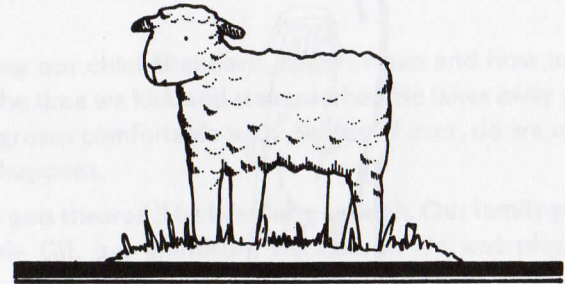


Sheep Need Full-Time Supervision Because They Must Be Sheared At The Right Time In The Right Season!

Characteristics of Sheep



The wool that protects the sheep in winter has to be removed in the summer. Too much wool prevents the body heat from dissipating. This causes the sheep to suffer and can lead to heat prostration. It is often necessary to shear them in winter. Dirt, grass and water can accumulate deep in the wool next to the skin. Should this mud-like substance freeze, it is harmful to the sheep. Sheep can't shear each other. They need to depend on the shepherd to do the shearing. When the wool is sheared, the sheep are providing for others. Wool is an absolutely unique product. Many have tried to make an imitation, but have failed.

A Shepherd's Care



The shepherd must shear the sheep. On a trip to Israel I watched a shepherd clipping his sheep. He had to have help from a small boy. The sheep was bleating and kicking like crazy. The shepherd sat on the body of the animal and the boy held the feet. It sounded like the shepherd was killing the animal. He was taking his time, knowing this procedure was necessary for the health of the sheep. The reaction of the sheep didn't hinder the performance of the shepherd. Sheep kick and bleat when sheared for the first time. They are quiet and allow the shepherd to shear them the second time. They learn from living with the shepherd that he cares for them. They trust him to do what is necessary. An experienced shepherd recognizes which sheep need shearing. He knows it is for their protection and the wool is the product or reward the shepherd has for his work.

ANOTHER REASON FOR THE SHEPHERD TO HONOR HIS COMMITMENT AND PROVIDE FULL-TIME SUPERVISION FOR THE SHEEP!

Characteristics of People

God, being our chief Shepherd, knows when and how to shear us. Most of the time we kick and scream when He takes away something we have grown comfortable with. Seldom if ever, do we understand why this happens.

Everyone gets sheared if he lives long enough. Our family got sheared when little Gil, our grandson, became ill. He was playing in my yard with his new toy when the time came to go home. I picked him up to put him in his mom's car and realized he was very warm with fever. Several days later he was diagnosed as having bacterial meningitis. The doctor looked Dawn straight in the eye and said, "Mrs. McWhorter, if your baby lives, he can be a vegetable. He can be mentally retarded, blind, deaf, paralyzed, any or all of the above. He has so much bacteria in his spinal fluid that it appears milky and I could see it with the naked eye. We have started him on an intravenous antibiotic and there is nothing more we can do. You pray for us." With this announcement, the doctor walked away. He did not mean to be unkind, he was being honest with us.

Gil was put in intensive care for 3 days and was hospitalized for 12 days. During these days Dawn and her husband, Curry were wonderful. They had great faith in God. There were many praying for this little boy. Dawn and Curry kept saying that Gil would be fine because they were trusting God.

When Gil was able to open his eyes and look around we noticed that he did not respond to sound. He could not sit up nor could he hold up his head. We propped him up in the bed to give him some juice and he fell over on his side. We all thought it was due to his weakened condition.

When Gil was physically able, he was tested. The test proved that he had lost his equilibrium and 80% of his hearing. The therapist told Dawn that this was nerve damage and it would never be any

better. She said, "You can take him anywhere in the world but the nerve damage can not be repaired. You should get hearing aids and begin therapy at once. Work fast so he will not forget the few words he has learned before this illness."

Dawn was sobbing and almost hysterical. I took Gil from her arms and she grabbed her pocketbook and ran. She went home and went to bed. I did not blame her. I wanted to run with her. Looking at that precious baby in that hospital bed, I wanted to scream and kick.

