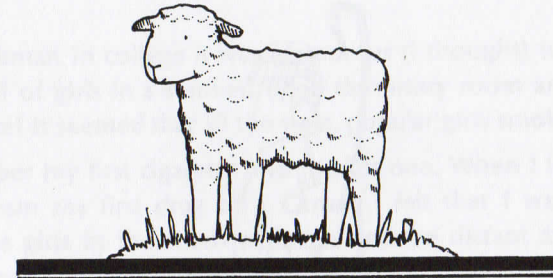




Characteristics of Sheep



When the enemy attacks, sheep are unable to defend themselves. They are not swift runners. Their bite is harmless. Most have no horns! This leaves them as easy prey. Many of their predators pass them by unless they are real hungry. It seems they want the challenge of a fight to work up an appetite!

Sheep Need Full-Time Supervision Because They Are Defenseless!

A Shepherd's Care



The shepherd carries a rod to ward off predators. An experienced shepherd is aware that his sheep are unable to defend themselves. He knows they can't find food, they won't drink water, they fall and can't get up. They need to be sheared and they have a tendency to go astray.

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

Characteristics of People

As a freshman in college it was glamorous (I thought) to pile onto a bed full of girls in a smoked filled dormitory room and light up a cigarette! It seemed that all the neat, popular girls smoked.

I remember my first cigarette and my last one. When I inhaled the smoke from my first drag of a Camel, I felt that I was going to faint! The girls in the room with me became distant and I could hardly hear their voices. This only lasted for a few minutes. I was determined to try another drag. I was going to learn to smoke!

The second drag was not so bad. Each one got easier and affected me less and less. I loved smoking. Nothing better than a cup of coffee and a cigarette!

I was up to about one pack a day when the word got out that these cigarettes might be dangerous. They were enemies of the human lungs.

My dad died with lung cancer at age 60 and my brother who is a surgeon told me his cancer was caused by smoking. After the funeral we went to mother's and I lit a cigarette. I will never forget my brother looking at me and saying, "How can you do that after what we have been through with dad?"

I put that cigarette out and determined to smoke no more. It did not take long for me to realize that it was going to take more than determination to get this habit out of my system.

I struggled for years trying to stop smoking. I did everything I knew to do. I found the habit more than I could handle. During my struggle I became a Christian. A friend suggested that I pray about this problem. She suggested that I ask God to give me the strength to stop smoking. I thought God had more important things to do than help me with smoking. She reminded me that I am a child of God and just as human parents are concerned for the needs of their children, God is concerned about every part of our being.

This made sense to me so I prayed and asked God to give me the strength to stop smoking. Nothing happened. I kept yielding to the desire for the cigarette and wondering why God was not helping me. I called my friend to discuss the matter. She pointed out that God was not going to come down from heaven and remove the cigarette from my lips or take it from my hand. I had to decide to give it up. I had to decide to stop smoking and go through the hard times of wanting to smoke. It would not be easy but when I turned from the desire, I would find strength from the Lord. I asked God to take away the desire. One day as I struck a match and lifted it toward my face to light a cigarette, I realized that God would take away the desire to smoke, when I stopped smoking. I blew out the match, threw the cigarettes in the garbage and said, "Lord, I will quit smoking. Now you give me the strength I am going to need to get over wanting the nicotine."

That was not the last time I wanted a cigarette. It was the last time I smoked. As I refused to yield to the desire, I began to experience the power of God in my life. I noticed that soon the desire was slipping away from me. God was working in my life, guiding me, being my Shepherd.

I realize that you can stop smoking without God. Thousands have done it. I just happened to be one who could not.

Smoking is certainly not the worst enemy man encounters. There are too many to list. Smoking just happens to be one enemy that has the possibility of eating you alive (with cancer).

Ulcer hour remedy

Alcohol is another enemy. I had to fight that one too. This one I fought without God. I managed to conquer it alone. When my three children were under three years of age, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. were ulcer hours. Sam seldom came home before 6 o'clock.

I found that if I had a drink about 4 o'clock I calmed down. If I had another one about 4:30 I was even calmer. When I added one a half-hour later I played with the children! Drinking helped me through the nerve racking hours of the late afternoon.

One afternoon I was sitting in the yard with a neighbor. The children were playing quietly in the sandbox. The neighbor and I were drinking vodka. Time came to go home and prepare dinner. I got

up and started walking home. I couldn't find the house. I kept looking and soon it came by. I started for the front door. My children were following me saying, "Mama, what is the matter with you?" I was drunk! Never in my life had I been so horrified. I was not raised to be a drunk. My parents taught me better, and my husband certainly deserved better than this.



I went straight to my bed, crawled under the cover, pulled it over my head and cried. When Sam came home I told him I had the flu! I was ashamed. I did not want Sam to know I was drunk.

That day I determined never to allow this to happen again. I was not a Christian but I knew this road led to a dead end. I don't know why I could give up alcohol and not cigarettes but that is the way it was.

