

From Section 3: Delighting in God's People

*"As for the saints who are in the land,
they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight." Psalm 16:3*

Sheep Bites: How God Uses Them, How to Bear Them, How to Heal Them

*"For it is not an enemy who taunts me— then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me— then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend."
-- Psalm 55:12-13*

Sheep Will Bite

The people in your congregation will hurt each other and they will hurt you. You can count on it. We may all have the Holy Spirit inside at work in us, but on this side of heaven, there will still be a fight with sin going on in all of us, too. Where there's smoke, there's fire. Where there's sin, there's bites.

Why Sheep Bites Hurt So Much

David's words written down as part of Psalm 55 quoted above tell us why sheep bites hurt so much. These hurts are coming from those who we count as friends and have covenanted with as brothers and sisters. They are people we have sought to love and care for. They are people to whom we have opened our hearts and have shared our hopes and our struggles. We thought we could always count on their support and friendship. We thought we would always enjoy each other's fellowship.

Then something happens...

Betrayal... shame... sadness...bitterness... anger... hatred... defensiveness... desire for revenge... isolation... abandonment... despair...fear...denial...shock... disappointment... and deep, deep hurt.

Emotions like these flood in. How do we respond? How do we cope? What do we do? How do we heal? That's what this section is about.

Understanding Sheep Bites

When someone hurts you, it's easy to focus on the hurt. But I've found I tend to respond better if I can remember why they are biting. It's like what you probably do when your kids are acting up. It helps to know if they are sick or tired or if they are just being mean-spirited and rebellious when you respond to their behavior. Someone who is sick or tired probably needs to simply be escorted to bed. But someone who is deliberately being defiant needs discipline. In the same way, the believers in your church (including you and husband, by the way), will sin against each other, but there are often different roots involved. Discerning the root causes can help you respond in the best way to the hurt, help it not hurt so much, and certainly can clarify the path to restoration.

Types of Bites

Here are nine, common sources of sheep bites, seen in Scripture and in many churches.

Not So Sound Doctrine

These are struggles against false teachers and false doctrines that have come up and taken root inside the church, turning the ears and hearts of believers away from essential gospel truths.

Paul addressed the church in Galatia when they faced false teachers like this:

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are

throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!" --Galatian 1:6-9

People like these false teachers lead naïve sheep away from the truth and they come to distrust, despise or rebel against their godly leaders when presented with their error. Men, like our husbands, have the difficult job of trying to re-teach or remove these false teachers from the congregation in a way that is effective and is winsome.

This rarely happens with an easy "pardon me, I had no idea I had that wrong" mindset. Usually heels dig in, disputes escalate and slander and gossip spreads. Sheep following the false leaders may find it hard to turn away from their teaching. This is the stuff that church divisions are made of. But these are the gospel mountains that our husbands are called to valiantly fight and even "die" on. Lives are at stake here.

Old Man Heart

Sometimes these are struggles that arise as the sinful desires of our hearts collide with each other, as James speaks of in his letter. (James 4:1-3) "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

These are so prevalent because there is still so much of our old, sinful ways wrestling with our new creation hearts. The final victory has been won by Christ's death on the cross, but the battles within will continue to our last breath. So many battles going on in so many hearts leads to these kinds of skirmishes between believers in even the godliness of people in the best of churches. O, come Lord Jesus, come!

Old Man Moves

Right there next to that "Old Man" heart are "Old Man" moves. These are memories, emotions or habits that come from our former way of life. They have no place in the church as God's people, but we are either blind to them or they are so slow to shift.

The church in Ephesus struggled a lot with this in terms of idolatry, leaving behind sinful lifestyles:

"Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." --Ephesians 4:17-24

The church in Rome struggled a lot with this in terms of prejudice based on cultural heritage:

"Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.... For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." --Romans 10:4,12-13

We are to put aside these former ways, but it is hard; and in the process, we often hurt each other, intentionally or unintentionally. At our church, we have especially seen this in learning to recognize and fight again racial prejudice. Even though the issue at our church is rarely (if ever, during our time here?) what might be seen as outright prejudice, there has been so much to learn about blind spots from growing up as part of the white majority. In some settings, there is overt prejudice to overcome. In all settings, there is so much to ask, discuss, and learn from our minority brothers and sisters so that we might change and grow up together in unity into Jesus Christ, our head.

