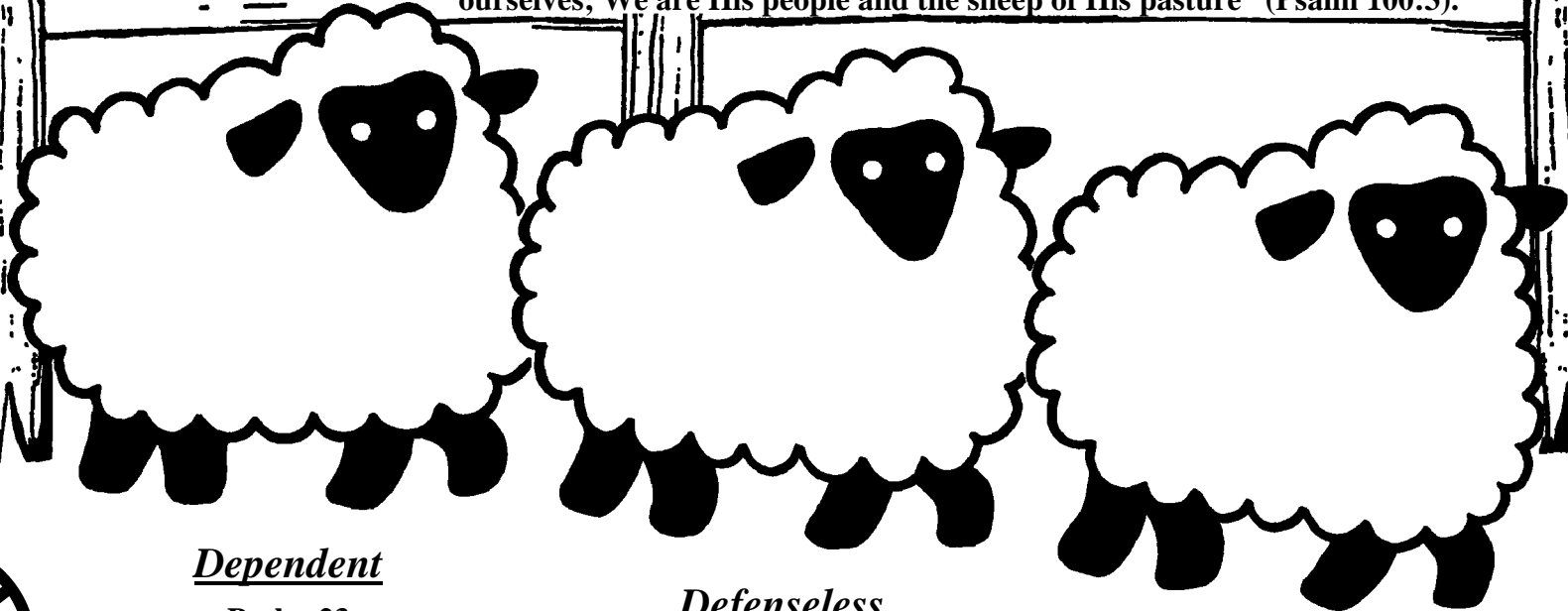


Wee Like Sheep

“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” (Psalm 100:3).



Dependent

Psalm 23
Matthew 9:36
Mark 6:34

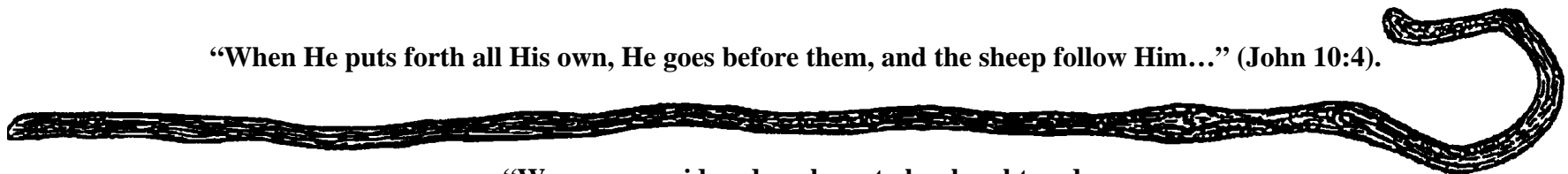
Defenseless

Isaiah 53:7
Romans 8:36, 37
John 10:12, 28

Directionless

Isaiah 53:6
1 Peter 2:25
James 5:19, 20

“When He puts forth all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him...” (John 10:4).