The strong sex drive can be an enemy. God created us with this drive. He told us sex was meant for marriage. We are warned about having multiple sex partners. This is a cause of the spread of venereal diseases. We know that these diseases are enemies of the human body. In order to prevent the spread of these diseases we should not engage in sexual activities outside the bonds of marriage.

It would be stupid to say we should not desire to have sex but who ever said we should have everything we want? We need a shepherd who will protect us from our enemies. One who will give us the strength we need when we decide to turn from the things that are harmful to our body.

We have many more enemies. Lying, deceit, anger and bitterness are listed in the Bible as works of the flesh. I consider the flesh to be our greatest enemy. The flesh is our fallen nature. It is in us and with us 24 hours each day!

Damaging deceit

I asked Dr. Brandt what he considered to be the most serious marriage problem today. I was shocked at his answer. He quickly said "deceit". Deceit is a dangerous, deadly enemy. It is one that is hard to fight. It causes serious problems with man's mental health. A person can be a fake for so long that he really has a hard time deciding who he is. You can push your real feelings so far inside of you that you can't find them.

Being deceitful means you say one thing and believe another or you act a certain way and feel just the opposite.

I met a friend from college days. I never did like this girl. I did not like the way she wore her hair and I hated her laugh. I remember closing the door of my dormitory room when I heard her in the hall. I did not want her coming in my room to visit me.

Years after graduating I saw this girl in the grocery store. I could not avoid speaking to her. I said, "Hello it is good to see you. How have you been?" After our conversation I invited her to come to see me. We parted company and I finished my shopping. I remember walking out of the store and seeing a reflection of myself in the window.

I looked at that reflection and felt sick. I even said to myself, "You make me sick!" I got in the car and drove home. I wished I could hide. I am not sure I knew what was wrong with me. I felt dirty.

I was sick of being nice to my friends and screaming at my children. I was sick of talking so nicely on the telephone and being so nasty to my family.

My behavior caused me mental anguish. One afternoon the telephone rang. I ran to answer it and saw my children spreading mud on the windows of my house. I could not believe they were doing this. I screamed as loud as I could for them to get away from the window. I picked up the phone and as nice and sweet as possible, I said, "Hello"!

I felt like a plate glass window that someone had just thrown a brick through. I was shattered on the inside. I wanted the floor to open so I could drop out of sight. My deceit was killing me. I wanted my friends to think I was a nice, sweet, charming lady. My family saw that I was a raging tyrant.

Being deceitful was a big enemy to me. I needed a defense. I needed a Shepherd to care for me and lead me to safety. I wanted to be honest. I wanted to be real. I hated having to change the look on my face, the tone of my voice and the subject of my conversation when someone outside the family walked into my life.



The Shepherd's Care

We are told in the Bible that we have three enemies. The world, the flesh and the devil. We are constantly tempted by the world. We desire to be popular and to have the desires of our heart. Some men and women want power or position. Nothing wrong with popularity, things, power or position. It is a matter of priority. We need to care more what God thinks of us than man. When this is our attitude, God takes care of our enemies. Proverbs 16:7 "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

We should delight ourselves in (obey) God and He will give us the desires of our heart. Psalm 37:4. Trust God with your powers and positions in life. Matthew 23:12 "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

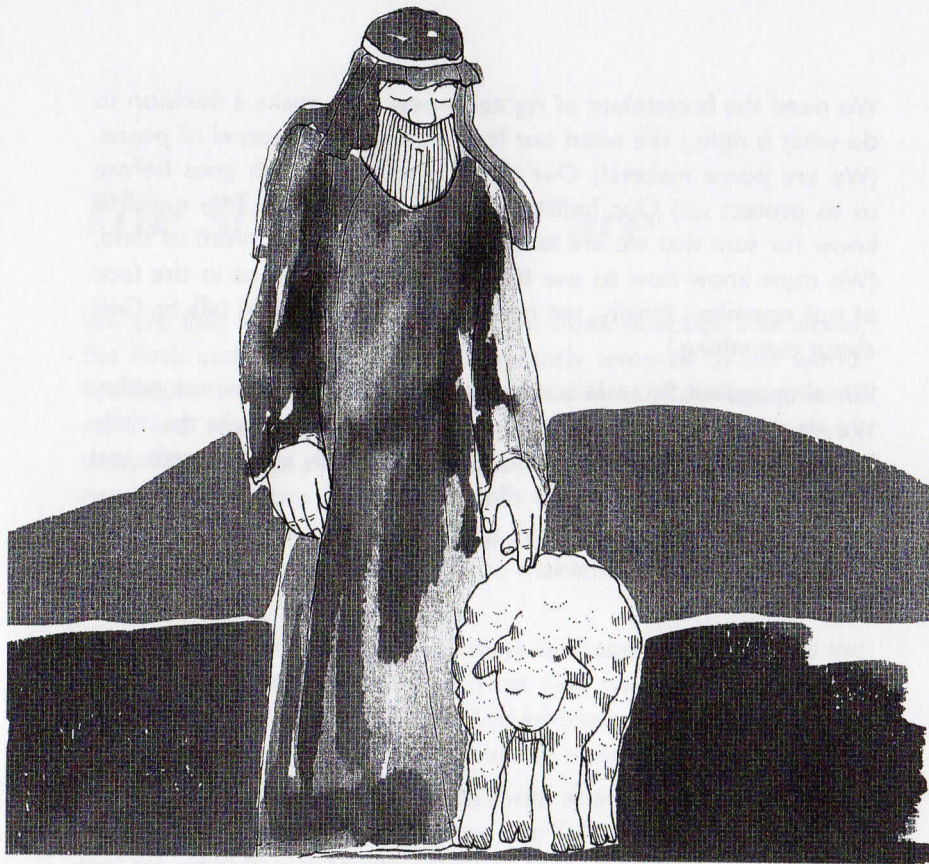
In Ephesians chapter 6 we are told about another enemy, the devil. He is the ruler of darkness, strong and full of tricks. God tells us that we need to put on our armor so that we will be able to stand against him. We are told to use every piece of the armor to resist when he attacks.



