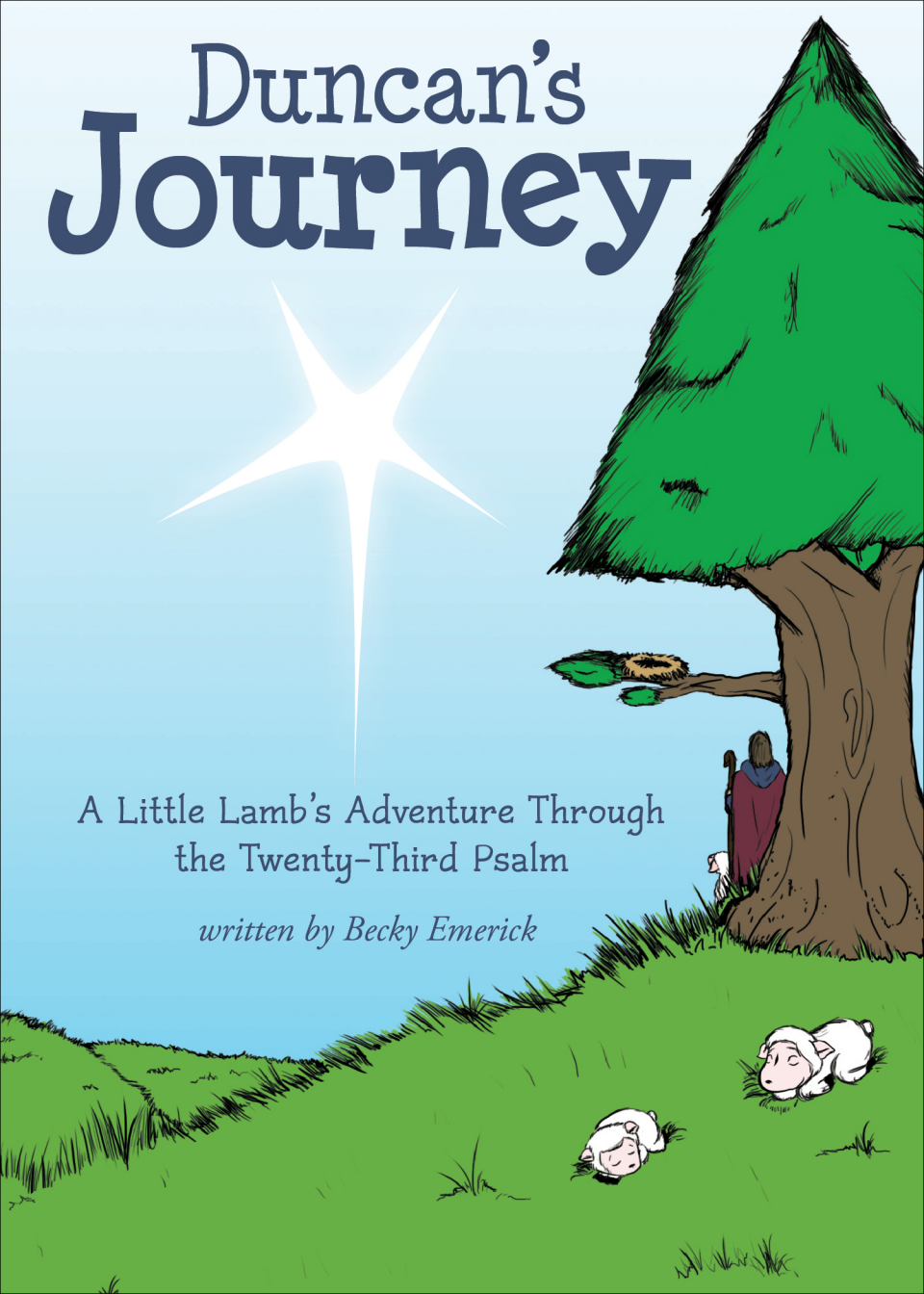


Duncan's Journey

A Little Lamb's Adventure Through
the Twenty-Third Psalm

written by Becky Emerick



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TATE PUBLISHING & *Enterprises*

Duncan's Journey

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*To my wonderful children: Abby, Katie,
Nathan, and Kevin. May you follow your
Shepherd all the days of your life.*

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Day One:

Psalm 23



On the hills of Bethlehem there stood a tall tree. The leaves from the tree gave shade to all the animals that wandered through the grass in the warm sun. Tucked inside one of the branches was a nest. Inside the nest lay a single egg. Mama Bird sat patiently, waiting for her baby to hatch. Papa Bird was perched nearby, keeping watch for danger.