Just a Sheep

Other times, the struggles come from basic, sheeply fear, ignorance or immaturity. They desire the wrong things. They are easily distracted and prone to wander. They react poorly. Their actions may be hurtful, but they come not so much out of malice, just their spiritual "age."

"So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. (1 Peter 2:2)

"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14)

It can be hard to learn to trust even godly leaders, especially for new Christians. It may take a lot of time and a lot of patient teaching and love to help these newer sheep grow up and out of their fears and immaturity.

I Just Don't Get It

The beauty of having pastors/elders is that they care for the sheep. The sheep recognize them as the godly leaders God have given for their benefit and they choose to entrust their spiritual well-being into the hands of these men. The tricky thing about having pastors/elders is that entrusting means trusting them, even when you don't have the whole picture.

Many of the saddest, most hurtful times in ministry here at CHBC have been when the pastors/elders ask the members to trust their recommendation on a church discipline matter and they choose not to divulge all the details out of sensitivity to the person being disciplined. To the members, the elders might look like they are jumping the gun or over-disciplining, but if they knew more, they would completely understand. Instead of remembering how trustworthy the elders have been in the past and apply that trust to this situation, they choose to distrust and even defame them.

The elders know that the sheep are reacting because they don't know everything there is to know. They COULD share more information in these tender situations to legitimize their counsel, but they decide to ask the members to trust them rather than sharing even more details that would cause further hurt to a member who is already struggling. (I don't mean that elders are supposed to cover up sin that should be exposed, only extra details that are better not to share more broadly than necessary. Sometimes, additional private conversations with individual members who are especially upset can be helpful here.)

Not Quite Ready for Prime-Time Leadership

Pastoring is a big job. So many people who you want to care for so well. So many decisions to make. So much counsel to give. No wonder a plurality of elders is the biblical model of healthy leadership for a local church!

But sometimes, a pastor and a church can be a bit too quick to call someone to be an elder. Perhaps they are a bit too immature, but are the best you have on hand, so they are voted into leadership. In other cases, your husband is called to a church that has men in leadership that probably should have never been recognized in the first place. Or, your church is in the process of acknowledging its first set of elders and puts no term limits on their service (our elders serve for a 3-year term.)

No matter which way the men came into leadership, the problems start as you begin to make decisions together. Unity is evasive. Discussions become heated. Decisions become difficult. Sometimes factions grow as church members take sides with different leaders, sometimes even turning into church splits. With no term limits in place, there will be no rolling off and coming to a fresh, more unified start. I have heard this story over and over and over.

1 Timothy 3:6 and Paul's qualification for elders alludes to difficulties with asking someone not yet ready for leadership:

"He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil."

Building Good Bones

Some of the biggest and most important struggles your husband may have to pastor your church through have to do with the biblical foundations that build a healthy church. My husband has grouped these together in what you may have heard called the "Nine Marks of a Healthy Church."

Here they are:

- Biblical Marks of Becoming God's People: The Gospel and Conversion, Evangelism and Missions
- Biblical Marks of Gathering as God's People: Church Membership, Exposition Preaching, Prayer
- Biblical Marks of Maturing as God's People: Biblical Theology, Discipleship, Church Discipline
- Biblical Marks of Shepherding God's People: Biblical Leadership

While these foundations are for the good of God's people and the glory of God, they sure have a way of drawing swords and shedding blood. Change is rarely easy, especially when it challenges long-held practices. There are certainly ways to bring about change too quickly and insensitively.

Even when change is introduced wisely and patiently, it almost always comes with difficulty and pain. Having experienced that myself, my heart goes out to any of you facing that now. But listen: these foundations are what I call the mountains worth crying and dying on. They can bring deep spiritual health to your church. God sees your sacrifice and pain. He will use your husband's good efforts for your church! Pray for your husband and the other church leaders to persevere in this crucial, life-giving work for your church.

If you want to know more about these Biblical foundations, I've added a section focusing on each and why they each are so important to the biblical health of your church. I find that reminding myself of why each is so important helps me to pray better for our church and to encourage my husband when he faces difficulties regarding them.

All the Gray Stuff

Essentials and distinctives. God's law and freedom in Christ. There are certain things in Scripture that we know we must agree upon. Take a look back at your church's Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. I know as you read them, you may feel like there's a lot of good old black and white we are promising

together. And there is. But as soon as you start to live it out, there turns out to be a lot more gray than you might have first imagined, both within those two statements and even more, outside of them.

