

for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep _____ a shepherd.

And Peter wrote this about believers in Jesus in 1 Peter 2:25... *For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and _____ of your souls.*

But, most significantly, Jesus, in one of His "I Am" statements, found in **John, chapter 10**, says this about Himself, as our Shepherd and we, who believe in Him, as His sheep... **verses 11 – 16...**

11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 "He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

Also....look at what He says about Himself, and us, in **verses 2-4...**

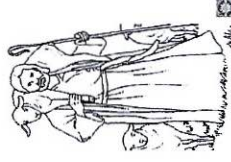
"But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is the Shepherd talked about in the most beloved Psalm of the 150 Psalms in the Old Testament collection...**Psalm 23**...the Psalm that we're going to study in the coming weeks.

[Answers: head butting, sheep, pasture, astray, lost, without, Guardian]

Exploring Psalm 23

SHEEP FACTS



DID YOU KNOW...

Sheep:

- travel quite a bit
- are really quite timid and fearful
- are rarely alone
- have no top teeth
- always lie down when finished eating
- are almost totally dependent on humans for their survival
- cannot clean themselves
- can sleep both standing up and lying down
- can run at around 25 mph when escaping predators
- have rectangular pupils that give them almost 360-degree vision without moving their heads.
- instinctively self-medicate by selecting specific plants when they feel unwell.
- form strong bonds with other sheep and humans.
- wool is an amazing fiber—breathable, temperature regulating and fire retardant.
- are known for being stubborn

Sheep behavior

Behavior is defined as an animal's response to its environment. A basic understanding of sheep behavior will make raising and handling sheep less stressful for both the sheep and shepherd. It will also dismiss the notion that sheep are stupid.

Flocking behavior

Sheep are best known for their strong **flocking** (herding) and **following** instinct. They will run from what frightens them and band together in large groups for protection. This is the only protection they have from predators. There is safety in numbers. It is harder for a predator to pick a sheep out of a group than to go after a few strays. Flocking instinct varies by breed, with the fine wool breeds being the most social.

Follow the leader

When one sheep moves, the rest will follow, even if it is not a good idea. The **flocking** and **following** instinct of sheep is so strong that it caused the death of 400 sheep in 2006 in eastern Turkey. The sheep plunged to their death after one of the sheep tried to cross a 50 foot deep ravine, and the rest of the flock followed.

Even from birth, lambs are taught to follow the older members of the flock. Ewes encourage their lambs to follow. The dominant members of the flock usually lead, followed by the submissive ones. If there is a ram in the flock, he usually leads.

Social

Sheep are a very social animal. In a grazing situation, they need to see other sheep. In fact, ensuring that sheep always have visual contact with other sheep will prevent excess stress when moving or handling them. According to animal behaviorists, a group of five sheep is usually necessary for sheep to display their normal **flocking** behavior. A sheep will become highly agitated if it is separated from the rest of the flock.

In addition to serving as a protection mechanism against predators, this **flocking** and **following** instinct enables humans to care for large numbers of sheep. It makes sheep easier to move, or drive, and enables a guardian dog to provide protection for a large flock. Domestication and thousands of generations of human contact has further strengthened this trait in sheep.

Domestication has also favored the non-aggressive, docile nature of sheep, making it easier for people, especially women and children, to care for sheep. Sheep were one of the earliest animals to be domesticated, and they have been thoroughly domesticated. It is doubtful they could survive in the wild, if a predator risk existed.

And one more behavior...

_____ is both a natural and learned behavior in sheep.

Sheep and the Scriptures

In the Bible, God likens humans to sheep, and two specific groups in particular...the people of Israel...and believers in Jesus Christ.

In **Psalms 79:13** the people of Israel are referred to as "**the** _____ of God's _____."

Isaiah (53:6) says that "**all people, like sheep, have gone** _____" from the Lord.

Jeremiah (50:6) says the people of Israel were "**sheep**" having been led astray by their "**shepherds**," the religious and political leaders of the nation.

Matthew wrote (9:35-36) that...³⁵ **Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.** ³⁶ **Seeing the people, He felt compassion**