Jump. Jump. The egg began to move. Within moments the baby bird struggled free and looked out at the world for the first

time. She saw green grass stretching over rolling hills. She saw yellow flowers reaching high to the warm, sunny sky. She also saw a lot of white and fuzzy animals.

“Mama,” asked the baby bird, “what are those white and fuzzy things?”

“They are called sheep,” said Mama Bird.

“What are sheep?” Baby Bird continued.

“Sheep are animals that roam among the grass. The fathers are called rams, the mothers are called ewes, and the babies are called lambs,” Mama Bird explained.

“Oh,” said Baby Bird, thinking. “Mama, what do sheep do?”

“Sheep spend most of their time eating and sleeping. They are herbivores, meaning they only eat plants. They eat grasses in the summer and hay in the winter.”

“But Mama, we don’t eat grass!”

“That is because we are not sheep,” explained Mama Bird. “We are insectivores,

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meaning we eat insects, but we also like worms, seeds, and fruit.”

“I'm hungry now, Mama. Can I eat soon?” asked Baby Bird.

“All right. I'll get you some breakfast.”

As Mama Bird flew off to hunt for food, Baby Bird asked Papa Bird, “When will I get to meet the sheep, Papa?”

“Soon enough, Birdie. Soon enough.” Papa Bird tucked Baby Bird cozily into the nest. “Let's get some rest before Mama comes back with your breakfast.”

Baby Bird closed her eyes and dreamt of white, fuzzy, grass-eating sheep.

Let's Talk About It

1. What did you learn about sheep?
2. What do you like to eat for breakfast?
3. Thank God for all of your favorite foods!

Dear God, thank you for giving me food to eat. Help me learn more about you as we read this book. In Jesus's name, amen.

“Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.”

(Psalm 86:11)

Day Two:

The Lord Is My Shepherd



Time passed, and Birdie's wings grew stronger.

"Papa, may I go talk to a sheep please? Please?" Birdie pleaded.

"Yes, Birdie, but don't fly too far," Papa instructed. "Stay near the nest so I can keep an eye on you."

Birdie flittered away clumsily to where a family of sheep lay grazing on the grass. "Hello!" Birdie greeted the smallest one.

“My name is Birdie. I’m a bird. Who are you?”

“My name is Duncan,” the little animal answered. “I’ve never met a bird before. I’m a lamb.”

“Yes. My mama told me all about you. You eat grass,” Birdie said.

“I really love grass, but I’m still drinking milk from my mother.” Duncan looked over at his mother. “She is over there. She’s the best mother in our flock.”

“What is a flock?” asked Birdie.

“A bunch of sheep, I guess. It’s what we call ourselves when we are all together,” Duncan explained.

Birdie fluttered into the air and looked over the flock of sheep. “Who is that way over there, the one standing up big and tall? He doesn’t look like you at all.”

Duncan laughed. “That’s because he’s not a sheep. He is our shepherd.” Seeing Birdie’s confused look, Duncan explained,

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“Our shepherd is the person who takes care of us and looks after us. He loves us and makes sure we always have food and water and shade, and he keeps us safe and—”

Duncan was interrupted by the sound of Mama Bird calling for Birdie.

“I have to go,” Birdie said, “but I’ll come back later, okay?” Birdie flew back to her nest. When she was safe and warm, she asked, “Mama, why don’t we have a shepherd?”

“Oh, but we do, Birdie. God created us, and He is our shepherd. He is always watching us and taking care of us,” Mama explained.

“But, Mama, why don’t we have one like Duncan?” Birdie asked again.

“God gives everyone exactly what they need. Sheep need a shepherd to do things for them that they are unable to do for themselves. We are hunters, meaning we can find our own food, but a sheep needs to

be guided to its food. We can fly away from danger, but sheep can't protect themselves. They need the shepherd to stay safe."

"If we can do all of that for ourselves, then why do we need God?" Birdie asked with a tilt of her head.

