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A Life Useful for Jesus



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I am like a sheep

But ^[15] why does God call us His sheep? Maybe because **sheep are such wonderful animals**. Or it may be, however, because **sheep are the most helpless animals**.

1. **Sheep are UTTERLY HELPLESS** and cannot find their way without a guide.... Though there be pasture within easy reach, the sheep is apparently incapable of finding it for itself. It must have a guide. So God, looking at stupid, lost humanity, said, "All they like sheep have gone astray."
2. **Sheep are among the most tender of creatures**, always suffering hurt and pain.
3. **Sheep are extremely vulnerable** they can't tell the difference between poisonous and non-poisonous plants so they are easily sickened by improper eating habits.
4. **Sheep are among the dirtiest animals** associated with man. The natural tendency of wool in its raw and wild state is to pick up any defilement with which it comes into contact. There is a very unpleasant odor that is natural to the sheep. Mud dries on the pelt of the sheep in the most bedraggled patterns imaginable. The adherence of the mud is persistent. No matter how dry it may become, it does not seem to powder and fall away. Above all creatures that are associated with the life of man, the sheep in unquestionably the dirtiest. The poet who sings the praise of the snow-white sheep rarely sees them in their typical natural conditions, journeying together in great flocks. The dust of their passage adheres to their person until they become as brown as the terrain over which they travel.
5. **Sheep are often mindless** they will all begin to follow one restless lamb even if it is away from the flock and shepherd. When one aged ewe sinks in tiredness to rest and chew often they all sink to the ground and follow suit for no reason than that they are followers of almost anything.
6. Of all the creatures in the world, **the sheep has the greatest need of cleansing**. So God looked at pitiable humanity, foul and unclean, bearing the marks of their passage through centuries of sin, and said, "We will call them sheep."
7. **Sheep are one of the few animals totally incapable of self-cleansing**. The dirtier a sheep gets, the more helpless it becomes. In this respect it seems to be below the hog. Many times we have seen a pig rubbing its person against the lower railing of the fence, scratching off the caked mud - but a sheep, never. So God looked at poor faulty humanity and said, "If We don't clean them, they'll never be cleansed. We will call them Our sheep."

The Lord is...

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (10:11) - Jesus is all I need to make it through life and get to my heavenly HOME, apart from Him is only aimless wandering.

- Jesus said I am the Good Shepherd who died; I have settled the issue of the unknown.
- I am your companion through life and death.
- Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to live and how to die!
- **Believers are FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF MY LIFE. "I AM the Good Shepherd" (10:11,14).**

Jesus has three magnificent titles as God's chosen Shepherd in the New Testament.

1. In **John 10:11** He is introduced as the Good Shepherd who dies for His sheep. He came as God's Prophet and died as predicted in Psalm 22.

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Part: 4	Jesus: I AM the Bread of Life
Part: 3	Jesus: I am the LIGHT in the Wilderness
Part: 2	Jesus: I AM the Light to follow
Part: 1	Jesus: I AM the Light to Trust

2. In **Hebrews 13:20** He is introduced as the Great Shepherd who lives for His Sheep. He lives as God's Priest in the present making intercession for us as described in all present tenses in Psalm 23.

3. In 1st **Peter 5:4** He is introduced as the Chief Shepherd who returns for His sheep. He will return as God's King as Psalm 24 promises.

Three thousand years ago David said that the Lord is my Shepherd, two thousand years ago Jesus said I am the Good Shepherd. Today shepherds have **changed little**, sheep have **changed less**, and **the Lord hasn't changed at all!**

Shepherds were the lowest profession of the ancient world. That is why Pharaoh had nothing to do with sheep or shepherds, and had them sent to a separate place. That is why they were unclean in Pharisaic Judaism. Some of earth's greatest names were shepherds: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and God!

God is a Shepherd. What amazement to the flaming hosts of Heaven that the Ancient of Days enthroned in Holiness would leave the Throne to roam the hillsides of Judea and Samaria to Guide and protect His flock called Israel.

Our Good Shepherd Jesus is the Great I Am

1. **Jehovah-Raah** (The Lord the Shepherd - **Psalm 23:1**) *The Lord is my shepherd.* Jesus says I AM your SHEPHERD.

