

A flock of sheep is grazing in a lush green field. The sheep are scattered across the middle ground, with some closer to the viewer and others further away. The field is vibrant green, and the background shows rolling hills under a bright sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and pastoral.

Familiarity
BREEDS CONTENTMENT

- John 10:1-5, 11-15 – Familiarity is the theme that runs through these verses. Jesus' relationship to His flock is never impersonal, or merely professional. He is not the cold, distant dictator of our lives, but the intimate companion who shared in human affliction (Hebrews 2:9ff, Philippians 2:5ff).
- The good shepherd endures the same conditions as his sheep. When they face the weather, so does he. When they are deprived, he gives of himself to secure their sustenance. When they are threatened, he stands between them and danger (vv. 11-13).
- Most of all, they "know" each other. It is a two-way relationship (v. 14) based on trust.

A Good Shepherd

A large flock of sheep is gathered in a lush green field, stretching across the middle ground. The sheep are white and fluffy, and their shadows are cast on the grass. In the background, there are rolling hills under a bright sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and pastoral.

Last Sheep

LUKE 15:3-6

MEMBERSHIP

The good shepherd knows his sheep "by name" according to Jesus. The sheep will not follow "a stranger" because they do not share a relationship with him. Add to that the fact that the shepherd in Luke 15 is able to positively identify exactly one hundred sheep in his flock and knows when one goes missing. His flock was not open-ended, but had a defined membership. Similarly, a Christian is not allowed to just wander around from flock to flock, or follow his or her whims. Our elders are shepherds, and should know who is committed to this flock.

A photograph of a large flock of sheep grazing in a lush green field. The sheep are scattered across the middle ground, moving towards the right. The background features rolling hills under a bright sky with scattered clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and pastoral.

Familiarity
IN AN ELDER'S QUALIFICATIONS

- There are many dangers to a flock – wolves (Acts 20:28-30) and lions (1 Peter 5:8), sheep getting lost (Luke 15:4), thieves (John 10:1), inept leadership (John 10:12-13), malnourishment (1 Peter 5:2, KJV says “feed the flock”), etc.
- Threats are real, so we shouldn't bristle at the notion of our elders holding us accountable. If they know us as well as the scriptures indicate they should, then we need to trust them – this includes criticism they offer, setting boundaries, and showing restraint with new ideas and projects.
- Psalm 23 – Good leadership fosters confidence, contentment, and the ability to focus on what we need to do – feed on the word and find others who want to be part of the flock of God.

A flock that rests safely



Applications

- Do we really know each other? Have you welcomed the elders into your life, or do you keep them at arm's length?
- An elder's imperfections only mean he is human. Rather than contempt, this should foster a sense of relatability and an appreciation for how hard the job is.
- How an elder handles failure is as important as how he handles success. We only know this through familiarity/relationship.
- Familiarity should be "updated" regularly, as people and their situations change.