

HIS NAME IS WONDERFUL

STUDY EIGHT

The Shepherd of the Sheep

Selected Scriptures

You cannot hide from the Shepherd. You cannot ignore His voice. There is something irresistible about it. He finds you and draws you back to Him. I am so grateful He doesn't leave us when we wander from Him.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

OF all the animals God could have chosen to represent His people, He chose *sheep*.

Sheep are far from the most remarkable animals on the farm. They tend to gather in groups and move as a unit. Whenever one member of the flock wanders, the rest follow—even if they stray straight into danger. Sheep have no way to defend themselves, so when attacked by predators, they panic and flee on their spindly legs—easy prey for wolves.

Yes, sheep are essentially helpless. Without a shepherd to nourish, guide, and protect them, they wouldn't survive long at all.

The similarities between sheep and human beings are remarkable. People easily lose their way and wander into danger. They often fail to defend themselves from physical, emotional, and even spiritual harm. And they tend to lead one another directly into disaster's ruthless grip.



www.insight.org | www.insightworld.org



INSIGHT FOR LIVING
MINISTRIES

Copyright © 1988, 2022 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

S08
1

The Shepherd of the Sheep

Selected Scriptures

Like sheep, humans also need a shepherd. Not just another human shepherd, but a *divine* shepherd. This *Searching the Scriptures* study explores Jesus' identity as the shepherd and considers how He seeks to provide nourishment, guidance, and protection to His desperately needy sheep.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

David expressed his trust in God as his shepherd in the moving lines of *Psalms 23*. As you prepare to explore this theme further, join David on the Judean hillside overlooking his flock and pray his words as your own.

*The LORD is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.
He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.
Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.
You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the LORD
forever.*



The Shepherd of the Sheep

Selected Scriptures



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Despite David's honoring words about the *heavenly* shepherd, people in the ancient world placed *earthly* shepherds on the bottom rung of the social ladder. Shepherds worked and lived alone in the fields, excluded from the business and excitement of city life. They worked with stubborn animals, and they smelled just as bad as their woolly companions.

For these reasons, people only worked as shepherds when they had no other choice. Yet Jesus forfeited all the honor He had as the Son of God and willingly became human, so He could serve His creation as the shepherd it had always needed.





Observation and Interpretation: Knowing the Shepherd

Three passages in the New Testament discuss the significance of Jesus' role as shepherd: *John 10:1–17*; *Hebrews 13:20–21*; and *1 Peter 5:1–4*. As you observe and interpret each of these texts, consider what specific shepherding role Jesus fulfills in each passage.



The Shepherd of the Sheep

Selected Scriptures

The Chief Shepherd 1 Peter 5:1–4	
Peter knew firsthand the dangers that awaited his fellow followers of Jesus, and his letter offered exhortation to find hope in Jesus. Using the image of the shepherd, Peter showed how believers can serve one another. Though Jesus is the <i>Chief Shepherd</i> , He delegates some of His own responsibility to His sheep so they might guide, comfort, and nourish others in need.	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>What commands did Peter give his fellow elders in 1 Peter 5:2? In what manner are the elders to carry out these commands?</p> <p>According to 5:3, how are these earthly shepherds to guide their flock?</p> <p>According to 5:4, what will be the result if these shepherds carry out Peter’s exhortations faithfully?</p>	<p>How does Peter’s description of a shepherd differ from a typical, worldly depiction of a leader?</p> <p>Why is it important for spiritual shepherds to remember that Jesus is their Chief Shepherd?</p>

The flock is to be shepherded. It is not to be driven. You don’t drive sheep. You drive cattle. To get a racehorse to do his best, you strike him with a switch. But you don’t strike a sheep. You shepherd sheep. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



The Shepherd of the Sheep

Selected Scriptures



Application: Trusting the Shepherd

John affirmed Jesus as the *Good* Shepherd. The author of Hebrews acclaimed Jesus as the *Great* Shepherd. Peter acknowledged Jesus as the *Chief* Shepherd. Based on each of these three titles, Pastor Chuck developed three practical applications for Jesus' sheep.

1. The Good Shepherd does not lead down wrong paths. If He's leading you somewhere unknown, *risk* following His guiding voice.
2. The Great Shepherd can't ignore a wandering sheep. If He's calling you because you're wandering, *return* to Him.
3. The Chief Shepherd will not overlook any deed deserving reward. If He's being glorified in your thoughts, words, and deeds, *relax!*

In the space below, discuss a time when you've followed the Good Shepherd down an unknown path despite your own uncertainty. Why did you take the risk in the first place? What were the results of following His guiding hand?

Can you think of a time when you've strayed from the Great Shepherd? This memory may feel painful, but reflecting on the past often allows believers to see more clearly God's goodness in the present. What finally caused you to listen to His voice and return?



The Shepherd of the Sheep

Selected Scriptures

What flock has the Chief Shepherd given you to manage? It could be your congregation, your employees, or even your own family. What steps can you take to resemble Jesus as you seek to shepherd others?

As you wrap up your study, return to the Judean hillside with David and reread [Psalm 23](#). Write down some thoughts about what it means that Jesus is *your* Shepherd who meets all your needs.

The prophet Isaiah once said,

*All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.
We have left God's paths to follow our own (Isaiah 53:6).*

Yet he tempered this bleak reality with a message of everlasting hope:

*Yet the LORD laid on him
the sins of us all (53:6).*

Isaiah knew that a true shepherd would later come to lay down His own life so that His wandering and needy flock might live.



The Shepherd of the Sheep

Selected Scriptures



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for sending Your Son to be my Shepherd. Give me ears to listen to His voice. Strengthen my faith so that I might follow Him. I trust He will nourish me, protect me, and guide me into eternal pastures of joy, hope, and peace. I ask these things in His good name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

