

THE SHEEP AND THE SHEPHERD

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THE SHEEP

The sheep is an interesting animal. Its nature and behavior is so interesting that the Lord uses it to describe His relationship with His followers. The Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd, while He calls those who believe in Him and follow His teachings sheep.

Sheep have low IQ and do stupid things most times. As a result, always need guidance and leadership. This is where the shepherd comes in to provide the guidance and leadership needed.

Jesus is the shepherd

Jesus is not only a shepherd to His sheep, but the Good Shepherd who risks and lay down His life for His sheep. He is not a hireling – He is not under another person's employment. He is the owner of the sheep and does everything within His power to make sure that no sheep is lost, wounded or killed.

John 10:11-15

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.

NIV

Ps 23:1

3 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

NIV

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus feeds His sheep, tends, watches over and protects them from predators that seek to devour them. He fights for them, risks His life to defend and protect them. As the Shepherd, Jesus leads the sheep to where the grass is green and makes them to lie down there in safety under His watchful eyes. He leads His sheep in the parts of righteousness and besides the still waters where their life is stress free and they find refreshment so they are renewed and refreshed daily. He offers guidance and leadership in the part of life and brings the sheep to the place of prosperity, serenity, safety, security, success and abundance. Jesus is in your life and mine to assist us live life to the fullest. He came that we might have abundant life.

The sheep of the Lord are believers.

Those who believe in, follow Him and walk in His ways are His sheep. They listen for His voice and depend on Him for guidance, inspiration and leadership. They do not pursue their will and ambitions, but the will of Jesus Christ for their lives.

John 21:15-17

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." 17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.

NIV

The Lord has personal relationship with each individual sheep.

John 10:2-5

2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

NIV

John 10:14-15

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

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It is important that each sheep develop his personal relationship with the Master. To be led accurately by the Shepherd, the sheep must develop a keen ear to hear the voice of the Shepherd. Sensitivity to the Shepherd is very important to getting instructions and following them. Your fellowship with the Lord is to help you identify what His will is in all circumstances and submit to it. The Shepherd leads while the sheep follows. A good sheep will keep his eyes on the Shepherd and will not insist on his own way or desires, but seek out and pursue the desire and will of the Shepherd for him or her.

The sheep knows and recognizes the voice of Jesus and follows Him only.

The sheep being already familiar with hearing the voice of the Shepherd calling out to him and giving him instructions can identify the voice of his Shepherd from the voice of a stranger. The voice of his shepherd he responds to lovingly and submissively, while he refuses to follow the voice of strangers – evil spirits.

John 10:1-6

10 "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on

ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." 6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

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The voice of Jesus is the Word of God.

The word of God we read from the Bible and hear preached or spoken to us is the voice of Jesus. Jesus according to Apostle John is the Word of God. The sheep responds positively to the voice of their Shepherd. The sheep trusts in the shepherd that He will not lead them astray, hence they follow Him. Every instruction or principle of God leads and brings us closer to the blessing and miracle planned for us and our destiny in life. A stubborn sheep will only get lost, wounded or killed by a wild animal or get stolen by a stranger. As long as you the sheep is responsive to the voice (Word) of the Shepherd, you will remain safe, comfortable, well nourished, healthy and prosperous and lacking nothing.

Ps 23

23 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me

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The secret of not lacking anything or not being in want is allowing Jesus to Shepherd your life. Let Him lead you by His Spirit and Word. Listen to His instructions, teachings and counsel and it will be well with you. He promises to watch over you while you are running with His counsel.

John 10:4

4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

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Ps 32:8

*8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.*

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The sheep is not a violent animal but gentle.

The Lord never forces anyone to obey Him. He will make every effort to present the truth to you as a believer but will never force you to apply it. The hireling is more forceful than the shepherd who is very tender and gentle with his sheep. That does not mean that he does not use his rod on the sheep when it is absolutely necessary to correct and discipline the sheep.

To submit willingly to the leadership of the shepherd you must have previously made a decision to be the sheep of the shepherd. One who has not given his life to Jesus is not one of His sheep. One who does not listen and obey the voice of the shepherd but instead obey the voice of the stranger is not the Lord's sheep. Enjoying the life of Christ involves three steps:

1. Become His sheep by repenting of your sins and giving your life to Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord.
2. Always seek out His will in all things and at all times.
3. Submit to His will and pursue it with all your heart though it is completely or partially different from what you would have wanted to see happen in your life. Do it without dragging your feet or looking back.