"He made us, Birdie, and without Him, we would not even be alive. He watches out for us in ways we will never fully understand. Most importantly, He loves us so very much. He loves you more than I do!"

"Wow," Birdie sighed with a smile. "I'm glad God is our shepherd, Mama. And I'm getting better at flying! Want to watch me?"

With that, Mama Bird watched as Birdie practiced her flying. Mama thanked God for giving them wings to fly away from danger and for being their faithful Shepherd.

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Let's Talk About It

1. What does a shepherd do for his sheep?
2. The Bible says that we are God's sheep. Have you ever thought about God being your shepherd? What does He do for you?
3. How does it make you feel knowing that God is always there for you?

Dear God, thank you for being my Shepherd and caring for me. In Jesus's name, amen.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." (John 10:14)



Day Three:

I Shall Not Be in Want



Duncan rested in the grass beside his mom, watching Birdie play with her mama and papa under the tree.

“What are they doing, Mother?” Duncan asked. “Are they digging a new nest on the ground?”

“Oh no, Duncan,” Mother explained. “They are teaching Birdie to dig for worms.”

Duncan thought it looked like a lot of fun. “I want to dig for worms too, Mother. I’m awfully tired of eating this grass. Birdie

gets to eat all kinds of things, like bugs, seeds, fruit, and worms, but I only get this grass. I sure wish I could eat a worm.”

Mother smiled at Duncan. “The shepherd knows what is best for us. He gives us everything we need.”

“But I don’t want grass, Mama. I want a worm. I’m going to dig for worms!” Duncan skipped away, still within the shepherd’s watchful gaze, and began scratching his hooves along the ground. “There must be a worm around here somewhere.” He was so busy trying to find a worm that he didn’t notice Birdie standing nearby until he heard the giggling. Duncan whizzed around.

“What are you doing, Duncan? Looking for something?” Birdie asked.

“Yeah. I’m trying to find a worm. I don’t want to eat grass anymore,” Duncan complained.

“I can help you,” Birdie said, eager to show off her new skill. “Mama and Papa

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just showed me. We first need to go somewhere shady. Then you peck your nose into the ground, like this.” Birdie showed how it was done.

Duncan tried and tried to jam his nose into the soft earth, but all he got was a dirty, sore snout. “I’m not very good at this.”

“I guess your nose isn’t as pointy as my beak,” said Birdie. “I also learned that if I tip my head to the side, like this, I can listen for worms. Want to try it?”

Duncan tilted his head and lowered his ear to the ground. He listened as hard as he could, but all he heard was the wind in the trees. “I can’t hear any worms,” Duncan grumbled, “and I want to eat a worm.”

Birdie decided she would cheer Duncan up. “I can get a worm for you, Duncan. Just watch and see!” With that, Birdie fluttered off and in moments came back with a prized worm. “Try this! You will love it!”

Duncan was so excited he leapt for joy.

“Great! Thanks, Birdie! You’re the best friend a lamb could have.” Duncan lowered his head and scooped up the worm. He wasn’t sure what he had expected, but it wasn’t what he tasted. The mushy, dirty, slimy worm felt like mud in his mouth, and he promptly spit it out. “That was awful!” he shouted.

Birdie looked upset. “I’m sorry, Duncan. I thought that was what you wanted.”

“Oh, Birdie, I’m sorry. It was what I thought I wanted, but I can see now why sheep don’t eat those big, slimy worms. I didn’t like it at all. But thanks for the help.”

When Duncan settled in for the night next to his mother, he said, a little embarrassed, “Mother, you were right. The shepherd does know what is best, and worms are not best. In fact, they’re not good at all. I think I’ll stick with the grass from now on.”

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Let's Talk About It


1. What did Duncan want to do? Was this a good idea?
2. Have you ever complained when you wanted something and couldn't have it?
3. What are some good things God has given you that you can be thankful for today?

Dear God, thank you for knowing what is best for me. Help me be thankful at all times. In Jesus's name, amen.

*"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever." (Psalm 107:1)*

Day Four:

He Makes Me Lie Down
in Green Pastures



Duncan and Birdie had been playing all day—running, skipping, and jumping. The game Duncan loved most was Hide and Seek. Birdie would fly to a nearby branch and hide. Duncan would then run around, looking for his little friend. They laughed the day away in the warmth of the sun.

