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# **That Great Shepherd of the Sheep**

**#1125-B**

**Series: Making the Spiritual Switch**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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*Father, we worship You...*

*As we come into Your presence, there seems to be that need in our hearts to slow down and take a deep breath before we embark upon looking at Your word, and just quietly turn the reins of our lives back over to You. It seems like only in a minute, Lord, we take control again. In something as simple as driving to church, parking the car, and doing all the activities, we can somehow lose sight of our surrendered position.*

*Quietly, Father, we pray now that we might come to Your throne, take a deep breath and cast all our cares upon You because You really do care for us. More than we can even understand love, You love us.*

*Teach us this morning, Father. Teach us truth in such a way that only Jesus can be glorified and exalted.*

*We pray it in His Name.*

*Amen.*

Make sure you understand that there are no accidents with God. Nothing is happenstance. Everything He ever made, He made with a purpose. Every leaf on every tree was designed as it is specifically by God. Every leaf falls off of every tree at a time appointed by God. Every star in the sky tells a story, and every star in the sky has its own name. God makes no mistakes. Every animal He created is different and every animal has a specific purpose. God does nothing haphazardly and nothing accidentally. He is the Supreme Architect. He is the Engineer of Excellence. He is the Master Builder. His plans are perfect. His execution is perfect. His design is perfect and His timing is perfect. Amen?

That perfection has a purpose because He is perfect and that purpose is spiritual. God wants to take whatever He's made in the physical realm and use it to teach spiritual truth. So,

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nothing He has made, nothing we have to look at, and see and feel and touch in this world, nothing is accidental. And nothing is without spiritual significance. The trees, the rocks, the rain, the clouds, the sun, the moon—all of these things that we have been looking at for the past few weeks were designed by God. Scripture says it is because He has truth to teach. And those items, those acts of His creation, in essence are photographs, that when fully developed, speak to those who have ears to hear.

But, in addition to those things that we have mentioned, let me remind you that there are some things in Scripture that God speaks of that are basically, not only applicable to all of society, but were particularly meaningful to the Jew and to the children of Israel. And so, we read a lot in Scripture about specific things that were of great significance spiritually that were of local interest: the fig tree, the vine, the vineyard, the husbandman, the sheep, the shepherd, the lamb, kings, kingdoms, manna, honey, holy places, cornerstones. We read about rocky soil, pillars of fire, famines, feasts, images, idols, doves, donkeys, and doors to the sheepfold. We read of wells and wolves and wool. And all of these things could be of interest to anyone, but they had special significance to the Jew in Jesus' day, and they had special significance in application to their lives. So, before we leave this subject of making the "spiritual switch" if you will, we are going to take a few weeks and look at a few of these items that were specific in importance to the Jewish mind. We particularly want to do that for two reasons:

1- They are given to us as examples. We are to take on the mind of the Jew if we are to see Christ against the backdrop God painted for His visit to planet earth. We are to look at Him through Jewish eyes. But more than that, we are to learn that principle so that we would learn to communicate the Gospel in our generation to the people God has given us to reach, not attempting to make them like us, but by entering into their world so they can see how Christ is at home there. It's a tough lesson for most missionaries to learn, beloved, and it's a tough lesson for us to learn.

2- We need to learn in our teaching experiences not only how to see through the eyes of those we minister to, but how to make the spiritual switch. We need to be able to realize, it isn't blasphemous to try to think of taking such things as airplanes, computers, power lines, or freeways and using them to illustrate

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how God works in the spirit realm. I believe if Jesus was living in our generation in Texas, there is no doubt in my mind, He would frame parables against a backdrop of oil wells and skyscrapers and cattle. He was a Master Teacher. He used visual aids that His Father had given Him as tools to demonstrate eternal truth. It did not matter whether or not it was a lamb or a longhorn; a vine or a cactus; a sheepfold or a corral. He spoke to the people in a language they could understand, of things that were significant to them.

