

# FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

Devotion | Week 4 Day 4

## Counting Sheep

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. – John 10:14-15

I have been blessed by God to have been an educator for many years. Over that time, I have had the pleasure of serving hundreds of students; each one a special creation of God. It is an honor to know that as God created these men and women, He knew that He would use me to help develop them into the people He designed them to be. Like Christ in John 10, I have been put into the role of a shepherd; tasked with the responsibility to help prepare the next generation of Christian men and women. But as I have reflected on Christ's words, I have come to the realization that I am not the shepherd I always thought I was.

A shepherd cares for his flock, working hard to care for the sheep's every need. He leads them to water and food. He keeps them together and protects them from any predator who wishes to attack. Educators do similar things: working hard to care for the needs of their students. They provide instruction, correction, encouragement, and protection. Both the shepherd and the teacher strive to see their charges thrive and grow to their fullest potential. But here is where the similarities end because the shepherds simply cannot do what we as parents, pastors and teachers must.

We are not shepherds. Shepherds will raise their lambs to grow into sheep that will know His voice and follow it all the days of their lives. We teach our children to grow into adults who will know the voice of God speaking to them. Shepherds protect their sheep their whole lives. We are required to let go, allowing our children to step into the roles for which they have been created. I have done this for decades and I have seen God richly bless those efforts. My former students are now artists, teachers, pastors, soldiers, salesmen, musicians, barbers, and businessmen to name a few. They have matured, married, and have begun raising children of their own. In these new roles, they have completed the transition from having been sheep under my care into shepherds leading flocks of their own.

This is something no real shepherd could ever do. Sheep can't become shepherds. They can only be sheep because that is what God created them to be. But before I give myself too much credit, I am reminded that the only reason my sheep could become shepherds is because they too have become what God created them to be. Our role, whether big or small was ordered by the One who knows all, who controls all, and who makes all things as they should be to fulfill His holy purposes and will.

Let us always give thanks and praise to God for sending us His Son, our Good Shepherd, who laid down His life that we might live forever in the splendor that is our Heavenly home. But until that day when we receive our reward, may we be about our business of transforming sheep into shepherds through the power of God.