

From The Pastor's Study I Am No Sheep

Throughout the Bible there are numerous references to God and leaders in the church as Shepherds. I'm not certain what the original writer of those parts of scripture intended but I am just a little insulted by being called sheep. And by being called the Shepherd of the flock bothers me even more.

Anyone who knows anything about sheep is fully aware that sheep aren't the most intelligent of the animal kingdom. One of our nations founding fathers, George Washington once declared, "If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter." If you believe the Urban Dictionary, "Sheep are a waste of flesh and brain cells." But further exploration into what people who know a lot more than I do tells a different story.

It isn't their intelligence that is lacking though, it's more their stubbornness for independence that is strong. Even at birth they are able to stand very quickly on their own. *Sheep are actually surprisingly intelligent, with impressive memory and recognition skills. They build friendships, stick up for one another in fights, and feel sad when their friends are sent to slaughter. They are also one of the most destructive creatures on the planet.*

A 2001 study by Keith Kendrick, who is now at the University of Electronic Science and Technology in China, found that they can recognize and remember at least 50 individual faces for more than 2 years. That is longer than many humans. Kendrick also stated, "The way the sheep's brain is organized suggests they must have some kind of emotional response to what they see in the world."

Aside from being smart, sheep can be playful and joyful. You only need to watch the video of Winter the Jumping Lamb to see for yourself. Sheep also have erotic preferences: 8% are homosexual, making them one of the few species that show lifelong preferences for same-sex partners.

Over two decades ago, researchers from the University of California observed rams for three years and discovered they established firm friendships and looked out for one another in times of need: "Rams were found to form long term relationships... [they] intervened on behalf of weaker colleagues and supported each other in fights," says the 1993 study.

I have never enjoyed being called a sheep but it appears I have held a position that science has proven to be wrong. I have held the same position society has

mistakenly held concerning an animal that can't defend it's self. Perhaps the authors of scripture knew more than society after all, but I guess that wouldn't be the first time.

All too often societies view of the world differs greatly from that of scripture and that difference creeps into the church and becomes the "new gospel". Truth doesn't change, and when societies view of the truth differs from the truth presented in the scriptures we have to decide whether we will follow God's Word or decisions made by a society intent on spreading falsehoods, and I'm not just talking about sheep.

The Bible holds truth, sometimes we have to dig a little deeper to understand the full meaning of scripture. When we take one line and use it to make a point when taken out of context we are doing as society does. But when kept in context, and we research enough to understand the truth in God's Word, we are following the truth.

So, I will proudly serve as Shepherd to my little flock of sheep and be a sheep to those who lead me. Scripture reveals truth in ways we don't expect.