

For readers to meet real-life shepherds, to have an understanding of what it means to be a shepherd, what it means to be a sheep, and most importantly, what it means to belong to the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

# From This Shepherd's Heart

By Vonnie Pratt

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## Chapter 19:

## Lessons from "Mercy"

She was flighty. At four months of age, she and two other sheep came to our farm. They were our first sheep. Of the three, she was the one who would not come near us. Fear gripped her if we got close, and she ran from us. I figured that would be the norm. We named our three new ewes, "Shirley, Goodness and Mercy". Shirley and Goodness were a bit more comfortable around us, but Mercy was determined to label us as the "Providers of Food", and that would be the extent of our relationship.

Mercy had several lambs during her time with us. But life began to take its toll on her, as she dealt with illnesses like most of the others. During these illnesses, we would give medication. Getting a halter on her was an experience. Although she fought us, ultimately, we won. As meds were needed for several days, we had the challenge of catching her often. She was strong willed, but eventually gave in.

Now, at eleven years of age, Mercy is the elderly lady of the flock. She is usually the last one in the barn for dinner, as her legs don't move as quickly as they once did. Although her years are beginning to show, she is the wisest one of the flock.

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She has learned over the years of living on our farm that running in fear gets old. The times of illness have taught her that the shepherd's tender touch is calming. The halter that pulls her gently to the shepherd allows her to hear a quiet voice that she could not have heard before. The routine of following the shepherd day by day has taught her that her needs will be provided for...always. Even though the path to the pasture may take a different direction, if she follows, she will be rewarded.

Although Mercy once fearfully fought to get away from us, life has taught her that she can trust her shepherd. It is quite common for her now to come and lean her head on us. We scratch her cheeks and speak gently to her, and as we begin to leave, she follows us...or blocks the way for us to leave, so that we will keep our attention where it belongs...on her. She loves to spend time with her shepherds. Mercy has learned to trust, and not fear.

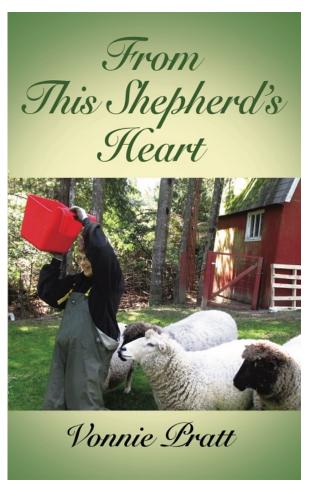
Oh, in these days of turmoil, may I be quick to remember these lessons from Mercy. The "halters" in life draw me close to my Shepherd and allow me to hear His quiet voice...the times of illness allow me to feel my Shepherd's tender touch...the routine of following Him day by day reminds me that my needs will be met...always. Even if my path takes a different direction, if I follow my Shepherd, I will be rewarded.

Yes, running in fear gets old...quietly following the Shepherd brings peace.

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"He led His own people out like sheep...He led them safely, so that they did not fear..." Psalm 78:52,53 (NASB)





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