John 10:7-10

7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

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Those who follow the instructions of Jesus and walk in the word of God are His sheep. The disobedient are not His sheep. His sheep hear His voice and follow. Those who do not follow are not His. At the judgement, the sheep will be separated from the goats.

John 10:3-4

3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

NIV

Matt 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was

sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 *"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'* 45 *"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'* 46 *"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."*

NIV

The sheep are the faithful ones, while the goats are the unbelieving and unfaithful ones – Ezekiel 34:20-24

THE STRAYING SHEEP

Isa 53:6

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

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Sheep get distracted easily. When distracted they go astray. They like to do their own thing, go their own way, and pursue their own agenda. The sheep is supposed to identify the will of the Lord and submit to it. But sometimes, they forget they are supposed to be following their shepherd and their eyes are to be on Him. The result is that they stray away from him and if the attention of the shepherd is not drawn on time to them, they may get lost.

When one is going away from the part of God, when one sins or is doing a thing that is displeasing to God he or she is straying. When one begins to do things to satisfy self, he is straying. The person is backsliding. And if the person does not repent, the person will go to hell.

Prov 14:12

12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

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1 Peter 2:25

25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

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God does not want us His followers to lose focus and stray away from the path He has chosen for us. We are to keep our eyes on Jesus and follow Him as He leads us in His plan and purpose for our lives.

THE LOST SHEEP

When a sheep strays, the next thing is that he becomes lost because he will not know his way back and will require the shepherd going to seek him like Jesus came to seek us.

Ps 119:176

176 I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.

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Jer 50:6-7

6 "My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray and caused them to roam on the mountains. They wandered over mountain and hill and forgot their own resting place. 7 Whoever found them devoured them; their enemies said, 'We are not guilty, for they sinned against the Lord, their true pasture, the Lord, the hope of their fathers.'

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Luke 19:10

10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

NIV

When a sheep is lost, he is without a shepherd, and he is harassed, distressed, rejected and helpless. He is like one who is condemned to die, except he is found quickly, he will be destroyed.

Matt 9:36-38

36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

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Preach to save the lost. Help them to return to their God and maker. Make it your business to help sinners find salvation in Christ and you will be rewarded for it.

THE OTHER SHEEP THAT HE WILL BRING TO JOIN THE FLOCK

John 10:16

16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

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The Jews are the original sheepfold because they have known the true God right from the beginning. The other sheep refers to the Gentiles (the non-Jews, you and I) who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. I thank God I am now in the sheep pen. Make sure you are among the sheep of the Lord.

THE SHEPHERD

Psalm 23; John 10:1-18

1. The shepherd is the owner and keeper of his sheep – 1 Cor 6:19-20
2. He passes through the door of his sheepfold, but the thief passes through the window.
3. He is the one who opens the door and leads his sheep out and brings them back.
4. His sheep know and follow His voice.

5. The shepherd leads his sheep where they will find pasture, graze and rest.
6. The shepherd lays down his life or rather risks his life in order to save and protect his sheep from death or harm. This, Jesus did for us when He laid His life for us on the cross of Calvary – John 10:11-18; 1 Samuel 17:31-37.
7. Jesus as the shepherd is the provider, caretaker, leader and director, protector and shield of the sheep. Jesus is indeed the good Shepherd – Psalm 23:4; John 10:11.
David knew that the Lord was His shepherd that was why he wrote Psalm 23 to express his trust and confidence in the Lord.
8. The good shepherd's whole duty or the summary of his work therefore, is to give and make sure that the sheep has abundant life.

John 10:10

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

NIV

ABUNDANT LIFE

Abundant includes remission of sins, deliverance, safety (security, protection), preservation, healing and divine health, provision and prosperity in all things.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, put your trust in the Lord your God. Know that He is with you always (Matt 28:20). If He is for you, He won't be against you (Rom 8:31-34).

Remember, greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4)

Live your life in total submission to the guardian and shepherd of your soul – Jesus Christ (1Cor 5:15).

The leaders of God's people are also called shepherds, while Jesus is called the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4; John 21:15-17; Isaiah 56:11). These under-shepherds or leaders will account to Jesus the Chief Shepherd and be rewarded by Him (Heb 13:17).