When the sun climbed directly overhead, Duncan knew he should go nap with

the flock, but he didn't want to rest. He was having too much fun. "I want to keep playing," Duncan exclaimed.

Faster and faster the two ran and flew, chasing each other in circles. As the night air began to cool, Duncan knew he should go back to the fenced-in pasture as the shepherd led them, but he didn't want to stop having fun.

"I want to play all day and night, Birdie."

The sun disappeared behind the horizon, and the cold darkness settled around them.

"Birdie, come in to bed," Papa Bird called.

Birdie said her good-byes, and Duncan was left alone. At first, he spent his time exploring the night animals. He heard crickets chirp and saw a bat fly by in the dark. Before long, he became very sleepy. He was too far away from the flock to be safe and too tired to walk back to them. "I'm so tired. I don't think I can walk anymore."

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He rested his head on a bed of clover and closed his eyes.

Just as he was beginning to doze into sleep, he felt strong arms wrap around him and pick him up.

“It looks like you’ve had a little too much fun today, Duncan,” the kind shepherd said. “It is very important to get your rest so you can keep up with the flock.”

The shepherd carried Duncan all the way back to where the other sheep lay snug and warm behind the gate. He laid Duncan down in a soft bed of green grass.

Morning came too soon for the little lamb. All the other lambs gathered around for a game of tag, but Duncan was too tired to play. Another lamb named Heidi came up to Duncan and said, “Please come and play tag with us, Duncan. It’s not the same without you.”

But Duncan didn’t have the energy to play. He just wanted to sleep. He wasn’t able

to sleep, however, because the shepherd was leading them to another, greener area of pasture. Duncan fought to stay awake and keep up with the flock.

Come naptime, Duncan thankfully rested in the green grass with the other lambs. He was grateful that the shepherd made them lie down to rest. He knew that after his rest he would have plenty of time to play some more, and he couldn't wait to join in on another game of tag.

Let's Talk About It

1. Why didn't Duncan want to take a nap?
2. Have you ever wanted to keep playing when you were told to rest?
3. When you go to bed tonight, remember Duncan's story. How can you make bedtime more peaceful for your whole family?

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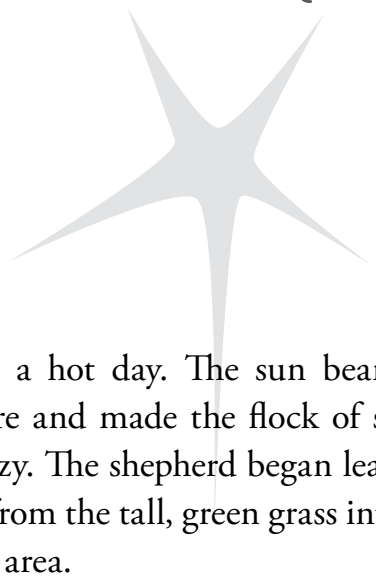
Dear God, thank you for caring for me.
Help me rest today when I am supposed to.
In Jesus's name, amen.

“Come to me, all you who are weary
and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
(Matthew 11:28)



Day Five:

He Leads Me Beside Quiet Waters



It was a hot day. The sun beamed down like fire and made the flock of sheep tired and lazy. The shepherd began leading them away from the tall, green grass into an unfamiliar area.

“Where are we going, Mother?” Duncan asked. “I’ve never been here before.”

Mother replied, “Just follow him, Duncan, and you will soon understand. The shepherd knows where we are going. He always does the right thing.”

Duncan followed along, but as the journey grew longer, some of the other lambs began to grumble.

“I’m tired of walking.”

“It is so hot!”

“Can’t we just rest here a while?”

Duncan didn’t complain, but he wanted to. He was so thirsty. His wool was sticky, and his legs were heavy and worn out.

As they rounded the corner, the sheep had to climb over a rocky path.

“This hurts my hooves,” the grumpy lambs moaned.

Their bad mood affected every animal in the flock. No one was happy, and it made the trip seem even longer.

Duncan was near the front and was the first to hear the sound of moving water. His spirits climbing, he gathered the strength he had left to jump over a few more rocks. His effort was rewarded with the sight of a gently rolling creek. Water! He eagerly drank

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to his heart's content, glad to cool his dry throat.

