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The Good Shepherd
By Laurie Waite Flores

Once upon a time, long ago, a beautiful baby lamb was born in a rustic barn on a bed of yellow-colored straw. A tall, quiet shepherd stood nearby with his young son standing near him, quietly watching over the tired mother sheep and the newborn lamb. The lambkin bleated, uttering its first sounds as its mother nuzzled him and began to bond with her sweet baby.

With a smile on his face, the gentle shepherd moved forward and beckoned his young son to join him in offering comforting words of praise to the newest member of his little flock. The son watched in wonder as his father gently stroked the heads of both beautiful animals. After a few minutes, the good shepherd turned and softly whispered to his son, "If you lead with kindness and a warm smile, they will follow." Then he stood tall, reached for his son's hand, and quietly exited the barn.

A few months later, the boy and his father were sitting under a tree in a beautiful green meadow filled with colorful wildflowers. The baby sheep was busy frolicking in the gentle winds and tall swaying grasses, chasing fluttering butterflies. His mother stood nearby, grazing on sweet clovers, herbs, and tender shoots. The day was nearly over, and they had been watching over their flock for many hours. They knew each sheep by name and had spent time during the day calling them over to where they were sitting and inspecting each one to make sure they were healthy and had no irritants or burrs stuck in their fleece.

As the sun began to set, casting a golden glow over the meadow, the shepherd and his son felt a deep sense of contentment. The boy had learned much from his father during these long days of tending the flock. He had learned the importance of patience, the value of gentle care, and the joy that came from seeing the sheep happy and healthy. The shepherd, noticing his son's growing bond with the animals, felt proud and hopeful for the future. The father turned to his son and said, "You've done well again today, my boy. Always remember, our flock depends on us for their well-being. It's our duty to watch over them with love and care. If you lead with kindness and a warm smile, they will follow." The boy nodded, understanding the responsibility that came with being a shepherd. He looked out at the frolicking lamb and the grazing sheep, feeling a connection to the land and the creatures they cared for.

As twilight descended, they gathered the flock and began the journey back home. The boy walked beside his father, feeling a sense of pride and purpose. The sheep followed behind them to the safety of the barn. He knew that one day, he would take on the role of shepherd, leading with kindness and a smile, just as his father had taught him.

Many years passed, and the boy became a young man. His responsibilities grew, and he now watched over many flocks in his hometown, helping the elderly shepherds care for their herds. He had become known for his radiant smile, gentle demeanor, and the innate kindness he showed to both people and animals. His early lessons from his father had stayed with him, guiding his actions and decisions.

The young shepherd moved through the meadows and hills with a confident stride, his protecting eyes always alert for any signs of trouble. He knew each sheep well, just as he had when he was a boy, and they responded to his presence with trust and affection. The townspeople often remarked on how calm and healthy their flocks were under his care. His days were filled with the rhythm of the land and the life of the flock. He rose with the sun, guiding the sheep to fresh pastures and ensuring they had plenty of food and water. He mended fences, tended to the sick, and kept watch for predators. Each sheep had a name and a personality, and he knew their quirks and habits as well as he knew his own.

In the evenings, he would gather the flock and lead them back to the safety of the barn. The sheep followed him without hesitation, drawn by the gentle authority in his voice and the kindness in his actions. As he walked through the fields, the setting sun casting long shadows behind him, he often thought of his father and the lessons he had learned in his youth.

One evening, as the sun began to set, casting a warm golden glow over the landscape, the young shepherd gathered his flocks and led them to a sheltered valley where they would spend the night. He walked with a sense of purpose, knowing that his work was vital to the community. The sheep heard his voice and followed him willingly, their silver bells tinkling softly in the cool evening air.

When he reached the distant valley, he found several of the elderly shepherds waiting for him. They greeted him warmly, their faces lined with age but filled with gratitude. The young shepherd helped them settle their flocks, counting each sheep, making sure all were safe and comfortable. One of the older shepherds who had been working nearby approached him. "You've grown into a fine shepherd, just like your father. He would be so proud of you," the older shepherd said, his voice warm with admiration.