2. **Jehovah-Jireh** (The Lord will provide - **Genesis 22:13-14**) *I shall not want.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your PROVIDER

3. **Jehovah-Shalom** (The Lord our peace - **Judges 6:24**) *He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your PEACE

4. **Jehovah-Rapha** (The Lord will restore or heal - **Exodus 15:26**) *He restores my soul;* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your RESTORER

5. **Jehovah-Tsidkenu** (The Lord our righteousness - **Jeremiah 23:6**) *He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your RIGHTEOUSNESS

6. **Jehovah-Nissi** (The Lord our banner - **Ex. 17:8-15**) *Yea, 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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your VICTORY.

7. **Jehovah-Shammah** (The Lord is present there - **Ezekiel 48:35**) *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.* As the Good Shepherd Jesus says I AM your Ever Present God.

MY Shepherd...

The good shepherd knows his sheep

Sheep are the most often spoken of animal in God's Word. The words for sheep number 600 times in God's Word, if herds and flocks are added they number 1,000 plus! In the Old Testament world a bunch of sheep was less than 100 sheep, a flock of sheep numbered 100 to 1,000. A band of sheep was more than 1,000 and would often stretch for miles. But the Lord is MY Shepherd; though there may be dozens, hundreds or even thousands in a large flock (or band) each one was uniquely known by the shepherd. But though there were countless sheep, there is always only one shepherd! Jesus is the One Shepherd of His One Flock! And to think that the Great God and Creator of this Universe watches over me like a shepherd. So that I can know what He is like He used a term I can study and understand.

As an ancient shepherd watched over every event in the life of his sheep from being there at their birth, watching over them in helplessness of infancy, watching them grow and learn, guarding them as they slept, checking their health, nursing their wounds, pulling their thorns, setting their broken bones, leading them through dangers, guiding them to unfouled waters, and finally finding the kindest and swiftest way to end their life at the most appropriate moment of either weakness, sickness or health.

And to think that is how closely my Good Shepherd is watching over me! He knows my date of birth, weight, pulse, biopsy report, blood pressure, and date of death.

He is my Good Shepherd!

An Ancient Shepherd was active in every phase of a sheep's life: from its birth - serving as midwife, to its death - when he devises the swiftest and most painless death possible. He provides food. He gently pulls thorns from its fleece and thistles from its paws. He painlessly shears wool from its body - and even gently sets leg bones when they are broken. Sheep often nuzzle their shepherd as their own limited expression of gratitude.

My Shepherd knows me in every phase of my life.

He knows my name. He knows my need. He knows my wants. He knew me before I was born. He shaped me in my mother's womb. He assisted in my delivery.

He knows my thoughts before I think them, my words before I speak them, and my actions before I perform them.

He has counted every hair on my head, measured my height, monitors my blood pressure and heartbeat, remembers my date of birth, knows my date of death and has even made provision for that event!

The Lord is MY Shepherd, it is personal. But even greater Jesus claims us as His. To claim the Lord as Shepherd is the supreme act of faith. To be claimed by the Lord as His sheep is the ultimate act of grace. He is MY Shepherd.

I shall not want!

The good shepherd provides for the needs of his sheep

Sheep need very little.

They need food, water, rest, and protection

All sheep must have four needs met to survive. They must be:

- 1. Free from fear** of predators like wolves, cougars, dogs, snakes, and bears or they will neither eat nor rest.
- 2. Free from friction** with the other members of the flock or they disturb, agitate and trouble all of the other sheep as they try to eat and rest.
- 3. Free from hunger** or they are so restless that they wander, lead others astray or just wear themselves out and become easy prey for predators and dangers.
- 4. Free from the constant pests** of flies (black, bot, warble, dear, nasal), gnats, ticks, flukes, wounds, poisonous weeds.

The Good Shepherd Makes His Sheep Content

The two strands of this Psalm are: "The Lord is my Shepherd" and the fitting response to this wonderful relationship "I shall not want". Contented sheep are the mark of a skilled shepherd. Contented believers are the testimony of a satisfying Good Shepherd. One friend in ministry once wrote these words describing his elderly grandmother. Think of her and then think of your own life and love for our Good and satisfying Shepherd.

A lasting memory for me is of my grandmother serenely sitting in the family rocking chair, peering through dime store glasses at the large print of a big Bible on her lap.