But I would remind you, it was no accident that God chose the Jew. And it was neither incidental nor accidental that He selected this particular group of people and placed them in a particular area where there were specific kinds of trees and specific kinds of animals and then used those trees and those animals and those illustrations to teach about the kingdom of God.

Today we are beginning to look (about a three-week look or so), at one of the most widely-known of those illustrations. Perhaps it's the most important of all because when you look at it carefully, you realize that when it develops fully like a Polaroid picture, suddenly you see not just an image of the illustration, but you see a picture of Christ and a picture of the Church. And, of course, what we are looking at is the illustration of sheep and shepherds.

### I- THE PORTRAIT

Early in Scripture it became apparent that God had created sheep for a reason and that God was going to call shepherds for a reason. From the very first confrontation between God and Adam's children, the solution to man's sin would be wrapped up then, in the whole issue of sheep and shepherds. In chapter four of Genesis, beginning with verse one, you remember these verses:

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a [boy-child] man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, [he was a shepherd; he was the world's first shepherd], but Cain was a tiller of the ground. [He was a farmer.]

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and

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to his offering: [He said, “That’s good.”]

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. [He said, “That’s not acceptable.”] (Genesis 4:1,3-5a)

Now, Adam and Eve had begun the glorious experience of parenting. We don’t know what the childhood years were like for these kids, but we know of their early adult years. I have a picture of Eve spending half of her time spinning the radio dial back and forth, looking for the James Dobson’s program. See, one of these kids was bright, successful, and extremely strong-willed. The other was more submissive, more suited to the task of shepherding than of running a modern farm. My guess is that Cain, (you have to read between the lines of the original Hebrew), had a fleet of new air-conditioned tractors and the latest in high-tech irrigation equipment. He was a good farmer, and he was proud of it.

Abel on the other hand was a “keeper of the sheep”. He was the world’s first shepherd. Man had already begun to specialize (that hasn’t stopped), and God decided it was time for His creation to bring something before Him as an offering.

Cain had no problem with that. He had a bumper crop that year, and it seemed only appropriate for him to show it off a little. After all, he was a good farmer. And to take a little of the fruit of his hands and give it to God seemed only natural. But God wasn’t interested in that. God was interested only in *a certain kind of offering*:

1) *God wanted an offering that represented faith*; an offering that did not represent confidence in what man had done, but rather in what God could do (Hebrews 11:4).

2) *It needed to be specific kind of sacrifice* because it was to be a picture of the perfect sacrifice which was to come (I Peter 1:19).

3) *It had to be a living sacrifice*, because “without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins” (Hebrews 9:22b).

So, God brought into being a certain kind of animal and He gave Abel dominion over that animal because he was painting a picture in Scripture, a picture on the canvas of eternity of a sacrifice that would be coming that would once and for all deliver us from the penalty of sin. He was etching into the fabric a sketch of “The Great Shepherd of the Sheep” who would one day lead His flock beside still waters and restore their souls (Psalm 23:2b-3a).

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### II- THE PROBLEM

So, that was the beginning of it all. The need for an offering, you remember was because man had alienated himself from the presence of a Holy God through sin. Given the benefit of all of the glories of heaven, man had opted for all the garbage of earth. And God needed to illustrate the futility of wandering and the need for deliverance. So, God opened His sketch book of eternity under the letter “s”, and up popped sheep. And He began to use this incredibly dependent animal for the purpose for which He had designed it before the foundation of the world. He used it as an illustration to teach us how desperately we need God. He even chose a shepherd, one whose heart beat with an understanding of the principle, and gave him the responsibility for writing the Psalms which would tenderly describe for us this Great Shepherd of the Sheep who was one day to come.

Throughout the entire Old Testament, God used word pictures of sheep and shepherds to illustrate four basic principles. If you could get those principles in your mind, this morning, you would begin to see, I think, why God made sheep in the first place. The first reason is, they speak of God’s ownership, as we shall see in a moment. The second reason is, they speak of the total depravity of man. Thirdly, they speak of the leading of God on a daily basis. Fourthly, they speak of the incredible love of the Good Shepherd—those four things. Let’s look at them together, independently, and then we will draw a net at the end and ask ourselves to leave here thinking of one basic principle that we can apply to our lives this week.