“This is great, Mother!” Duncan exclaimed. “You were right. The shepherd really does know where we should go.”

Mother replied, “He always does.”

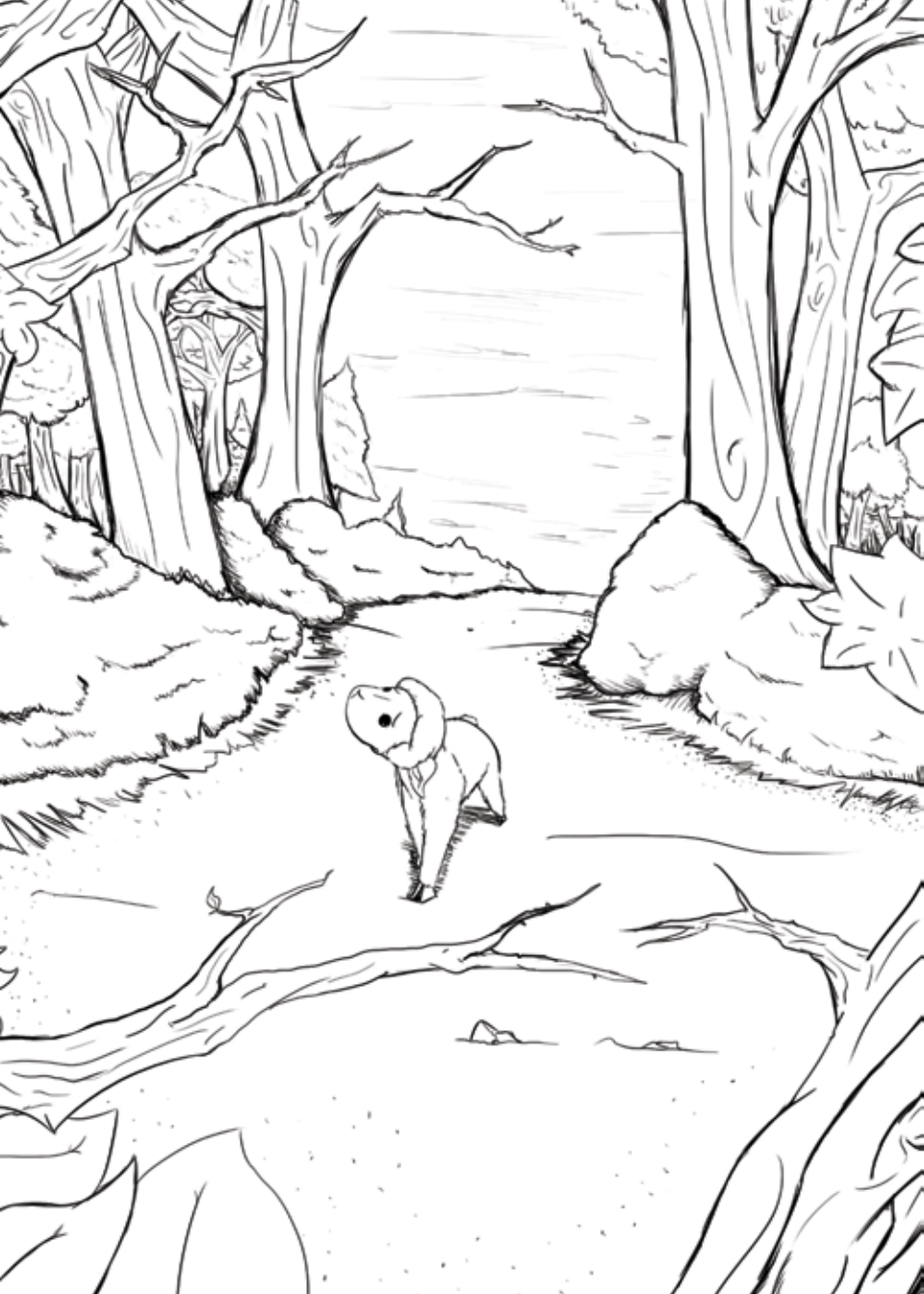
Let's Talk About It

1. Why were the lambs complaining?
2. Have you ever complained when you couldn't do what you wanted to do? Perhaps you wanted to go to a park but you had to go grocery shopping instead.
3. When you are grumpy, remember that God loves you and has a plan for the day. How will knowing this keep you from complaining when things don't go your way?

