



GOD'S DESIGNED DEPENDENCE

Jesus Christ made a very interesting statement when He said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (Jn. 10:27).

Because so few have had experience with sheep, many operate under a number of incorrect assumptions. For example, some would accept the truth of the statement: "Sheep are so stupid that they need a shepherd to take care of them." As a result, the idea that we are like sheep is not one we readily buy into. No one wants to be compared to a dumb sheep even though cuddly lambs may have their endearing qualities.

The reality is that sheep are not dumb; rather, God created them to be highly dependent. In His deliberate design, sheep need care. Similarly, you and I are not stupid, **but we are designed to be dependent upon God.** Just as sheep need a shepherd, so we too need the Good Shepherd, "...for He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

Sheep are self-indulgent by nature and, failing to depend upon the shepherd for direction, become preoccupied with themselves, wander off and get lost. A good shepherd is always alert to lead and protect the sheep because they are **dependent** upon him.

Human beings are designed to be **dependent** upon their Good Shepherd. Christians also tend to be self-indulgent and preoccupied with their own pursuits and ignore their need to depend on the Good Shepherd. Jeremiah says; "Even so they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check" (Jer.14: 10). Ezekiel writes, "They were scattered for lack of

a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill (idolatrous practices), and My flock was scattered over all the face of the earth; and there was no one to seek for them" (Ezek. 34: 5-6).

Man's erring propensity was understood by W. H. Strombeck when he wrote, "Though man has rebelled against God and tried to gain independence from God, he is still dependent, though unwilling to acknowledge it."

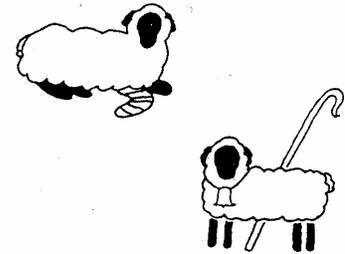
Lost sheep are extremely vulnerable and easy prey to the many predators, which are their natural enemies. Sheep are directionless and need constant leading and protection from their shepherd. Occasionally, when one sheep habitually wanders off and gets lost, it is not the only one affected. That would be bad enough, but often other sheep follow the wayward one and become lost also. The wayward sheep's pattern of wandering off has to be corrected for the safety and protection of the whole flock.

The watchful shepherd takes the continually errant sheep, breaks one of its legs, then resets it. This hobbles the sheep so that it cannot walk very far or fast. The shepherd feeds the injured sheep by hand, giving it his special attention. When it is time for the shepherd to move his flock from one pasture to another, he has to carry the "humbled" sheep on his shoulders.

Once the sheep's leg heals, a close bond has also been established between the sheep and his shepherd. The restored sheep will always stay near the shepherd, never to stray again.

"For you were continually straying like sheep. But now you have

returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Peter 2: 25).



Peter's words become even more significant in recognition of his own wandering from Jesus, his Shepherd. Peter attempted to deny his dependence on Christ and tried to take matters into his own hands. He denied knowing Jesus while his Master was being unjustly tried before the High Priest.

"Though man has rebelled against God and tried to gain independence from God, he is still **dependent**, though unwilling to acknowledge it."

Even though Peter fled under pressure, Jesus still valued Peter highly. Peter was later restored to his Shepherd after Jesus' resurrection and was later commissioned to shepherd Jesus' lambs and sheep (Jn. 21: 15-17).

Jesus Christ's loving and valuing people was not limited to Peter and His disciples; it extended to all of humanity. An example of this is found in Matthew 12. Before healing of the man with a withered hand, Jesus said, "Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep?" (Mat. 12:12).

The implied answer is much, much more! Christians, regardless of their condition or position in life, are of great value to our Good Shepherd! Jesus died for all mankind in order to restore us to a *Shepherding grace* relationship **dependent** upon Himself. "...*And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand*" (John 10:28).

We are saved by faith in God's saving grace in Christ, and we live by faith dependent upon Christ's daily shepherding grace. "*Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith...*" (Col. 2:6). We were created **dependent** by God's deliberate design.

The Apostle Paul had this relationship in mind when he penned Romans 12:1; "*Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.*" In other words, bring yourself alongside God, keeping in step and in harmony with Him, which is well pleasing to Him.

The writer of Hebrews wraps it up succinctly for us, "*Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen*" (Heb. 13:20-21).



MAKING PEACE ASAP

To this day, the very graphic illustrations you shared with us using the husband-wife sheep model are still in our minds. Aside from being very 'cute,' your little sheep remind us of how we constantly repel or attract each other, depending on our behavior towards each other. How clearly they are brought to mind when we have to apply the principles of *shepherding grace* in day-to-day living.

We especially love your illustration of "laying down one's life" for the weaker vessel. That was a truly

powerful principle of the sacrificial love Jesus has for us!

One of the oft-repeated principles that also had a tremendous impact on some of the husbands whom you taught, Bob, was the one about husbands taking responsibility for making the first move and saying sorry whenever there is a quarrel between husband and wife—even if the husband thinks it was not his fault. As the leader, he must take the initiative; he must set the example. That really got to them, Bob!

Even with us, it had always been very hard for either of us to say sorry to each other. Our own sinful strategies of pride and selfishness would keep us from making peace ASAP... Because of what you shared with us, it is now 90% easier for us to kiss and make up! The waiting for who will do it first and who SHOULD do it first looks like a thing of the past for us. By God's grace, we hope to even improve some more in this area.

Nowadays, we are concentrating more on how we can *please* each other. Sometimes, we even have to check our motives. Are we doing it in a spirit of competition or of love? Funny, how we can get it all wrong, even if it started out so right!

But we have to share this truly amazing thing that happened which we believe is a direct result of responding to God's design for marriage. Remember how the currency crisis hit Asia last year? Well, many businesses were very adversely affected. People lost their jobs, had to foreclose on their properties, shut down their offices, etc. Almost everyone was affected. Real estate was definitely sluggish, and still is--until now.

Since our business is mainly real estate, things were inactive for about three months. Then the unimaginable happened! God started sending us some good buyers. One actually bought two large properties IN CASH—something very rare these days.

And then, as if this weren't enough, God gave us another big blessing. A past transaction that was on hold for a year, is now finally going forward. Our windfall from this is

enough to last us for about two years! Isn't God amazing? Isn't God great?

God did not allow the economic crisis to adversely affect us. Instead, he is using it to show us His faithfulness and control over all things. He is also showing us that God's money never depreciates.

We believe God's timing is designed to encourage us to respond to Him even more in the area of our marriage. As we follow Him day by day, He shows us His pleasure by rewarding us in many big and little ways we just cannot miss or ignore.

We feel unworthy of His graciousness, but we are thankful just the same that we have a loving Father who wants to affirm His love for us and keeps encouraging us. As a result, we are experiencing a deeper, richer, more peaceful and loving relationship which makes us look forward to what lies ahead.

Each day is another opportunity to *please* God and *please* each other. After all, we have His permission to do so, just as you taught us.

Thank you for all that you have so generously shared with us. We know we have a long, long way to go in terms of applying it, teaching it, and sharing the benefits with others. We need your prayers.

We are excited to share your materials the Filipino way-- simple, relevant, practical and faithful to the Scriptures!

Ito and Cata de Jesus, Philippines

Don't miss the opportunity to attend our Annual CUPbearers / Gracestoration Retreat in Buena Vista, Colorado, at the Spring Canyon Conference Center, May 24-27, 2002 Memorial Day Weekend!

Jesus, The Bread of Life -- Feeding Hungry Hearts
(John 6:35).

Please refer to enclosed brochure for details. Come join us! We would count it a privilege if you are able to participate with us!