#### God’s Ownership

Principle one then, is the principle of ownership. God never designed man to be self-sufficient. We were never designed to be “self” anything. This whole concept of self was not of scriptural origin. It is God’s plan to give you infinite worth, but that worth is not self-worth. It is worth based on the reputation and integrity of the One who created you, the One who sustains you, and the One who restores you. You are of infinite value to God and in God, but not because *you* have done anything. He created you for a purpose, and when He restored you to the image from which you strayed, you became of infinite value. But it is a reflection of the One who made you, not of you. Remember that.

Use your imagination this morning. (You have to just to

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stay in this class, don't you?) So imagine, if you will, you are a beautiful violin, and you were created by one of the most famous violin makers who ever lived. You were designed to make beautiful music. You were designed to reflect in your every sound the heart of your creator. One day, however, you got tired of being a violin. You decided you wanted to be a flute. So, you got up and rammed yourself against the wall and changed your shape and you jumped in a bucket of paint to hide your finish; you ripped off your strings, and you put an ad around your neck: "Flute for sale, cheap."

Problem—as a flute, you're worthless. You were never meant to be a flute. As for beauty, once you covered over the design of your Creator you are hideous. You are now attempting to be something you're not. So there you are, on the garbage heap, not worth the cost of the sandpaper to rub down and find out what you were before, and you are picked up for nothing by a junk store owner named Satan who places you in the window of planet earth, puts an outrageous price tag on you, and marks it "close-out." What a life.

Then along comes the One who made you. As He passes by the window and looks in, lying there worthless is His most cherished creation. Tears form in His eyes and with a heart filled with love, He enters the store of planet earth, pays the outrageous price being asked, reaches down, picks you up, takes you home, and starts over again. Off comes that hideous paint, back go those carefully tuned strings, and once again, a miracle takes place; and when those strings are touched by The Master's hand, music pours forth and lives are changed.

Now, answer for me, what kind of self-worth does that violin have? It was created out of nothing by the Master Craftsman. It had nothing to do with it. Given the opportunity to choose for itself, the best it could do was refuse to be what it was meant to be and turned itself into a worthless piece of trash. And so, in tender mercy, the one who made it in the first place, redeemed it, paid it, bought back what was already His, *and did it all over again*. Who is to be praised? Self? How dare we. *We are not our own; we've been bought with a price*. What a price!

To best illustrate our worth apart from Him, God decided to try something. He decided to see if we would understand it better if He used an illustration. And so, he reached down and chose

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the sheep.

Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

(Psalm 100:3)

“We are what, Lord?” “You’re sheep, my child. I made you.”

O 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...

(Psalms 95:6,7)

We are not our own. We are no more our own than sheep have citizenship. Without the Shepherd, we tried and failed miserably. So, He bought us back and, hopefully, we’ve learned our lesson. God made sheep to teach us how vulnerable we are apart from a life of total dependence on the Shepherd. Except He lead us, we’ll get lost. Except He protect us, we’ll get slain. Except He rescue us, we’ll fall. Without Him, we have no purpose, no personality, and no possibility of usefulness. *He is our God. We are the people of His pasture; we are the sheep of His hand.* The sooner we learn that, the better off we are. Got it?

### Man’s Sinfulness

The second principle God wants to teach us through sheep, I think, is not only must we be totally dependent upon Him, *we must understand the depravity of man.* All of us are sinners, and He wants us to be willing to admit, not just that we are not perfect (big deal), we are in utter depravity apart from Him. So, He created a living illustration; He created sheep. Look at Isaiah 53 again.

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

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 53:4-6)



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We're like a bunch of sheep. We've all gone astray.