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Here are only a few examples of feeling the gray:

- Can Christians drink? Can they smoke?
- Under what conditions can Christians divorce and remarry?
- Can women pray in front of the congregation?
- Can women be deaconesses or is Scripture only talking about the wives of deacons?
- Should women with young children have jobs outside of the home and put their kids in day care?
- Should Christians vote for one political candidate based only on his views on gender or abortion?
- Does raising my child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord mean I must homeschool them?
- Is courtship the only biblical model for finding a husband or wife?
- Should you wait to baptize young children who confess Christ or should you immediately baptize them and bring them into the Lord's Supper and church membership?

These are only a view of the often highly charged currents of differing opinions that might run through your church membership, and even between your elders/pastors. They certainly do in ours, here in the nation's capitol—a city already full of strongly-held, differing opinions.

Paul writes to the Corinthian church about just such issues:

"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall." --1 Corinthians 8:9-13

The path to agreeing on essentials and respecting each other on distinctives (areas of Christian freedom) is the difficult dance that unity must learn. Practicing that dance together may bring hurt as we step on each other's hearts and closely held ideals, but it is also how we learn how to hold our convictions, while being respectful and loving towards others.

The Enemy's Schemes

Don't ever forget it: the church as an enemy. Satan hates God and His good plans. He tempted Adam, and Adam fell. He tempted Christ, but Christ stood firm. Satan's head was crushed when Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. One day Satan will be put away forever along with sin and

death. But for now, there's still vicious strife between him and God and we, as Christ's beloved, are in his crosshairs. He loves to mar the church. He longs to bring her shame and to ruin. Sisters, we are at war.

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"
-- Ephesians 6:12

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings."--1 Peter 5:8-9

We have an enemy who delights when we fight against our flesh and blood Christian brothers and sisters. He wants to make the most of our struggles with sin in order to dishonor God's name.

To foil this enemy, to love God's people and to uphold His name, we fight to love well even in our hurts.

Let's next take a look at how we can do this.

Sheep Bite Triage: Some Ways to Help Your Hurts

Sheep bites are coming (or may have already come). Where do we go for first aid? Remember those chapters on godliness? I hope you thought they were important when you read them. But it's in times of trials that you really see how dependent we are upon God to help our husbands and us to act worthy of the gospel. Here are some of the ways that godliness—that is, knowing God and seeking to grow like Christ—will be the life-preserver God uses to help you through, to heal, and even to bring good out of even the hardest trials. We do not have in ourselves what we need to keep on loving God's people or giving them what they need even in adversity. We need God, His Word and His people to help us.

1. Feed on God's Word

We need God's Word to reveal not just the sins of others, but our own sin, as we act or react to difficult situations. We need to receive God's wisdom to know how best to respond and how for our husbands to best lead through the circumstance for the good of God's people and for God's glory. And they will need God's Word to strengthen them to carry out that wisdom in a way that honors Him. And we will need God's Word to remind us of God's perspective on His sinful people: He WILL transform them. He IS in control. He DOES care for His Church. Satan and sin will NOT WIN. God WILL!

Focus Feeding

Meditate on passages that apply to situations like yours and how the church dealt with them. Ask God to help your husband (and you) apply these truths to your situation. Meditate on passages, like the one above from Psalm 55, that bring God's comfort, or, that help you see where you are sinfully responding to it and need help to change.

Story Feeding

Read stories of God's faithfulness in difficult situations, especially if there are situations like the one your church is going through. Take hope that the same God who helped his saints of old is alive and well to help his saints today. Pray that be the case! Re-read the difficulties Jesus endured. We have a great high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses and knew what it was to be disowned, defamed, betrayed and even killed by the very ones He came to save. Thank Jesus for what He suffered for us. Ask Him to help you and your husband and your church in your hour of need!

Sermon Feeding

Listen to sermons from other preachers that encourage your heart to keep on loving God's people and that might give your husband/you wisdom to how to deal with your situation.

Repeat Feedings

Do not be discouraged if you have to run back to Scripture again and again for help and for hope. God sometimes grows things quickly; but usually, He grows them slowly and steadily. This is especially the case wounds from church members which often hurt so deeply and often aren't simple, one-time events, but drawn-out issues. Deep physical wounds take longer to heal. So do deep emotional and spiritual wounds.

Food as Medicine

The church has often been described as a hospital for sick and dying souls come to God for healing salvation. Jesus Himself seems to agree: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17, NIV)

I don't know what your church is like, but this certainly seems to be an appropriate description of everyone in ours, including myself. We have all come to Jesus for salvation; and, we all have diseases of the soul that infect both ourselves and all too easily spread to others.