Dear God, help me follow you, even when I am not getting my way, because I know you love me so much. In Jesus's name, amen.

“Do everything without complaining or arguing.” (Philippians 2:14)





Day Six:

He Restores My Soul



The shepherd didn't lead the flock back to the fenced-in pasture that night. Duncan woke up early and looked around. Most of the lambs were still sleeping with their mothers. Duncan, who was growing rather curious, decided to take this opportunity to look around.

The rocks were somewhat difficult to climb, but he worked hard to steady himself and was able to manage it. The ground wasn't very easy on his slippery hooves. In

the distance, he saw another small animal covered in fur. It was bigger than Birdie but much smaller than himself.

“Hello,” he called out to the smaller animal. “Who are you?”

The smaller animal didn’t answer. She just hopped into the trees ahead. Duncan decided to follow.

“Excuse me!” he called again. “I’d like to meet you, if that’s all right.”

This time the small animal turned toward Duncan, raised her large ears to the sky, and looked at him as though she were trying to decide if she should trust this strange, large creature.

Duncan stood very still. “Don’t be afraid,” Duncan whispered. “I won’t hurt you. I’d just like to be your friend.”

At the sound of the word *friend*, the fluffy animal shyly asked, “Who are you?”

“My name is Duncan.” He was happy to

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have a new friend. "I am a lamb. Who are you?"

The animal answered, "My name is Sarah, and I am a bunny." Sarah then heard a noise in the woods and hopped quickly away without even saying good-bye.

Duncan struggled to follow her.

"But wait!" he called, stumbling over the sticks and branches. "Would you like to play?" In time, Duncan could no longer see Sarah the bunny, and he stopped running, knowing it was hopeless. "My, she was a scared little thing. I wonder what she was afraid of."

Duncan looked around, and it suddenly occurred to him that he didn't know where he was. Tall trees surrounded him, stretching to the sky and covering the soft rays of the early morning sun. This made it difficult to see anything clearly. Large bushes and undergrowth were all around, and he couldn't make out which way he had come

from. He began hearing noises: creaking, cracking, snapping. They were all unfamiliar to this little lamb, and he began to shake in fear. The darkness of the place began to surround him, and he couldn't even move. Frozen, he stood still, and panic began taking hold of his mind.

The snapping and thrashing became louder. Duncan imagined all sorts of horrible things, and the very thought of a large beast coming to make him into dinner scared him to his very soul.

When the kind face of the shepherd appeared through the brush, Duncan didn't know whether to leap or fall down flat. The fear had taken the life out of him. The shepherd picked him up, checked him for wounds, and covered him in his robe. The shepherd whispered, "You weren't made to be in this forest, Duncan. I have come to guide you out."

Peace covered Duncan like a soft

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blanket. Nothing around him had changed. The trees were still tall and the forest was still dark and the noises still circled around them, but wrapped in his shepherd's arms, Duncan knew he was safe. And that was all that mattered.

Let's Talk About It

1. Why was Duncan afraid?
2. Have you ever made bad choices that put you in danger?
3. Jesus promises to be with us, even when we are afraid. Even if nothing around us changes, knowing this, we can trust in Him. Will you pray to God the next time you are afraid?

Becky Emerick


Dear God, thank you for always being with me. When I am afraid, help me trust in you. In Jesus's name, amen.

“So do not fear, for I am with you.”

(Isaiah 41:10a)

Day Seven:

He Guides Me in Paths of
Righteousness



The next morning, the shepherd gathered the lambs and herded them into a sunny spot to do their daily training games.

“We’re going to work extra hard today, lambs,” the shepherd said as he started leading them in a circle around the pasture. “The green spring pasture grass is almost gone, and we are on a journey to the high country in the mountains.”

He led them in various exercises, making sure they knew how and when to follow, when to start and stop, when to drink, and when to lie down. Duncan wasn't really paying attention, and sometimes he bumped into the other lambs. They began to get irritated with him.

"Duncan, watch where you're going!" Heidi snapped.

Duncan rolled his eyes. "I think following the shepherd is sometimes boring."