My people hath been lost sheep: (Jeremiah 50:6a)

Admit it, beloved, like the psalmist did:

I have gone astray like a lost sheep; (Psalm 119:176a)

In other words, sheep wander, all of them. And all of us, *like sheep*, have wandered. That's why Paul said:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;  
(Romans 3:10-12,23)

Do you think he meant something by that? None, no not one, all? If you can read those passages and deny the depravity of man, you have a vivid imagination. God wanted us to understand. Look at a bunch of sheep. They will all wander, and so did you, and so did I.

### God's Leading

The third thing God wants us to learn by looking at sheep is that *God wants to lead us day by day*. Not only is He our Redeemer, He is our Comforter and our God.

He [God] made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence;

And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham:

But (He) made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock [of sheep].

And He led them on safely, [like a flock of sheep] so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

(Psalm 78:50-53)

Our best-known illustration, of course, is Psalm 23:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of

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righteousness for his name's sake.

(Psalm 23:1-3)

That's a shepherd's job. He doesn't presuppose the sheep are swift enough or self-sufficient enough to make it on their own, and the few that don't, He's there to help out. That's not the way it works. Apart from Him, the sheep don't know where the water is. The sheep don't know what's harmful and what isn't. They don't know anything. If they will let the shepherd take the responsibility, they can relax. They just need to go where He leads, listen for His voice, and let Him be responsible. You say, "Wow! What a life! I wish I could have that life." You can. That's what the Good Shepherd is all about. He leads you to green pastures. He leads you beside still waters. He restores your soul. He is the Good Shepherd. And because we never fully understand our need to be led without struggling, God made sheep the way He did; and He told us to look at them and then look in the mirror. And you may look a little fuzzier now when you look in the mirror, but that's alright. God wants you to understand your need to be led.

### God's Love

Next week, if you want to prepare, we will begin to look at John, chapter ten, and we're going to look at specific issues involved in the incredible heart of a shepherd. But this morning, I want us to close by looking at that fourth image that develops out of the photograph of the sheep and the shepherd, and that is *a picture of the love of The Shepherd*.

Never is the shepherd too weary to care for his sheep. Never is anything so dangerous that he flees, rather than defending his sheep. Never is he too tired, never is he too busy, never too preoccupied to go look for the one who is lost. What a portrait that ought to paint for us, not only of God's love for us, but of God in us creating a pastor's heart, an elder's heart, a teacher's heart, a parent's heart, a Christian's heart. Matthew 18:10-14, you're familiar with it. I'm sure we have looked at it even in recent months in this class.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

How think ye? ["What do you think," Jesus said], if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the

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mountains, [where all that danger is and do whatever it takes to find that one] and seeketh that which is gone astray? [Or does He count the odds and say, “Hey, that’s not bad. I got most of them.”]

And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

(Matthew 18:10-14)

And he spake this parable unto them, saying, [you remember, we looked at it a few months ago].

What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

And when he hath found it, [does He whoop it into shape? No, it says] he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, [Let’s have a party.] Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just [literally self-righteous] persons, which need no repentance.

(Luke 15:3-7)

What love. What love! Beloved, that’s why God gave us sheep and shepherds. He wants us to understand the depth of that love, and we really couldn’t understand it in the same way without that photograph. Also, look at His purpose. Why did He come to earth?

1- The clarity of God’s purpose. He didn’t come to earth to set-up a welfare program, although there may be a time and a place for that. He didn’t come to try to overcome the world order, although there may be some changes in the world order that the church would bring about. He didn’t come to remove all suffering and pain, though indeed, on occasion, He does that. He came primarily to *save that which is lost*. This may not be a good idea, but I’ll say it anyway. It’s never stopped me before. I think every church in the world ought to take one Sunday a year, and read this passage. And then, the leadership on down, should fall on their faces before God, and renew their commitment to

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the primary purpose of the church, which is to seek and to save that which is lost. We can get so comfortable encouraging one another as long as the unbeliever doesn't disturb us by coming into our midst. Folks, we've got it backwards. It happens in counseling. Counselors today will often counsel people and call it Christian counseling without trying to lead people to Christ. True counsel is that which gives a person the ability to solve their problems, and only a personal relationship with Christ does that. Christian leaders today around the world are holding church services, preaching sermons, holding committee meetings, building buildings, planning activities, and using money for a million things, but often without so much as ever focusing on the reason *why the church is there*. We are here to seek and to save that which is lost. And then, we are to go into the world and teach those who are saved to observe whatsoever things He has commanded (Matthew 28:20).