While we all need to be careful about spreading "infections of the heart" to each other, perhaps as the wives of God's junior physicians, we are exposed to more contagion than most. Do you recognize any of these?

- discouragement from news of a member's failed struggle with a long-standing sin
- defensiveness or spitefulness in response to criticisms of your husband, both deserved and undeserved
- self-pity during another lonely week at home due to an unusual work load
- discontentment with elements in our situation; and
- guilt over failure to support my husband as he needs you to and you desire to, yet again

This is just a piece of the parade of usual suspects that I bump into. How about you?

Remembering God's Word and the truths contained in it has been like a wonderful antibiotic in daily germ warfare. I notice that I am much quicker to identify the heart issues and apply God's truth to them more effectively. They help me to identify disobedient thoughts, confess them to the Lord for what they are, ask for His forgiveness, and the strength to turn away and love.

2. Pray for More

God is the one who has everything we need for life and godliness... not US! And not any of the other saints in your church! We must all go to Him over and over and over to give us what we need. We will need strength to endure. Strength to forgive. Strength to extend more grace and 1 Corinthians 13 love. If there will be unity, it will be because God gives it. If good is to come from the suffering these trials bring, it will be because God gives it.

Pray Persistently

There have been times when the wounds of a fellow church member have been so deep that I've thought I could never overcome the rising hatred in my heart. But through persistent prayer, over many months, God reshaped my heart and gave me not only forgiveness, but even affection for that member. Do NOT feel helpless if there's "nothing you can do but pray"! Do not be discouraged if heart changes is slow. God

is willing, able and at work. And I can guarantee that not only will He help you with your difficulty, but He will change you through it!

Pray Especially for Your Husband's Heart

Pray for your husband's heart not to hold on to bitterness against any fellow member. Our husbands hopefully are blessed with the congregation of encouragers. (My husband certainly is here at CHBC!) But even the most encouraging congregation is also a congregation of sinners. And that means that there may be many occasions, even every day, where our pastor-husbands are once more wading in the sins of others.

Sometimes, this is listening empathetically as others humbly confess their sins and turn to the Lord in repentance. But unfortunately, there are many times when it is the hard work of helping people see their sin and urging them towards repentance, and they don't like that.

"Be prepared to disappoint somebody, my husband always says. Keep your eyes on the Lord and be faithful to love him and to care for the sheep. If you have to please everyone the ministry is the wrong place for you." That's why it's so good for you to spend time praying for your husband that he would be encouraged and he would persevere in loving the flock, even when they take to biting him.

3. Be Careful of the Bitterness Triangle

I'm sure you've heard of something called a love triangle. One man loved by two women, which one will win him? Many a story has been based on that formula. But among pastors' wives, it's not so much a love triangle as a bitterness triangle that is a common paradigm. This happens when we hear about a difficult situation between our husband and another member which they resolved but which we become embittered at the other member about. But because the other member never had a disagreement with us or hurt us directly, there's no natural path to correct the offense. And what builds up instead is bitterness, resentfulness, unforgiveness, and hardness of heart.

This has been one of the most frequent ways I have seen sin creep into my heart and take hold. Sometimes it's enough to know that my husband and his other person has been reconciled. But all too many times, I've had to awkwardly go and speak to that person to bring peace between us. Time spent in God's word and in prayer has been the way the Lord has given me grace to care more about restoring unity than embarrassingly admit that I've been holding a grudge.

Over the years, Mark and I have learned that he needs to be very selective in what disagreements he tells me about so that this bitterness triangle does not arise. Sometimes he needs to find another elder or pastor to de-brief and pray with him over these kinds of circumstances. I'm a good support for some situations. Fellow leaders might be better for others.

4. Take the Lord's Supper Seriously

Our church celebrates the Lord's Supper together on the first Sunday of every month. So, on the last Sunday of every month, whoever is leading the service reminds the members of the Lord's Supper is coming the next week and encourages them to restore any relationships between each other that need mending. This is a biblical mandate. And it's a wonderful way to examine your heart by the month, if not more frequently, of any hardness in your heart towards other members.

We actually read through the church covenant together before we take the Lord's Supper, reminding us of the promises we've made to love each other. The seven days between the last Sunday in the month and the first Sunday when we take the Lord's supper is a great week to pray for the Holy Spirit to bring

unity to the membership by confessing sin and forgiving each other. If your church has a church covenant, you can use it to pray for the Holy Spirit to bring unity in light of those specific promises you've made to each other.