“We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered,
But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer *through Him* who loved us” (Rom. 8:36, 37).

WEE LIKE SHEEP

Dependent

“Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything that I need” (Ps. 23:1 Living). “He makes me lie in meadows green, He leads me to refreshing streams” (Ps. 23:2 Mof). “He renews life within me, and for His name’s sake guides me in the right path” (Ps. 23:3 NEB). “Your strength and support are indeed my comfort” (Ps. 23:4 Har).

“And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

“He saw a great multitude, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things” (Mark 6:34).

Defenseless

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

“Just as it is written, ‘For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:36, 37).

“He who is an hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them” (John 10:12). “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28).

Directionless

“All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

“For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25).

“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back; let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5: 19, 20).

Gracestoration

WEE LIKE SHEEP

DESIGNED GRACE: Sheep Are Not Dumb; Sheep Are Dependent, Defenseless, Directionless; Needs of Sheep; Presence of the Shepherd

God designed sheep with inherent propensities. The Greek word '*probaton*' describes a sheep as '*a forward moving quadruped.*' The Scriptures frequently cite the sheep metaphor to show how much we are like 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). "*And you, My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God*" (Ezek. 34:31). Sheep are a mute reflection of our own inherent characteristics. Phillip Keller notes that "we have such a likeness to sheep, it is well nigh embarrassing to discover what the Lord is trying to teach us."

Sheep Are Not Dumb

A common reaction of people when comparing the imagery of sheep to humans is that they take offense—because sheep are so DUMB, and of course, they are not! My friend visited a rancher who declared that he no longer raises sheep. Why? Because they are born to die, he said! He got so frustrated untangling them every hour or so from the rope he had tethered around each one to a stake in the ground. Now, who is the DUMB one in this story? HA!

It would do us well to study how sheep are designed so that we can learn from them accordingly. We also learn from sheep how we were designed—even though cultural and societal pressures try to convince us otherwise. Since God likens us to sheep in many passages of Scripture, wouldn't it behoove us to look into the subject and discover what we can learn about ourselves?

Sheep are intelligent in that they know their master's/shepherd's voice. "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*" (John 10:16). In the East, several shepherds use the same sheepfold at night for the safety of their flocks. In the morning, each shepherd has his own call and calls forth his own sheep. The sheep immediately recognize their own shepherd's voice and begin following their respective shepherd. They never get it wrong!

Sheep Are Dependent

"Though man has rebelled against God, he has never gained independence from God; he is still dependent, though unwilling to acknowledge it." J. F. Strombeck

God created/designed sheep as dependent creatures—which means that they are dependent on someone to take care of them. No other animal is so dependent. For example, if the wool is not removed from the sheep once a year, the fleece may get so heavy and thick that the sheep may suffocate in hot weather and die. Sheep need a shepherd to shear them.

Sheep do best in arid, dry climates where they have to move around a lot in order to forage for food. This controls gluttony because sheep do not know when to stop eating. They gorge, then bloat and then die if no shepherd is around to de-gas them.

Sheep need two gallons of water daily. They are dependent on a shepherd for their water supply. They only drink out of still waters. They need fresh water every day. They will not drink yesterday's water. They will arise early in order to get the dew off the grass which meets most of their daily requirement. If they miss the morning dew, finding water during the day may become a challenge for the shepherd. On its own, a sheep cannot find its own water or food. "Without the shepherd planning, providing, and pasturing the sheep and satisfying their recurring need for food and water, the sheep would surely die of thirst and hunger. The shepherd is the key, the answer, the provider for the life of the sheep, for their sustenance and survival." (excerpted from Walter Godfrey Bowen, New Zealand).

Sheep cannot go in reverse. If they are caught in a thicket, they keep burrowing forward to try to get out. A shepherd has to extricate them, for they cannot extricate themselves.

Sheep Are Defenseless

Did you know that sheep have no top teeth? They cannot even bite a predator! They are defenseless! In New Zealand, ravens wait for the lambs to be born out in the field so that they can immediately eat out the lambs' eyes. Even mother ewes are defenseless to protect their newborn lambs.