We need the breastplate of righteousness. (We make a decision to do what is right.) We need our feet shod with the gospel of peace. (We are peace makers!) Our shield is of faith. (Faith goes before us to protect us.) Our helmet must be of salvation. (We need to know for sure that we are saved.) Our sword is the Word of God. (We must know how to use Bible verses to defend us in the face of our enemies.) Finally, we need to pray. (We should talk to God about everything.)

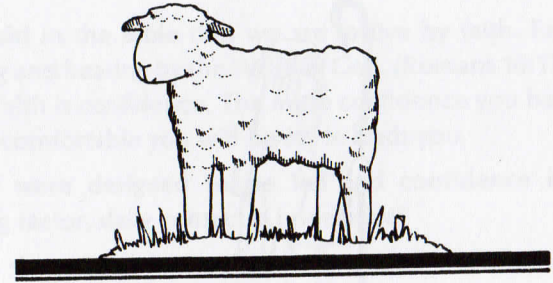
Winning against Satan is accomplished by the decisions we make. We decide if we want to have on the armor. We fight the daily battles trusting God to lead us, give us wisdom and strength and to keep us standing when it is all over.

Like sheep, man is defenseless and needs a Shepherd!



Sheep Need Full-Time Supervision Because They Need His Daily Touch!

Characteristics of Sheep



Sheep will come to the shepherd daily and rub against his legs or wait for a pat on the head. Once he has had a bit of personal attention from the shepherd, the sheep leaves satisfied for the day. Satisfied sheep eat, drink, get fat and grow wool. They fulfill the purpose for which they were created.

A Shepherd's Care



Prospering shepherds are those with satisfied sheep. The shepherd must make himself available to the sheep. He must reach out to them. The touch of the shepherd satisfies the sheep. An experienced shepherd desires satisfaction for his flock and through himself meets this need.

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

Characteristics of People

We are told in the Bible that we are to live by faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. (Romans 10:17) Another word for faith is confidence. The more confidence you have in Him, the more comfortable you will be as He leads you.

Since we were designed to be led and confidence is the key motivating factor, daily contact is imperative!

Men, like sheep were created to have a need of daily contact with The Shepherd!

I have never been able to designate a certain time each day for my prayer and Bible study. Something always seemed to come up and interfere. I was frustrated and at times even angry that I had been interrupted.

I planned to pray and read my Bible daily so I looked for a time. I remember when my children were in school and I was driving in a car pool, I could enjoy Bible study waiting in the lines at the school. There were no telephones, no dishes to wash, no clothes waiting to be folded and put away. I always took my Bible on the days I picked up the children. This was truly a quiet time for me.

The Shepherd's Care

I don't mean to imply that a quiet time is the only contact you have with The Shepherd. If you have committed yourself to Him for full-time supervision, He is with you continuously.

PART II

All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray, We Have Turned Everyone To His Own Way . . .

Having studied the first part of Isaiah 53:6, let's look at the second part: "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."

It is our nature to want our own way. This is a natural tendency for all of us. We get involved in obtaining what we want and it is possible for us to forget everything else except reaching our goal.

When sheep find pasture, their only interest is eating. Their main concern is the next blade of grass. It is easy to stray as they nibble away with their eye on the grass instead of the shepherd.

Since the sheep don't watch the shepherd, the shepherd must watch the sheep. He walks among them as they eat and makes sure they stay near him. If just one little lamb strays from the fold, the shepherd goes to bring him back. We, like sheep have a strong tendency to become preoccupied with satisfying our own desires and we easily wonder away from The Shepherd. This strong tendency was first manifested in the garden of Eden.

When God formed the universe, He put the stars in place, the sun began to shine and the trees stood tall. The green grass grew and