

Being A Sheep

Joe Slater

Cyber-bullies berate people who disagree with them, calling them sheep. On social media being a sheep means you are naïve, gullible, and generally lacking in smarts. You just follow wherever the herd goes, even if it's over a cliff!

God is no bully, cyber or otherwise; yet He refers to us as sheep. Sometimes that's because we act foolishly. *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way"* (Isaiah 53:6). Let's face it – sometimes our behavior betrays the fact that we aren't the sharpest knives in the drawer!

All too often we go along with the herd instead of thinking things through and acting individually. That's what most Israelites did when ten of the twelve spies discouraged them from invading Canaan (Numbers 14:1-10). Following the crowd cost those rebels 39 more years of trudging around in the wilderness. After they died, their children inherited the Promised Land.

But being a sheep isn't always bad! Wise sheep follow a good shepherd. Jesus said, *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by my own"* (John 10:14). Jesus doesn't ask for "blind faith." He has earned our trust. We follow Him because we know Him to be faithful.

Jesus entrusted the care of His sheep in local churches to shepherds. We commonly refer to them as elders and overseers, but they have been charged to shepherd (pastor) the flock of God which is among them (1 Peter 5:2). Churches appoint qualified men whom they trust to shoulder this heavy responsibility. Every sheep in the flock ought to strive to make the shepherds' task as easy as possible. Be a sheep, not a billy goat!

Unexpected Visitors

For as long as I have been preaching, people have told me that the reason they weren't at church services was because they had "unexpected visitors." This explanation is usually offered without any shame or embarrassment, indicating that in their way of thinking, their behavior was totally acceptable.

But suppose it was the worship hour and, instead of participating in this assembly of exhortation, study, and praise, you are at home entertaining some "unexpected visitors." And, while you're entertaining these "unexpected visitors," another "unexpected visitor" drops in – Jesus. Friends, when Jesus does decide to unexpectedly drop in, I don't think any of us would want to be found neglecting spiritual matters in favor of worldly matters.

My concern is that these "unexpected visitors" are revealing our misplaced priorities. For example, what if "unexpected visitors" dropped in at the time of your child's graduation from high school, at a time when you were expected to be at work, or when you were expected to attend a wedding or funeral of a close friend? Wouldn't we explain we had a prior commitment? Of course, we would. If that is the case, then what are we to conclude when one misses his appointment with the Lord to entertain visitors?

The privilege of wearing the name of Christ requires us to make many sacrifices in life. It may cause some of our friends or family to think we are a bit strange (1 Peter 4:4). It may even anger some of our friends or family (Matthew 10:34-39) to realize they don't come first in our lives. But so be it! Knowing how great a sacrifice Jesus made for us, we should think it a rather small thing to sacrifice a couple of hours of visiting with friends or family in order to pay homage to the one who died to save us.

Next time "unexpected visitors" drop in when you have an appointment with the Lord, why not use it as an opportunity to invite them to join you or tell them to make themselves at home for the next hour or so until you return? Give it some thought.

--Steve Higginbotham (via *Bulletin Gold*)

My Choice

At three-score and five I now realize

That we choose to be happy or hurt.

Those things that transpire can lift us up higher

Or drag us right down to the dirt.

What matters the most are the thoughts that we host,

Much more that what tumbles our way;

Regardless what comes, whether feasting or crumbs,

We're always in charge of our day.

Life marches ahead with excitement or dread,

Depending completely on me;

What is is what is, and it is what it is,

But I choose how to frame what I see.

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Collecting Dust

The Bible is a book beloved.

At least we say it's so.

It rests in honor on the shelf

With other books, you know.

And yet its pages, seldom read,

Are given little thrust;

We claim to love this Book of Books,

But it keeps collecting dust!

Poems above by Dalton Key (via Old Paths)

**We justify ourselves when we ought to judge ourselves.
If we learned humility, it might spare us humiliation.**

--Vance Havner