Sheep's legs are very skinny; therefore they cannot run fast or far. They are easily overtaken by a predator.

Sheep have weak hearts and are susceptible to coronaries. A story is told of a boy who went to feed his sheep early every day. He took two buckets—one in each hand. One morning a burly old ram came up behind him and butted him right into the fence, causing him to drop the day's supply of feed. Later, the boy saw an opportunity to pay him back (in fun, he thought). As the boy was heading out to the barn, he saw the burly ram walking down the path parallel to the barn. The boy stationed himself at the corner of the barn to greet him LOUDLY when the ram approached, which he did. But what the boy didn't calculate was that he actually scared the burly ram to death—right there on the spot. The ram had a coronary!

Sheep are susceptible to falls because they are so top heavy, especially prior to sheering time. If they fall and roll over on their back, they cannot aright themselves. (See "Cast Sheep" card.) Only a shepherd can RESTORE them to right side up!

Sheep Are Directionless

"ALL [WEE] LIKE SHEEP have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way..." (Isa. 53:6).

Sheep have a predisposition to go their own way. Scripture gives many warnings about going astray, going our own way, etc. James, the Lord's brother, encourages us to restore/find the lost sheep, *"My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back; let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins..."* (James 5:19, 20). See also the parable in Luke 15 as told by Jesus concerning the seeking and finding of the lost sheep. Luke later shared the "purpose-given life" of Jesus, *"The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). Peter also experienced Jesus' restoring grace to him after his denial, *"...once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers"* (Luke 22:32). Peter did just that and later went on to encourage his brothers, *"For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls"* (1 Peter 2:25).

If sheep are lost, they tend to go in circles. Interesting note: It is the same with people. They end up at the very place they started (if they are lost in a forest or in a jungle).

Examples of Sheep Attrition:

Sheep will follow a lead sheep—even over a cliff. A movie crew in England was gathering footage of a flock of sheep on a hillside. One sheep got spooked and started running up the side of the hill. The rest of the sheep followed and the entire flock fell over the cliff into the ocean below. All this was caught on film.

Another story was told of a boatload of sheep going from France to England. The sheep were all huddled together on the deck. One sheep got spooked and jumped overboard. Sadly, all the rest followed. The entire flock was lost at sea!

A recent story from Turkey tells of one foolish sheep of 1,500 who leapt off a cliff which started a stampede resulting in about 450 sheep dying. As the pile grew larger, many sheep actually survived due to the padding the dead sheep provided to absorb the shock.

“What a poor, blind, weak and miserable creature is man, at his best estate! We are like poor helpless sheep; the devil is too subtle for us. What is our strength! What is our wisdom! How ready are we to go astray! How easily are we drawn aside into innumerable snares, while in the meantime we are bold and confident, and doubt not but we are right and safe! We are foolish sheep in the midst of subtle serpents and cruel wolves, and do not know it. Oh, how unfit are we to be left to ourselves! And how much do we stand in need of the wisdom, the power, the condescension, patience, forgiveness, and gentleness of our Good Shepherd! Jonathan Edwards

Needs of Sheep

Sheep need a shepherd. “In the East a gentleman once wished to test the truth of the statement that the sheep will not follow a stranger, and the shepherd told him that only the sick sheep would respond to his call. And he found it to be true. What a lesson is this! Who are the people that go here and there, accept this or that newest fad in teaching, go astray into error and sin? The sick sheep. Those who do not know how to discern between good and evil and are a prey to every deceiver.” W.H. Griffith Thomas

Sheep will follow any shepherd! A story is told of a pastor who got permission to hunt on a farmer’s land. On the day he planned to hunt, he headed for a special place next to a ravine where he could sit on a bluff. He decided to take a short cut across the pasture. As he was walking, he suddenly heard footsteps behind him. He didn’t want to turn around just yet, so he slowed and stopped. The footsteps also stopped. He started up again only to hear the footsteps behind him. He again slowed down and stopped abruptly. The sound of the footsteps also stopped. Again he started up and this time quickly turned around. To his amazement he discovered that about 100 sheep were following him. Where did they come from? He didn’t want 100 sheep going hunting with him, that’s for sure! How could he get rid of them and still go hunting? He decided to run for it as fast as he could. Sure enough, they didn’t follow, because the shepherd was too far ahead. The pastor was able to hunt that day, but the picture of the sheep desperate for a shepherd, and his reluctance to be a shepherd, still lingers in his mind.

