealing  
 gently with a brother.**



*Strength of heart, I need not fail,  
 Not mine to fear but to obey,  
 With such a Leader, who could quail?  
 Thou are as Thou wert yesterday.  
 Strength of my heart, I rest in Thee,  
 Fulfill Thy purposes through me.  
 Amy Carmichael*

## Submission

Since thy Father's arm sustains thee,  
Peaceful be;  
When a chastening hand restrains thee,  
It is He!  
Know His love in full completeness,  
Feel the measure of thy weakness;  
If He would thy spirit sore,  
Trust Him more.

Without murmur, uncomplaining,  
In His hand.  
Leave whatever things thou canst not  
Understand;  
Though the world thy folly spurneth,  
From thy faith in pity turneth,  
Peace thy inmost soul shall fill  
Lying still.

Like an infant, if thou thinkest  
Thou canst stand,  
Childlike, proudly pushing back  
The proffered hand,  
Courage soon is changed to fear,  
Strength doth feebleness appear;  
In His love if thou abide,  
He will guide.

To His own thy Saviour giveth  
Daily strength,  
To each troubled soul that liveth  
Peace at length.  
Weakest lambs have largest share  
Of the tender Shepherd's care;  
Ask Him not, then, "When?" or "How?"  
Only bow!

S. D. Carter



***The King of love my Shepherd is,  
Whose goodness faileth never;  
I nothing lack if I am His  
And He is mine forever.  
Baker***

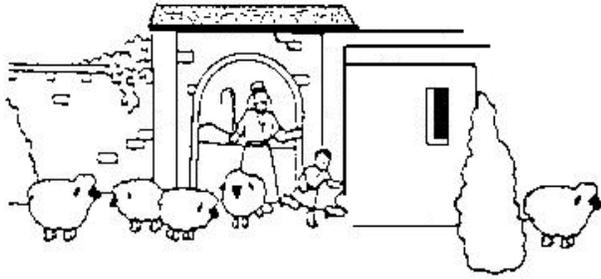


**Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8).**

"We recall a striking story," says James H. McConkey, "from the lips of a friend. A lady was summering in Switzerland. One day she started out for a stroll. Presently, as she climbed the mountain-side, she came to a shepherd's fold. She walked to the door and looked in. There sat the Shepherd. Around him lay his flock. Near at hand, on a pile of straw, lay a single sheep. It seemed to be in suffering. Scanning it closely, the lady saw that its leg was broken. At once her sympathy went out to the suffering lamb. She looked up inquiringly to the shepherd. 'How did it happen?' she said. To her amazement, the shepherd answered; 'Madam, I broke that sheep's leg.' A look of pain swept over the visitor's face. Seeing it, the shepherd went on: 'Madam, of all the sheep in my flock, this one was the most wayward. It never would obey my voice. It never would follow in the pathway in which I was leading the flock. It wandered to the verge of many a perilous cliff and dizzy abyss. And not only was it disobedient itself, but it was ever leading the other sheep of my flock astray. I had before had experience with sheep of this kind. So I broke its leg. The first day I went to it with food, it tried to bite me. I let it lie alone for a couple of days. Then, I went back to it. Now it not only took food, but licked my hand, and showed every sign of submission and even affection. And now let me tell you something. When this sheep is well, as it soon will be, it will be the model sheep of my flock. No sheep will hear my voice so quickly. None will follow so closely at my side. Instead of leading its mates astray, it will now be an example and guide for the wayward ones, leading them, with itself in the path of obedience to my call. In short, a complete transformation will have come into the life of this wayward sheep. It has learned obedience through its suffering."

"The chamber of suffering – is it not the birthplace of obedience?"

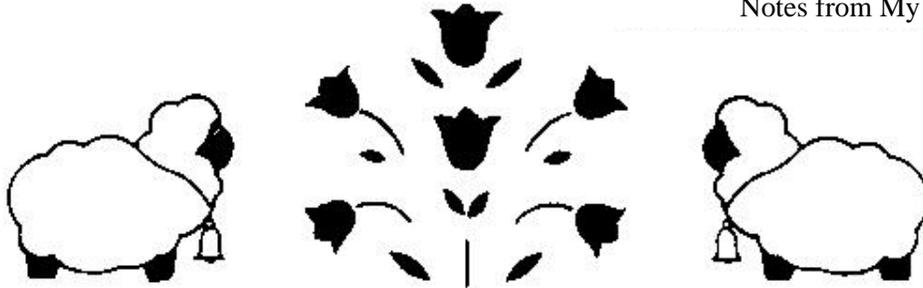
"Very often a complete submission to the will of God – in a fiery furnace if needs be! – is the quickest way to deliverance."



There are times in all of our lives when the Shepherd allows us to run in our foolishness until we are left alone in the darkness with our tears. We feel that we have been forsaken. Even in that aloneness He is with us, and He restores us to the paths of righteousness. He has accomplished it for His Name's sake – it is the kind of Shepherd He is.

With this in mind, read the story of Peter in Luke 22:31-32. Jesus allowed Satan to sift Peter, but he did not forsake him: He healed him with prayer. The Shepherd allowed the sheep to run the full length of his foolishness, but through it all, never left or forsook him. Afterward Peter was a tower of strength to the whole of Christ's church. He was a lamb who, through his own foolishness, had been laid on the Shepherd's shoulders, and so could comfort other foolish sheep.

Notes from My Bible, Psalm 23  
Malcolm Smith



Count Nicholas L. von Zinzendorf spread the fire of revival and missionary zeal from a German village called Herrnhut, which was built on his estate. He lived from 1700 to 1760. He and his wife shared a passionate devotion to Christ which was used of God to spread the flames of prayer, devotion and missionary service.

**“I have one passion; it is He, and He alone”** was his life motto. He was the grandson of an Austrian nobleman. He married a lady of noble birth and at their marriage altar they covenanted to renounce their rank and to devote all their property as well as themselves to the service of Christ. He became a bishop in the Moravian church and the firebrand of revival in that denomination. His people caught his fiery zeal. Their seal is a lamb on a crimson background with a cross of resurrection and a banner of triumph with this motto: **“Vicit agnus noster, eum sequamur” – “Our Lamb has conquered; let us follow Him.”**

A powerful spiritual movement began when the Count was teaching a class of nine girls who were ten to thirteen years old. Zinzendorf was concerned because he did not see any signs of spiritual life among them. He took this burden to the Lord as he poured out his soul in great agony on July 16, 1727. In August, the Holy Spirit moved in great power among those girls. The awakening spread to other girls and then the boys and finally to the whole Moravian community.

**“...They have presented to the church of Christ a splendid object lesson of the great fundamental missionary principles as taught in the Scriptures. They have recognized themselves in debt to the world as trustees of the gospel, and have been taught frugality of habits, readiness to sacrifice, and prompt obedience to the call of God to go anywhere, and with an emphasis upon the worst and hardest fields as having the first claim. And no missionaries of the cross have been bolder as pioneers, more patient or persistent under difficulties, more heroic in suffering, or more devoted to Christ and the soul needs of men than those of the Moravian Brotherhood.”** (Another person has stated their motto this way: **“Let us win for the Lamb the rewards of His sufferings.”**)