She was old, diabetic, widowed, and poor. Her little house consisted of a kitchen, living room, bedroom, and bath.

Her church was across the street.

She walked two blocks to cash her meager welfare check and pay her utilities. Her groceries were delivered to the back door.

Her kitchen stove burned wood. Her oil heat needed constant regulating. The uncarpeted floor was always drafty. The roof leaked. The lawn was in need of care.

She had buried parents, husband, two of her twelve children, and even some of her grandchildren. All of her living children had long since left town - many of them hundreds of miles away.

But I never heard her complain. She was content. Whenever I'd ask if I could get her anything, the answer was always the same: "I have everything I need."

In this greedy grasping world of ours, that sort of contentment is rare. That kind of contentment is irresistible attractive to the people of the world who think that wealth consists of the abundance of things, rather than the absence of wants [16] .

Sheep are always branded by their owners. In modern times it is most often by cutting marks into their ears. Other methods are also used, maybe the burn of a branding iron, marks dyed on the skin, or a notch cut in an ear. The sheep were always recognized by their brand. As God's sheep we also are known by our brand. Contentment, that supernatural strength to live with little and be satisfied, is the mark of Christ's sheep! I shall not want simple means I have everything I need!

The Good Shepherd Makes Sure His Sheep are Lacking Nothing

The theme of Christ's Good Shepherding is that He frees us from all want. If the Lord is my Shepherd I shall not be in want.

- 1. When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack rest for I lie down in green pastures.
- 2. When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack life for he restores my soul.
- 3. When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack guidance for he guides me in the paths.
- 4. When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd** I shall not lack safety for you walk me through the valley. Note that the fearfulness of the dark valley causes a change from 3rd person "he" to 2nd person "you". What has changed? The weak and needy sheep need the close presence of the shepherd. So we especially experience Christ's presence in those valleys!

5. When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd I shall not lack provisions because you prepare a table before me.

6. When I follow Jesus as my Good Shepherd I shall not lack heavenly home for I will dwell in his house forever.

If sheep are not checked, they develop infections in their wounds. If they are not guided, they drink fouled water and develop liver flukes that slowly kill them.

If they are not oiled in the summer with special oils they are distracted to sickness and even death by the nasal flies that lay eggs in the soft tissue of their noses. The eggs hatch into larvae which burrow up into their sinuses and cause them to run hit their head on rocks, rub their noses until they raw, or even get infected to the point of blindness and even death.

Ancient and modern shepherds have made oil with sulfur and spices that repels the flies, prevents the eggs from being laid, and calms the sheep in the summer "fly season". Without protection the sheep are irritable, fearful, and restless. They run from the flies, tossing their heads for hours, rubbing their heads, hiding in bushes and just acting panicked. This leads to lack of nourishment, abandonment of care for the young, and general weakness. The application of oil is astounding, the flock grows quiet, the sheep return to eating.

So in our lives the anointing of the Holy Spirit is the moment-by-moment appropriation of God's power over the pests that irritate and nag us in life. Only the oil of the Holy Spirit can free us from frustrations and irritations. Only the Holy Spirit can quiet us and bring us to contentment.

At salvation we received all of the Holy Spirit. But to possess Him and to be controlled by Him are two vastly different conditions. Shepherds can carry gallons of nasal fly oil but until it is applied there is no relief.

It's the application that matters.

To be safe from all wounds, pests, diseases, and dangers they learned to trustingly pass under the rod of their shepherd as he moves the rod and his hands over their fur to check and clean and protect them. Sounds like the prayers of David in [Psalm 139:23-24](#) *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting. NKJV*

To us that means awareness of the presence of God's Spirit, daily application of His power, His Word, His control. To us that means asking for the Holy Spirit's control, filling, and leading – and then living under His guidance! It means bowing my infected head for His daily inspection and cleansing. It means submitting my rebellious will for a periodic dip to purge the sin. It means being filled by God's Spirit moment by moment. Only God's Spirit can calm the irritations of life. Only God's Spirit can bring peace to my world. Only God's Spirit can restore me to regular feeding and growth. Not just in summertime do we need anointing, we need Him DAILY! **He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters.** As with most animals sheep are made of 70% water. Water is vital for them to live.