The young man smiled, his heart swelling with pride and humility. "If you lead with kindness and a warm smile, they will follow," he replied, feeling the truth of those words deeply. The elder shepherds nodded in agreement, their faces reflecting a shared understanding. The young shepherd felt a sense of fulfillment, knowing he was carrying on his father's legacy with the same dedication and compassion. As the sun set and the stars began to twinkle in the night sky, the young shepherd sat down with the older men, sharing stories and wisdom by the light of a small fire. He felt a deep sense of fulfillment

and knew that he was exactly where he was meant to be, carrying on the legacy of care and kindness that his father had instilled in him. The young shepherd looked out over his flock, feeling a profound connection to the land, the animals, and the timeless wisdom that guided his every step.

Many years later, the shepherd once again stood in the old rustic barn, this time with his own young sons. The boys held their father's hand as they quietly watched over a new mother sheep and her newly born lambkin. The lambkin bleated, uttering its first sounds as its mother nuzzled him and began to bond with her sweet baby. With a humble smile on his face, the gentle shepherd moved forward and beckoned his young sons to join him in offering comforting words of praise to the newest member of his little flock. The sons watched in wonder as their father gently stroked the heads of both beautiful animals. After a few minutes, the good shepherd turned and softly whispered, "If you lead with kindness and a warm smile, they will follow." Then he stood tall, and they all quietly exited the barn.

As they walked back to their home, the shepherd felt a deep sense of continuity and pride. He had passed on the values his father had taught him, and he hoped that one day, his sons would do the same. The cycle of life, care, and kindness continued, rooted in simple yet profound wisdom. Under the twilight sky, the family moved together, bound by love and shared responsibility, their hearts full of the gentle joy that comes from tending to those in their care because they had been taught, "If you lead with kindness and a warm smile, others will follow."

Dedication Page

To my father, Merlin Delmar Waite, your life is a testament of strength, kindness, and enduring love. You have shepherded our family through countless seasons, providing stability and warmth. Your stories, wisdom, smile, and unwavering support have been a sanctuary, teaching us the true value of compassion and the importance of family.

To my grandfather, Delmar Waite, your quiet example, unwavering love, guidance, and sacrifices shaped our family into who we are today. You rescued the orphan lambs and raised and nurtured them to adulthood. Your constant care and wisdom have been our guiding light, showing us all the true essence of what it truly means to be a good shepherd.

To my brothers, Paul Waite, Monte Waite, Delmar Waite, Devon Waite, and John Waite, your examples have been a constant source of strength for our family, and your legacy

of service and leadership is a beacon of light to all who know you. Thank you for your endless patience, and for the countless ways you have protected and nurtured us all.

Symbolism of a Good Shepherd

A “good shepherd” is often used to describe someone in a leadership or caregiving role who provides guidance, protection, and care for others, similar to how a shepherd tends to their flock. This term is rooted in Christianity, where Jesus Christ is referred to as the “Good Shepherd” in the Bible, symbolizing His dedication to the well-being and salvation of His followers.

Good shepherds:

Are effective leaders who guide others with wisdom and understanding.

Are compassionate and always show love, kindness, and empathy to those around them.

Are responsible and take their duties seriously.

Are humble, loyal, trustworthy, and reliable and have great patience.

Are hardworking and willing to put others’ needs before their own and sacrifice their time and talents to serve others.

Are protectors who keep those under their care safe from harm.

Sheep do not thrive well without a shepherd. They tend to get into trouble, eat things that could harm them, and easily fall prey to wild animals. The condition of the sheep is directly related to the care of the shepherd and needs constant care.

A good shepherd knows his sheep individually and cares for them personally. Shepherds move forward at the head of the flock, and the sheep follow because they know and trust the shepherd. The symbolism of the Good Shepherd serves as a metaphor for the relationship between Jesus Christ and His followers, highlighting His role as protector, guide, and savior.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. (Psalms 23:1–3)