5. Find Someone to Talk To

When we are hurt, it is so helpful to have a godly person to talk to in addition to our husband. Depending on how widespread the issue is in the church, it might mean finding a fellow pastor's wife or other mature, godly woman at a different church to talk to. It can even be over the phone. Fight the temptation to slander or overstate your side. Use your friend as someone who can show compassion, give advice, pray for you, help confirm your point of view, show you your sin or blind spots and hold you accountable.

Encourage and pray for your husband to have wise advisers and supportive prayer warriors, too. These may be found among the elders or other godly men in your church, or pastors at other churches. Nine times out of ten, someone has dealt with that they are going through and can be a huge help. There is nothing new under the sun, just different actors in the cast.

6. Remember the Gospel

We are all in need of the gospel, all the time. Only Christ is a saint of his own standing. Only he is truly "qadoshim:" a holy one. It is only his standing given to us as His free gift to all who repent and put their faith in Him that makes us holy. His work alone sets us apart to enjoy a special relationship with God and to be used in His service. He makes us glorious. His Spirit brings the only spiritual life and transformation, the only reflection of God's character, that will ever touch our lives. The gospel is for us all.

We Never Outgrow the Gospel

While once saved, always saved is a wonderful truth, it is not only in that first hearing and receiving God's good news that we need the gospel. Unfortunately, repentance from sin is a daily necessity. Praise God, we can go back to Him again and again and ask for forgiveness.

Confess And Be Cleaned

It will be easy to see times when church members have wronged you or your husband, but there will be times when you wrong them, even if it is only in the way you respond sinfully to how they have treated you! The good news is that there is forgiveness for me...and for you, if you are struggling like I do with not delighting in the saints as God calls us to do. "If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

Are you struggling with bitterness against saints in your church who have mistreated your husband? Are you holding a grudge against someone for voicing his doubts about your husband's good motives in a humiliating way in front of everyone in a member's meeting? Have you struggled with hateful thoughts against others who never seem to be pleased with what your husband does?

Have you adopted a mask of fake sweetness to protect yourself from being really known by others and possibly criticized for your imperfections? Do you gossip with your friends or among other pastor's wives about the short fallings of others in your congregation, when instead you should either speak to the person or leave the issue as a personal matter of prayer?

Turning to yourself: Are you weighed down with guilt or wonder if you should stop doing something good for the church when you know you are plagued with mixed motives?

Confess these things to God. They are sin. Perhaps others have sinned against you or your husband, but

God will hold you accountable for how you react to what they have done. Praise God we have a Savior who has paid for all our sins! We need Him!

Put Yourself in the Same Box

When someone has hurt me or my husband--especially if it's in a way or an extent that I can't imagine myself hurting someone—it's easy for me to put them in a "bad person" box and me in a "good person" box. That attitude will make it very difficult for me to do anything but judge that other person.

I've found it important for me to recognize when I've drawn that kind of box and go back to the gospel. The gospel puts both of us in the "bad person" box. Yes, perhaps I wouldn't do what that other person did or say what they said, but there's plenty of other things that I would do or say that are enough for me to never deserve anything but God's punishment. The gospel box helps me begin to see that person as not so different from me and begins a thaw in my hard heart that God can use to foster mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Remember What the Gospel Does

The gospel is the power to save and to change! It is even powerful enough to work good in whatever crisis your husband might be dealing with, and you are trying to cope with and support him through it. I'm not saying that the gospel works like instant mash potatoes—just add water to the flakes and poof you get mashed potatoes (what a weird food!). But I am saying that the gospel is the power of God and it is at work, according to His perfect timing, to do all that He transforming He plans to do in His people. Transforming to be unified. Transforming to love each other. Transforming to be the bride of Christ. Even as we are hurt or even as we hurt others, we can hope that God can help us. Hope, not despair. That's what God holds out to us in the gospel.

"He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me." (Colossians 1:28-29, NIV)

"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." -- Ephesians 1:15-23

Is That It?

I wish I could say there is a magic pill to heal your hurting heart or protect you, your husband and your church from future sheep trials, but I can't. But what I can say is that you can never over-trust God.

And, as Elizabeth Elliot says, "Suffering is never for nothing." This next section on the delighting in the saints takes a look at God's blessings to us through a life of tending sheep, both in difficult and good times.