There are only 3 ways for them to get healthy and life giving water: deep wells, running streams, and dew-laden grasses.

In many early weeks of the spring and summer a sheep never needs any source of water but the dews. This is of course only when the sheep are out early. To get the water they need they must be up early while the grey mists of dawn are rising. Feeding on the dew-laden grasses they find clear, pure, and clean water that meet every need for water they ever have.

Is there a lesson again for us? Do we meet the Lord in the quiet opening of our days? Do we get the refreshment we need to carry us onward through the hot, dry activities of life's deserts? That is what the morning manna collection pictured. That is what the sheep experienced. That is what all the biographies of the great saints of the past have recorded as being a common denominator in their lives.

Is that what we have?

He restores my soul

One of the most dreadful situations for a sheep is to be "cast". This refers to being on its back, feet flailing, and unable to regain its balance to stand.

In this condition that happens when sheep seek a spot that is too comfortable (like a depression in the pasture to sink down into and lay in), or when they over eat, or when they are too shaggy and untrimmed, or when they stumble and roll down an embankment. Once in a cast position, the clock begins to tick. They lose circulation in their legs, then feeling goes, then the rumination gasses start them swelling and if left unchecked they actually die from the suffocating pressures of their own upside down digestive world. They are cast when their world turns upside down!

What did David say? Why art thou cast down oh my soul? [Psalm 42:5-11](#). That is a sheep term and only the hand of the Shepherd can set us and keep us back on course!

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

Yea, 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.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

Sheep are defenseless animals; they can't bite like dogs, scratch like cats, kick like horses or even snap like turtles. They are defenseless; their list of enemies is great.

- Cougars track sheep for days, returning to kill sheep each night. Sometimes they drag a sheep for miles to their lair.
- Coyotes go to the weak on the fringe of the flock, grab an ewe or lamb by the throat and run away at speeds in excess of 30 mph.
- Eagles can steal and fly away with a small lamb, crows can pull out their eyes, flies can cause blindness and even death.
- Poisonous weeds abound, steep edges dropping to deadly depth always loom.

Sheep are defenseless but their shepherd defends them. Our enemies surround us, they hover around us, and they slither beneath us. John the Apostle identifies our enemies as:

- **The World** system that governs the earth in greed, controlled by legions of demons, controlled by Satan. The world surrounds us always reminding us that we never quite have enough.
- **The Flesh** is our insatiable appetite inherited at birth and never completely gone until death.
- **The Devil** is that most powerful created angel that opposes all that is of God, and goes to any length to steal our affections and devotion away from God!

The Lord's Table is set for us to remember the only One who as our Shepherd defends, protects, and feeds us – even though surrounded by enemies!

You anoint my head with oil;

If sheep are not checked they develop infections. The most common is what we see in the Old Testament called blemished (as in an "unblemished" lamb). The blemishes were what we today call the scab, a communicable infectious skin disorder that if left unchecked can totally disable sheep. The face of the sheep is where the scab starts. It is transmitted as sheep rub heads, which they do often. The other most common ailment is also of the head and it is called the nose fly. In application, the world of sin usually attacks our heads (minds) first. We must have our noses oiled by the repellent of God's Word and our heads washed with the healing cleansing of the Holy Spirit.

If they are not guided they drink fouled water and develop liver flukes that slowly kill them.

If they are not oiled in the summer with special oils they are distracted to sickness and even death by the nasal flies that lay eggs in the soft tissue of their noses. The eggs hatch into larvae which burrow up into their sinuses and cause them to rub their head on rocks, rub their noses until they raw, or even get infected to the point of blindness and even death.

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- To us that means asking for the Holy Spirit's control, filling, and leading – and then living under His guidance!
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- It means submitting my rebellious will for a periodic dip to purge the sin.
- It means being filled by God's Spirit moment by moment.
- Only God's Spirit can calm the irritations of life.
- Only God's Spirit can bring peace to my world.
- Only God's Spirit can restore me to regular feeding and growth.
- Not just in summertime do we need anointing, we need Him DAILY!

My Cup overflows

- As the shepherd anoints his sheep, pouring oil over their heads, rubbing their wounds, anointing their noses, something wonderful takes place.
- The animal's entire personality changes.
- Irritability leaves.
- Frustration ceases.
- Hostility departs.
- Focus returns.
- Sheep feed and grow.