2- The intensity of God's priority. Not only is that the goal, but look at the intensity of it. Can you imagine a situation where 99% of the people you knew were Christians? You would say, "Oh, hey, that would be heaven on earth." I don't think so. But let's assume they were 99% Christians. Think of all the fellowship you can have, and all the prayer meetings you can have, and all the praise gatherings you can have. And you say, "Wow, what a life!" I don't think so. I don't think that's why we're here. I think we are here to meet together, to grow together, and to go out and to seek and to find that lost sheep. Any shepherd worth his salt, Scripture says, would leave the ninety and nine, give them a big hug and say, "I'll be back to take care of you," and go off and find that one. Roll call wouldn't be complete until *He did*.

The Church of Jesus Christ needs to return to the Shepherd's calling—to the Shepherd's heart. It didn't matter to the shepherd how heavy the opposition was. He left the ninety and nine and went up into the mountains, up into the freezing weather, up into where all the fierce, steep precipices were there for him to fall off of; whatever it took, he went up there to find that one. And then look at what he did when he found him. We looked at this just a few months ago, so we'll cover it quickly.

3- His example of proper praise. I think we celebrate everything in the kingdom today but the thing we're to celebrate. We celebrate offerings when they come in, campaigns and programs. We celebrate births, birthdays and anniversaries. But

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the real reason we have to celebrate is when *someone finds Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord*. And when that happens, we ought to stop everything we are doing. The shepherd is beside himself. He runs and gathers all his friends together. They are eating dinner, they are planning activities and he says, "Wait a minute. You don't understand. Something so important has happened and we need to all get together and have a celebration. I found my sheep!" He's got the sheep over his shoulders. "Rejoice with me."

And then, Jesus says, "Not only that, but up in heaven, every time somebody comes to Christ that's what is happening. The angels are going door to door. They are saying, 'Party time, praise time. Another person came to Christ. Someone destined for hell has been born again.'" Don't you realize, the bells on the church steeples of the world ought to be pealing, day after day, in joy, thanksgiving, and excitement. Someone who was lost has been found. We ought to gather around those new believers. There ought to never be another day in their life like that. They should never forget it. We ought to sing, "Life now is sweet, and my joy is complete for I'm saved, saved, saved!" I'm going to get to preaching. I better quit.

That's the message of the shepherd and the sheep. It's a message of God's ownership. It's a message of man's sinfulness. It's a message of God's leading, and it's a message of God's love. It teaches us purpose, priority, and praise. It teaches what's important to God. *People are important to God*; so important to God that the Good Shepherd will leave everything and go out and find that which is lost. Then He turns to us and says, "Won't you?"

That's the shepherd's heart. We have an example of what we are like apart from God by watching sheep. We have an example of what it's like to minister to others by watching the shepherd. And to be sure we understand, God sent the Good Shepherd to teach us just how important sheep really are.

### III – THE PROVISION

I want to close, by leaving you with one thought. How important are people to you? When you plan a get-together, are you more concerned about how the table looks, or about the people who might be hurting? When you are in a meeting, are you more concerned about motions and minutes than you are about people? When you schedule your time, is more time set

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aside for activities than for people? When there is an intrusion on the horizon of your life, and it turns out to be a sheep with a broken leg, what do you do? Do you stop, pick it up and see that it gets cared for, or are you ready to shoot it, bury it, and get on to your next meeting?