Sam came immediately to the hospital. Curry went home to be with Dawn. I sat in a chair and cried. Gil was cut off from us. We could not reach him. Would he ever hear another sound? Could he ever hear us tell him we love him?

I had two pains, one for my grandchild and the other for my child. I did not want either of them to suffer. When I stopped crying I was so weak I felt I could not drive my car to Dawn's apartment. I had to sit in a chair and wait for my strength to return. I remember sitting in that chair and talking to God. I had been dealt a mighty blow and I was down. I had been sheared. My daughter and my son-in-law had been sheared. I started remembering all I had learned about sheep, how they fall down and need the shepherd to get them up on their feet. I asked God to help me. I asked Him to get me up quickly and get me on my feet so I could help my children. I needed my strength renewed.

I thought about the fact that we are all like sheep and sheep get sheared. We were comfortable with Gil being a hearing child. We did not want this part of this little boy to be taken away. Why had God allowed this to happen? This is a question that has no answer.

The Shepherd's Care

Dawn asked me this question as soon as I got to her apartment. "Mom, why has God done this to me?" I told her, "I have no idea! I know that God is love and He has our best interest at heart. This is not my desire for Gil but because I know God's love and I know He allows things to happen and can turn the bad into good, we must trust Him in this situation. Gil's hearing is gone. We wanted it back. We can scream and kick or we can be still and see God at work. The choice is ours."

I reminded Dawn of that great passage in Hebrews chapter 12. These verses had seen me through difficult times in the past. I had memorized the verses found there: "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. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (verses 2-7)

In Webster's dictionary the definition of the word chasten means to inflict pain for the purpose of reclaiming an offender. I looked in Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. In the Greek language, the word chasten denotes to train children. It suggests the broad idea of education. Hebrews was written in Greek, not English. It makes a big difference in understanding the verse when you see the original meaning of this word. We did not feel God was reclaiming us as offenders but we knew we needed to be

educated. The use of the word in Hebrews means educating by the infliction of calamities. This is what God is doing in our lives. Frankly, we would prefer another way of being taught but we must believe and accept the fact that God knows what He is doing and it is best for all involved.

I would go to any extreme, spend any amount of money to have Gil's hearing restored but I thank God for all the wonderful lessons He has taught me through this calamity.

Dawn and Curry were told by the doctor that Gil would soon learn to visually compensate for his loss of equilibrium. This determined little guy was soon on his feet walking. He took many a fall but he kept getting up and trying again. He now walks and runs and climbs trees like any normal three-year-old.

Before he learned to walk we had him in a playpen on the deck. His uncle Mark whistled so loud, we covered our ears. Little Gil's eyes began to glow, he smiled a big smile. He heard the whistle. We all cried because of the look of excitement on his face. This was the first sound he had heard since his illness. Gil has regained some of his hearing and with the use of hearing aids is hearing in the normal range in one ear and is considered to have a mild loss in the other. He is talking now. Each word he says brings excitement to the family. One day as he was leaving my house, I kissed him on the cheek and said, "I love you." He smiled, looked me in the eye and said, "I love you." We cried with joy. My other two grandsons talk constantly. We find ourselves wishing they would be quiet for a few minutes! Gil has afforded us great pleasure in these last few months. We look forward to watching him grow as he overcomes this handicap.

Benefits of being in shape

God is teaching us to trust Him. One year after Gil's illness, he stuck a stick in his ear. Dawn ran to get him but was too late. He had fallen and the stick went into his ear canal and destroyed his ear drum. He had to go into the hospital and have surgery to repair the ear drum.

Curry was at work so I had to drive Dawn to the hospital. She laughed as we walked into the emergency room and said to me, "Well, mom, it is true that you never know what a day will bring."

I thought of those kicking, bleating sheep. Dawn was not running away from this scene. She was learning from it. She had spent one year in the special care of her Shepherd and she had learned that He is capable of caring for her. She trusts Him more today than she did yesterday. Her goal in life is to trust Him even more tomorrow.