The nose flies of the Christian life are catalogued in [Galatians 5: 19-21](#). They are called the works of the flesh. There are 15 named:

- Adultery
- Fornication
- Uncleaness
- Lewdness
- Idolatry
- Sorcery
- Hatred
- Contentions
- Jealousies
- Outbursts of wrath
- Selfish ambitions
- Dissensions
- Heresies
- Envy
- Murders
- Drunkenness
- Revelries

Most Christians usually shun seven of these nose flies. We are proud we don't do them. But eight reflect the irritations of the flesh of which most of us are guilty.

These pests are constantly buzzing around us and within us, causing unceasing harassment. We can swat at them, run from them, and try to hide from them. We can pretend they aren't there – but we can't eliminate them.

They create guilt and anxiety within and hostility without.

The only solution is found in Another.

My irritable personality must be exchanged for Another's.

The fruit of the Spirit is actually a list of Christ's personality traits when the Holy Spirit runs our lives. There are 9 evidences called the fruit of the Holy Spirit in [Galatians 5:22-23](#):

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Longsuffering
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

The Holy Spirit pours His oil of **LOVE** over the nose fly of **strife**, and brings **peace**.

The Holy Spirit pours His oil of **joy** over the nose fly of **envy**, and brings **peace**.

The Holy Spirit pours His oil of **peace** over the nose fly of **disputes**, and brings **peace**.

The Holy Spirit replaces my personality with Christ's.

The results are dramatic, life changing and overflowing.

There is always enough anointing left over for others, overflowing cup is meant to be shared.

The anointed head is for me.

The overflowing cup is for others.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.

Finally, is Jesus yours?

Jesus is all we need. He is our Good Shepherd ^[17], so we need no longer fear the outcome of our battle with evil. Christ has conquered! We have conquered! And we *will* conquer!

1. Lesson one: come to Christ for salvation. If you are empty, call out to Christ. Do not let yourself go through another day without coming to him. Be born again, receive life, be filled, be delivered, and join the victory parade! If you are spiritually dead—without resurrection life—under sin—under guilt—empty, Christ invites you to come to him: Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. ([Isaiah 55: 1, 2](#)) **The Spirit and the bride say**, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. ([Revelation 22:17](#))

2. Lesson two: look only to Christ for satisfaction. Cultivate human relationships, but do not look for ultimate fulfillment in them because they will disappoint you. Energetically pursue your career, but do not imagine that you will find transcending fulfillment in it. In Christ we have everything. May our prayer be: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. ([Philippians 3: 10](#))

3. Lesson three: be filled with Christ's spirit. Our lives can be victorious. Jesus has

been there before us; He has met the worst Satan can give and has been victorious. The most important factor in victorious Christian living is to be filled with the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit ([Romans 8:9](#)). Christ is the victor over temptation and sin. His very words to us are, "[T]ake heart! I have overcome the world" ([John 16:33](#)). When Martin Luther was asked how he overcame the Devil, he replied, "Well, when he comes knocking upon the door of my heart, and asks 'Who lives here?' the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, 'Martin Luther used to live here, but he has moved out. Now I live here.'" When Christ fills our lives, Satan has no entrance.

4. Lesson four: stay filled with Christ's word. The other factor in the victorious Christian Life is to be filled with God's Word. In response to each of the three temptations, Christ answered with Scripture ([Deuteronomy 8:3](#), [6:16](#), and [6:13](#)). He knew the truth of, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" ([Psalm 119:11](#)). Why is this so? God's Word reveals God's mind, and God's mind cannot be subject to sin. Therefore, if we fill our hearts with his Word, sin and temptation cannot dominate. [Psalm 23:1-6](#)

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, 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 runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever. NKJV

[1] Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

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[14] Drawn from, adapted, and quoted from Phillip Keller, [A Shepherd looks at the 23rd Psalm](#); Don Baker, [The Way of the Shepherd](#).

[15] Drawn from Don Baker, [The Way of the Shepherd](#), p. 2 and Harry Rimmer, [Science](#), p. 248.

[16] Don Baker, [The Way of the Shepherd](#), p. 18-19.

[17] Adapted, paraphrased and quoted from Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Colossians and Philemon—The Supremacy of Christ*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.