The Good Shepherd *cares for His sheep*. That means His own needs don't even matter if one of the sheep is lost, or hurt, or in danger. Quickly, He moves. Lovingly, He responds. Faithfully, He stays until the job is done. In Hebrews 13:21, we read this benediction:

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you [or through you] that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.  
(Hebrews 13:20,21)

Don't ever say, beloved, "I don't have the personality to be a shepherd." My friend, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep lives in you if you're a Christian, working through you, the Scripture says, to do what pleases Him, which is His will. And He, wants you, and He wants me, to take care of those sheep. If one is lost, there are no limits to His endurance, no parameters to His availability. If one of them is tangled up in the brush, hurting, struggling to get free, the Shepherd that lives in us runs to his side. If there is one whimpering and lonely, wandering aimlessly, He stays by their side until they find their way home because *He cares. The Shepherd cares.*

Because God knew in eternity past how difficult it would be for us to grasp these principles, He created sheep. And because He wanted us to see the depth of His love for us, He sent us shepherds. And finally, in one great act of love, He sent the Great Shepherd of the Sheep to come to live in our hearts.

I want to remind you as we close, beloved, as you walk out of these doors this morning; as you go to your place of business, or to your home, your neighborhood, or to your family to celebrate the holidays. Whatever it might be, everywhere you go, there will be hurting sheep. They may not let you know, if they don't think you are a listening shepherd, but everywhere you go there are hurting sheep. Some of them are crying internally and some of

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them are crying their eyes out. We have a choice. We can go on our way and pretend that our frantic activities are a substitute for being shepherds. Or as a church and as individuals, we can slow down, take a deep breath, and begin searching for lost sheep. We can stop and take the time to free the struggling ones whose lives have been entangled in the barbed wire fences of this world.

Would you like to know what God would do? Then open your Bible, beloved, and take a look at that Great Shepherd of the Sheep, and you'll know.

### THE LOVE OF THE SHEPHERD

Oh, the love of the Shepherd,  
How He cares for His sheep.  
Look, one little sheep is lost,  
See the Shepherd weep!

Searching, climbing, crying out  
"Come home, dear sheep, come home;"  
Knowing deep within his heart  
That sheep is all alone.

Look, the Shepherd's coming back  
Through bitter, blinding storms;  
The sheep is near the sheepfold now,  
Safe in the Shepherd's arms.

How we ought to praise our God  
That He will leave us...never,  
For He's the Shepherd of the sheep  
And we are His forever!

Let's pray.

*Our Father and our God, thank You for giving us sheep and shepherds, but most of all, for giving us the Good Shepherd to live in our hearts.*

*As we leave this place this week, Father, may it be evident that Your Spirit working through us, is out there seeking to find the hurting sheep and bring them home.*

*In Jesus' Name we pray.*

*Amen.*

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### A Challenge to Further Study

1- Take a concordance and look up the words, “sheep” and “shepherd”. Write out as many of these verses as you can. Find what qualities of fallen man the sheep are displaying and what attributes of God the shepherd is expressing.

2- Spend a week meditating on Psalm 23. Take each phrase and be sure you understand its meaning. Write it out in your own words. Personalize each word as you pray it back to God. If you have children, share the principles with them.

3- Reread Matthew 18:12-14. What do you think Jesus was saying? Why did He use sheep and a shepherd? How can understanding this principle change your life?

### A Challenge to Further Application

1- How does the “ninety and nine” principle affect you personally? How burdened are you for the lost sheep of the world? Of your neighborhood? Of your family? What price are you willing to pay to see one sheep come into the fold? How faithful are you to pray for those who are lost and do not know The Shepherd?

2- Do you know sheep who belong to The Good Shepherd, but have allowed themselves to become tangled up in the barbed wire of this world and are no longer resting in the Shepherd’s arms? Are you willing to risk personal scorn or rejection to go to them and try to carry them back to the fold? Is it easier to laugh or condemn them than to seek to restore them? What would The Good Shepherd do?

### A Challenge to Scripture Memory

Memorize or review Psalm 23

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