God educates us as we see Him provide for us through good times as well as through bad ones. None of us wants the bad times but they will come along. In John chapter 33 verse 16 Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The same Jesus that said He is love and that He died for us, tells us the world will give us tribulation. We get pleasure from thinking about His love and we are grateful that His death affords us salvation and freedom from the penalty of sin. We consider it negative to think about having tribulation. The truth is that we must consider both sides of the coin. We need to accept the truth of what Jesus said, prepare ourselves for what might happen and trust Him to protect us in His own way. We can even cheer up as we believe He has overcome the world.

God knows what He is doing. He knows the best thing for us and He is willing to sit on us and keep clipping while we kick. He loves us so much that He will let us kick. That is real love.

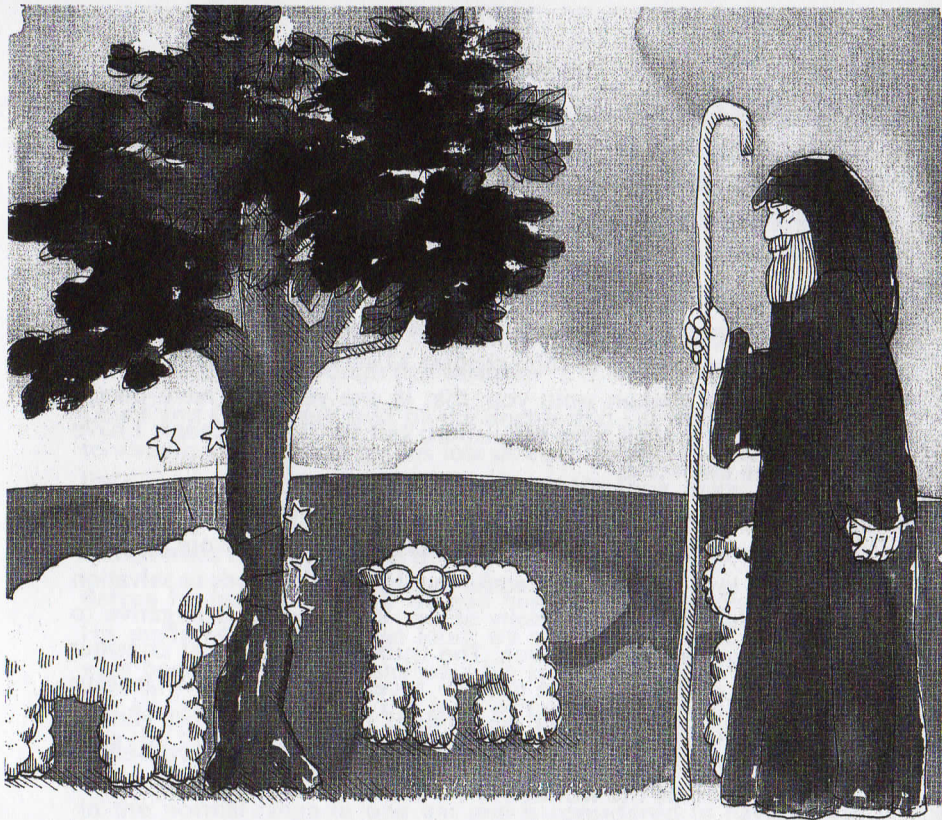
God will shear us. He will take away something we have grown accustomed to having. He will do this because He knows it is best for us. It will not be something we want to give up but when we relax and accept our losses as being from the loving hand of God, we begin to learn and to grow.

For our own good, we need to trust God to take away from us what needs to be removed. We will stop fighting God as we see the benefit that comes from shearing.

The heart of this book is to help you understand the importance of being in shape because you never know when you will be sheared!

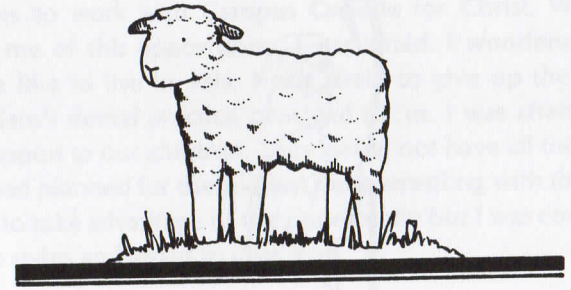
Clipping to a sheep in shape can be a shear delight!

