

The Good Shepherd

*“He calls his own sheep by name...
they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”
John 10:3 (NIV)*

The biblical imagery of our Saviour as a Shepherd is rich beyond description. This metaphor is also used of Jehovah in the Old Testament. For example Psalm 23:1 says, “The Lord is my Shepherd...”. Jesus took this title for Jehovah from the Old Testament for Himself and said He was the Shepherd of His people.

Two of the many details in the relationship between sheep and the Shepherd are the matters of the Shepherd calling His sheep by name and voice recognition.

In his fine book on the history and culture of the holy land, *In the Steps of the Master*, H. V. Morton tells of the way a shepherd there works with his flock. When Morton spent some time in the holy land he was out early one morning and saw a cave where two flocks of sheep had been sheltered all night.

One of the shepherds emerged from the cave, stood a short distance from it, and called his sheep. One by one they came

out until his entire flock was by his side. Then the second shepherd did the same. The sheep only came when they heard their own shepherd call.

When Jesus spoke about the shepherd and the sheep He was clearly describing a sight the people all knew and understood. The shepherd does know his sheep by name and they will only respond when they hear his distinctive voice.

When we use a person’s name in conversation it is a good tool for drawing close to the person. If you see a casual acquaintance and are able to address them by name the person has the sense that you cared enough to keep their name in your memory.

Our Lord wants His people to know the intimacy that comes from Him using their names when He speaks to them. The relationship between Jesus and His people is close and intimate. If you are one of Jesus’ sheep you hear His voice as you read the Gospels. You recognize the tender tones and gentle words of guidance He

speaks to you from the Scriptures.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) put it so well in a hymn when he wrote:

*I love my Shepherd’s voice: His watchful eye shall keep
My wand’ring soul among The thousands of His sheep:
He feeds His flock, He calls their names, His bosom bears the tender lambs.*

Is your heart not drawn toward this gentle and loving Shepherd? Do you not know that you may entrust your entire life and safety to the Shepherd Who calls His sheep by name? Jesus said He gave His life for the sheep such is His love. Read John 10:1-18 and see that Jesus gives abundant life to all His sheep. Listen to Him today and come, receive the abundant life He offers. Tell Jesus you wish to follow Him and He shall speak your name and lead you today, tomorrow, and forever.

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