

January 2023



*How much is a ministry like Shepherd's Heart needed? Shouldn't people use common sense and resolve their own problems? Why should I help them?*

Surprisingly, there are people who ask questions like these. They forget that Jesus was the one who felt compassion for the crowds that came, because their problems were so great and they didn't know where to go for help. He characterized them as being like sheep without a shepherd. (See Matthew 9:36)



Recently I read a story about an abandoned sheep named Baarack who rescuers found in Australia. Sanctuary staff gave him a long-overdue shearing and found that his fleece weighed about 78 pounds. (The average fleece is about 7 pounds). Sheep need at least yearly shearing to keep the weight of their coats from causing problems. Despite his extra heavy fleece, Baarack was underweight. The wool around his eyes impaired his vision, grit and debris pooled in the gap between his cornea and eyelid, and a grass seed had stuck in there and

caused an ulcer. If sheep go for an extended period without adequate care, overgrown wool can lead to a buildup of manure and urine that could then lead to infection. Sheep need regular care.

When people neglect or are denied care they don't thrive. Problems multiply and become serious. Like the sanctuary staff, we often provide long-overdue attention and care. It typically involves walking with people through their impaired vision until they can see the healing path. Lately I've worked with several Baaracks. One Baarack has struggled with sexual addiction, another with anger. Both have marriages that are struggling. After meeting for several months, they have begun to renew their relationship with the Lord as their eyes have been opened to the love of the Good Shepherd who wants to restore them and the damage they carry that weighs them down. They are beginning to see movement in their marriages as they learn to empathetically listen and respond.

While counseling a few men, I continue to work on connecting with people who lead our Loving Well marriage course. My next project is developing Loving Well 2.0. The demand is coming from Spanish speaking participants who have benefited from Loving Well and want to continue to dig deeper. I am preparing to present ideas to a working group that will provide feedback so that we can finish this by the end of 2023. Tools like the Loving Well course assist these "shepherds" in caring for sheep and keeping the flock healthy.

Your investment in Shepherd's Heart continues to bear fruit and provides compassionate care for those that stir the heart of Jesus. I am deeply grateful for your partnership.

Mark and Mary