Like sheep, we need to be sheared!



Sheep Need Full-Time Supervision Because Their Vision Is Impaired When They Are Not Sheared!

Characteristics of Sheep



Sheep can see only a short distance in front of them unless the wool is trimmed from their face. Shearing is a necessary process for the sheep. It is not a pleasant experience for them. Without it not only are they in danger of freezing or heat prostration, but their vision is limited. We can't interview sheep to determine their attitude following the shearing but we can observe the improvement in their vision. They are better able to see the provisions of the shepherd. This builds stronger confidence in their shepherd.

A Shepherd's Care



An experienced loving shepherd knows the importance of good vision. He is very interested in the sheep building confidence in him through being aware of his provisions.

ANOTHER REASON FOR THE SHEPHERD TO HONOR HIS COMMITMENT AND PROVIDE FULL-TIME SUPERVISION FOR THE SHEEP!

Characteristics of People

In 1972 Sam and I with our three children moved to Manila, Philippines to work with Campus Crusade for Christ. When Sam first told me of this opportunity, I was afraid. I wondered what it would be like to live in Asia. I was afraid to give up the financial security Sam's dental practice provided for us. I was afraid of what would happen to our children. They would not have all the material things I had planned for them. I lost sleep wrestling with these fears. I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity but I was comfortable in my life styles and afraid to give it up.

When we arrived in Manila, I could hardly believe my eyes. The airport had been burned. It was raining. It kept raining and Manila experienced the worst flood in more than 100 years. School was closed. We sat in our apartment for 3 weeks with no telephone, no television, no newspaper, no friends. We cried and begged Sam to take us home. He laughs now as he recalls that each night before we went to bed we took a vote whether to go home or stay. It was always 4 to 1! Sam's 1 vote carried and we stayed.

Finally the sun came out and school started. Living in Manila was like going back in time 100 years. The streets were full of potholes. We shopped in an open market where fly covered meat hung from the ceiling. Fish were flapping on the tables and the chickens walked around in their cages.

Often the telephone didn't work, and each day the lights unexpectedly went out for an indefinite period of time. We settled in to a nice house and soon the children began to make friends. They went to a wonderful school. The teachers were the best. There were so many activities that they found it hard to select the ones in which they wanted to get involved.

I began to see how dependent I was on “things”. I couldn’t go out and buy a dress for myself or a shirt for Sam. There were no ready-made clothes in our sizes. I had to purchase material, find a dressmaker and a tailor and have all our clothes made.

Nothing was easy about life in Manila. It took so much time to do anything. We lived 4 miles from the downtown area and I have spent as much as 2 hours in the car trying to get home because of the congested traffic.

Sleeping through a traffic jam

One day I sat in my new air conditioned car waiting for a traffic jam to clear up. I had been to teach a Bible class in a downtown church. My son, Sam had driven me. This was during the rainy season and the streets were flooded. Cars had to creep along or the water would cause them to stall.

It was 9:00 at night and we had not had dinner! The temperature was in the high 80’s and it was raining. The humidity was so high that the air conditioning in the car had little effect on the temperature. Sam III and I sat for 15 minutes at a crowded intersection. After 5 minutes I was out of patience. I could not believe how dumb these people were. If they would only put up lights to control the traffic. If only they realized that they could not all go through this intersection at the same time.

I was so mad I was even yelling at Sam (as if he could do anything about the situation)! There was a bus waiting next to our car. You could not see through the bus because of the number of people packed in it. I saw one old lady who appeared to be in her seventies. She was packed in that bus like a sardine in a can. She could not move and I was surprised that she could even breathe. She had her hand on the bar above her head and her head was bowed. I realized she was sound asleep.

I will never forget that lady. There I was, the missionary, so mad I could hardly sit still in my new air conditioned car with the bucket seats. This dear lady was so peaceful she could sleep while standing on a hot, musty, crowded bus!