Sheep need relationship with the shepherd! When sheep have a reliable shepherd, they automatically look to him to protect them. Read the ‘Notes and Quotes’ page, “The Eyes of All Look to Thee.”

My friend Pam was raising two lambs on her farm. The neighbor's dog got out one day and was fast approaching her lambs. One lamb ran out of the way, and the other ran directly to Pam, stood by her side and stared straight into her face as if to say, "If you don't protect me, I'm dead meat! The helpless lamb riveted its eyes on Pam's.

Note: This is the same option that the two thieves had on the crosses on each side of Christ. One chose to look at Christ; the other did not. We have the same choice! What kind of sheep are 'wee'? What kind of sheep are 'ewe'?

We need only one response to our Shepherd, *"Come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker, For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand"* (Ps. 95:6, 7).

Presence of the Shepherd

"The best way to keep the enemy out is to keep Christ in. The sheep need not be terrified by the wolf; they have but to stay close to the Shepherd. It is not the praying sheep Satan fears, but the presence of the Shepherd." A.W.Tozer

Notice the Shepherd's staff lying on its side which serves as a reminder that the Shepherd goes ahead of the sheep. *"When He puts forth all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him..."* (John 10:4). Jesus Himself said, "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7, 9).

"At every sheepfold there is a big earthen bowl of olive oil and a large stone jar of water. As the sheep come in for the night they are led to a gate [door]. The shepherd lays his rod across the top of the gateway [doorway] just higher than the back of his sheep. As each sheep passes in single file, he quickly examines it for briars in the ears, snags in the cheek, or weeping of the eyes from dust or scratches. When such conditions are found, he drops the rod across the sheep's back and it steps out of line. Each sheep's wounds are carefully cleaned. Then the shepherd dips his hand into the olive oil and anoints the injury. When all the sheep are at rest, the shepherd lays his staff on the ground within easy reach in case it is needed for protection of the flock during the night, wraps himself in his heavy woolen robe and lies down across the gateway [doorway], facing the sheep, for his night's repose." (Robert Gamble [Scotland] in *Shepherd My Sheep*).

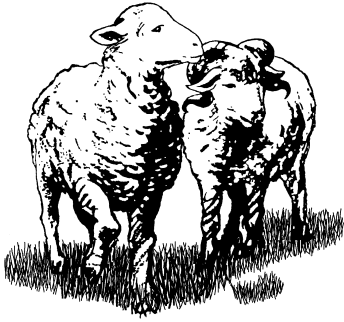
Question: When the shepherd lies across the doorway of the sheepfold, which way does He face—toward the predators outside, or does he face toward the sheep inside the fold?"

Answer: The shepherd **FACES THE SHEEP** inside the fold. The sheep need to see the shepherd's face for their *security* and *safety*. Then, and only then, can they *rest* assured!

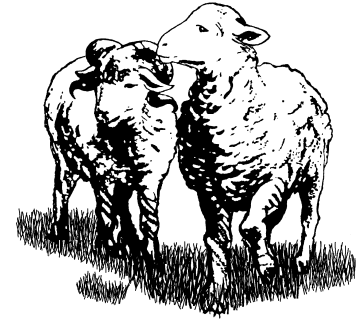
Reinforce this truth of the Shepherd's **presence** by quoting Hebrews 13:5 (NIV) backwards and forward:

**"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." [forward]
"You forsake I will never; you leave I will never." [backwards]**

Review and reinforce this lesson by incorporating the 'notes and quotes' pages and by reading the Scriptures on the back of the card.



ALL WE LIKE SHEEP



“The shepherd’s voice speaks strength, serenity and stability to my soul.”

“Whatever else happens there remains this one, basic fundamental fact that only the person who wants to follow Christ will ever do so. All the rest will become strays.”

“This word ‘follow’ as used by our Lord implies much more than just the thought of sheep tagging along blindly behind their owner. It has within it the connotation of one who deliberately decides to comply with specific instructions... There rests with us then the obligation to comply. As we cooperate and follow through we will find ourselves progressing. New areas of life, exciting experiences of adventure with Him will emerge as we move onto fresh ground.”

