

Living in the country, surrounded by beautiful paddocks, Tony and I often come across a stray sheep wandering around our garden, or heading to town on the Gowrie road.

I follow along behind him, soothingly telling him everything will be ok, while he nervously looks back at me and then picks up the pace a little.

I'm trying to get him to a gate so he can re-join his mates, while Tony races up the road to find an opening for him.

This goes on for some time and despite our good intentions, we have not yet been successful in our rescue attempts and we always end up with a very nervous little animal. Tony then rings Daryl, he rides up on his bike, picks the little fellow up and returns him to the flock. Easy!

Like you, I've probably recited Psalm 23 hundreds of times. But, being a city girl all my life, I had to research the nature of sheep, before I really understood the significance of the shepherd.

This is what I've learned about sheep:

Sheep have a natural tendency to wander off and get lost.

Sheep are totally dependent on their shepherd for their survival, they are basically helpless creatures – poor eyesight and hearing, they can't run fast and they have no camouflage, no weapons, sharp claws or powerful jaws

Sheep will not lie down when they are hungry and will not drink from fast-flowing streams, they need still waters.

Sheep are easily frightened and become easily confused, blindly following each other, often to their peril.

Sheep know their shepherd's voice.

And, what have I learned about the shepherd?

The shepherd meets the sheep's every need: food, water, rest, safety, and direction.

The shepherd must lead his sheep because they cannot be driven. Instead, the sheep hear the voice of their shepherd and follow him.

We too are like sheep sometimes, wandering off and losing our way, consumed with fear and worry, following one after another.

When we, as believers, follow our Shepherd, we, too, know that we will have all we need. In biblical times, shepherds laid down their lives for their sheep, just as Jesus laid down his life for us. . Jesus said, my sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

God is my shepherd and I wouldn't have it any other way.