I felt convicted over my attitude. I saw myself with a new set of eyes and I was ashamed. Here I sat, impatient, selfish, mad and hostile. I will never forget that little old lady on the bus. I don’t know her name, yet God used her to show me what I looked like to Him. This has happened to me many times since, and it is always terrible. Conviction is a bad feeling but a necessary one. We are blind to our sins and it takes the Spirit of God to open our eyes to see the truth about ourselves. However, I don’t have much trouble seeing sin in others!

God removed the comforts of home, the pleasure of conveniences, the joy of friends and the security of family to help me see myself. It was hard going through this shearing process but now in retrospect, I “see” that it was worth it. I would not trade those few hard years for anything.

There were many days I felt our future looked bleak. I worried about how we would be able to educate our children. I worried about sending them 12,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean to college and seeing them only once every two or three years. There were times I would walk by young Sam’s bedroom and cry. He was a senior in high school and I dreaded the day he would leave for college in the states. God dealt with my fearful attitude as I flew to an island south of Manila.

The Shepherd's Care

Sam and I went to the Island of Cebu to speak at a conference. We were flying on a Philippine Airlines plane. The captain's voice came over the loudspeaker. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking from the flight deck. Our cabin is not pressurized and we will be forced to fly at a low altitude. We will be encountering turbulence so please buckle your seat belt. We will be late arriving in Cebu. We hope you enjoy your flight!

I had my seat belt buckled so I sank down in my seat, heaved a huge sigh and talked to God. I said, "Well God, I don't care if this dumb airplane crashes. I wish I were dead anyway. I am sick of life, I don't like living in this place and I am tired of worrying about my future. I can't bear to send my children to the U.S. and be so far from them. I hate homemade clothes. I am tired of being hot. Just let this plane fall into the South China Sea and let me die and get out of this mess!

With that prayer I picked up my Bible and opened it to read and help pass the time away. I did not have another book or I am sure I would have read it instead.

I had the Living Bible and it fell open to the Psalms. I tell you the truth. I lie not! I looked on page 485 and saw these words: "And look! See the ships! And over there, the whale you made to play in the sea. Every one of these depends on you to give them daily food. You supply it, and they gather it. You open wide your hand to feed them and they are satisfied with all your bountiful provision." That is Psalm 104 verses 26-28.

We were flying low over the beautiful South China Sea. I looked out of my window and just below, close enough for me to see were two ships. I could not believe my eyes. It was as though God was speaking to me saying, "Look out the window!" I watched those

two ships slowly making their way to their destined port. I realized that in that sea were thousands of fish. God was providing for them and they were satisfied.

Here I sat, wishing I were dead. I have had more "things" than most people have even heard about. I have been loved and treated kindly by my family and my friends. I have traveled and seen the world. And, I have opportunity to share my faith. I have the unbelievable privilege of knowing the God of all Creation!

I prayed, "Oh, Lord, when will I learn? Forgive me for my impatience, my anger and my hostility. Cause my love to increase and abound toward all men. Put a song in my heart and give me a thankful spirit."

God had done it again! He had showed me myself. My eyes were beginning to be open to what I looked like to Him. My vision was improving.

I know now that God had to shear away my homeland, my family members and friends in order for me to see my own heart. I was blind and He wanted me to see! God doesn't open our eyes to all our problems at once. It would be too hard for us. He continues to increase our vision as we give Him the freedom to do so.

Proverbs 29:18 "Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." Perish means to waste away, to be in a state of decay, to be wasted or rendered useless. This is the state of a man who is mad, bitter, hostile, haughty, proud, selfish, discontent and filled with self pity.

Happy is the man who lets God change his heart. It is always beneficial when God shears His people. He knows what He is doing. It may seem at times that God is sitting on us clipping away and this process will never end. We must remember that God loves us and has the power to cause us to prosper through mishap or tragedy. We easily forget this, therefore it is necessary that we have a reminder. Sheep are the best reminders I know. I must never forget that I am like one. God tells me so and He ought to know. He made me! Like sheep, to improve our vision, we need to be sheared!