“It is no mere whim on God’s part to call us sheep. Our behavior patterns and life habits are so much like that of sheep, it is well nigh embarrassing.”

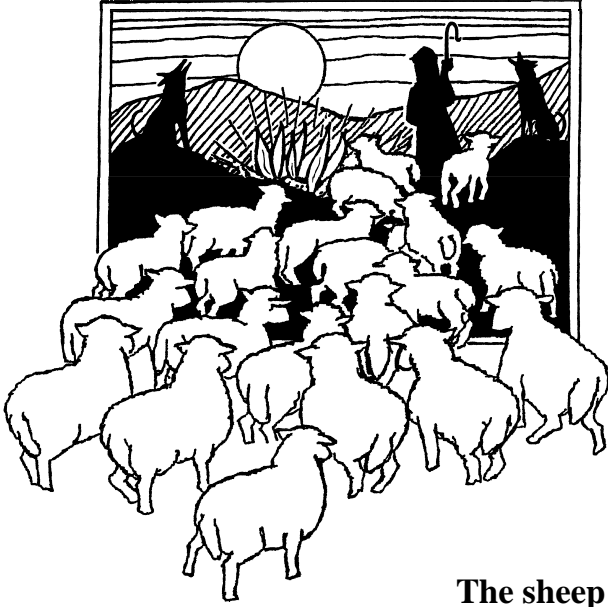
“Scripture points out the fact that most of us are a haughty and stubborn lot. We prefer to follow our own fancies and turn to our own ways. *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way”* (Isa. 53:6). And this we do deliberately, repeatedly, even to our own disadvantage. There is something almost terrifying about the destructive self-determination of a human being. It is inexorably interlocked with personal pride and self-assertion. We insist we know what is best for us even though the disastrous results may be self-evident.”

“Just as sheep will blindly, habitually, stupidly follow one another along the same little trails until they become ruts that erode into gigantic gullies, so we humans cling to the same habits that we have seen ruin other lives. The stubborn, proud, self-sufficient sheep that persists in pursuing its old paths and grazing on its old polluted ground, will end up a bag of bones on ruined land.”

“The world we live in is full of such people. Broken homes, broken hearts, derelict lives, and twisted personalities remind us everywhere of men and women who have gone their own way. We have a sick society struggling to survive on beleaguered land. The greed and selfishness of mankind leaves behind a legacy of ruin and remorse.”

“In spite of all this He does not insist on imposing Himself upon us. He does not override our wills. He refuses to rush into our experience by gate-crashing His way over our decisions. Having made us in His own likeness, free-will agents able to choose as we wish, whether or not we shall be His sheep, enfolded in His care, is ultimately up to us. This is a staggering decision facing each individual. This amazing generosity of Christ in so approaching us stills our spirits and awes our souls before Him.”

Excerpts from: *The Good Shepherd* by Phillip Keller, Chap. 1 & 5.



“The Eyes of *All* Look to Thee”

(Psalm 145:15)

One night in a rugged area where the snows were recently melted and the grass was just turning green, I spent an evening with a shepherd and his flock. There were two thousand sheep held on this lush mountainside for the night. The bonfire provided the means of preparing a good supper. Three dogs enjoyed bones near us. The sun had long since set and the vermilion sky had changed to burnt amber.

The sheep had quieted down, and then I heard it—the long wail of a coyote behind our camp. Across the arroyo was an answering call. The dogs looked pleadingly at the shepherd for his consent to find the coyotes. The shepherd knew this was what the coyotes would like as the sheep would then be deprived of their protection. The sheep were on their feet now, and there was some bleating as the ewes brought their lambs close. The shepherd tossed some large logs on the fire, and the flames rose. In this light I looked out and saw thousands of little lights. I realized that these were reflections of the fire in the eyes of the sheep. In the midst of danger the sheep were not looking out into the darkness but were keeping their eyes set in the direction of their safety, looking toward the shepherd. I couldn't help but think of Hebrews 12:1-2,

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Looking unto Jesus! It was enough for the sheep, and I knew it would be enough for me!

From: *A Turtle on a Fencepost* by Allan C. Emery: Word, p. 53.