"Oh, Duncan," Heidi exclaimed, wide-eyed, "you shouldn't say that. My mother told me that this is going to be a very dangerous journey. Poisonous plants; wild, sheep-eating animals; cliffs we could fall down—" She stopped short, afraid to imagine anything worse.

"And you've gotten into your own fair share of trouble, Duncan," another lamb named Woolly snorted. "Don't think we

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haven't noticed all the times the shepherd had to carry you home."

"Some of the older sheep think you might be causing trouble for all of us, Duncan," Heidi said.

"But how?" Duncan asked. He couldn't imagine how he could be hurting others. He was just playing around.

Wooly explained, "My father said that if you keep sneaking out and disobeying, you might bring danger to the flock."

Heidi finished, "A lion or bear might follow you and get us all. And that would be horrible!"

Duncan lowered his head. "I'm sorry. I never really thought I was hurting anybody."

"We all love you, Duncan," Heidi said. "And the shepherd loves you too. We don't want you to get hurt."

Duncan decided it was time to start paying attention. The shepherd was teaching them to stay on the right path, away from

trouble. To Duncan, it sounded like a good lesson, and he knew he needed this refresher course.

Let's Talk About It

1. Why were the other sheep talking about Duncan?
2. Have you ever had trouble choosing between right and wrong?
3. God wants us to follow the right path all the time because He loves us and wants us to stay out of trouble. What trouble can come to you when you go down the wrong path?

Dear God, help me learn to stay on the right path. Thank you for leading me. In Jesus's name, amen.


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“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’” (Isaiah 30:21)



Day Eight:

For His Name's Sake



Birdie zoomed through the air to Duncan, who was snacking on a small patch of grass.

Out of breath, she exclaimed, “Oh, Duncan, I’m so glad you’re all right. I’ve been looking everywhere for you. You didn’t come back to the pasture for the last few nights, and I was afraid something dreadful or even terrible might have happened.”

“No. It isn’t like that. We are going somewhere new for the summer. There’s more

grass up there.” Duncan directed Birdie’s gaze to just above the next mountain.

“Way up there, Duncan? Are you sure? It looks risky.” Birdie didn’t like the idea of her friend going so far away. “Aren’t you afraid?”

“It’s risky all right, but the shepherd will be with us, so it will be okay,” Duncan answered, confident in his words.

“I don’t understand, Duncan. I don’t need a shepherd. Why do you? Why can’t you just stay here with me? Won’t you please stay?” Birdie pleaded.

“I wish it were that easy, Birdie.” Duncan lowered his head. “I need the shepherd. Without him, I don’t know what I’d do...” Duncan’s voice trailed off as he thought about what the shepherd had done for him. “Every day he leads us out to the best grass. He provides for us when we’re thirsty. He rescues me when I’m in danger. He calms me down when I’m afraid. He loves me.

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You're a wonderful friend, Birdie, but the shepherd is everything to me. I want to go with him and follow him wherever he leads me."

Birdie understood. "Well, let's not waste this time together talking. Let's play!" Birdie flew off behind a branch.

Duncan took a long, hard look at his shepherd standing nearby at the head of the flock. "Thank you, shepherd," he whispered. Then he turned back to the pasture, eager to find his favorite friend and let the game of tag begin.

Let's Talk About It


1. Why didn't the sheep go back to the pasture?
2. How is God like the shepherd?
3. Can you think of any words that describe God? As His children, how can we be more like Him?

Dear God, you are loving, kind, and good. Help me to be more like you. In Jesus's name, amen.

“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.” (Psalm 8:9)

Day Nine:

Even Though I Walk through the Valley
of the Shadow of Death



The shepherd continued to lead his flock. He guided them through the gate, out of the flatlands, and up the mountain path. They were heading to the deep grass through the dark valley on the other side of the hill. So far, no one had been injured. They obediently followed the shepherd as he used his staff to nudge them away from the poisonous plants and narrow passages.

After days of traveling, as they reached the lowest point, it began to rain. The mountains were like dark, threatening towers on either side. They were entering a gloomy, narrow passage, with mist and rainclouds covering the mountaintops. Ahead was a sluggish stream, brown and murky.

No sheep would dare cross through this passage alone. Part of Duncan wanted to dig in his heels and resist the gentle prodding of the shepherd's staff. He looked back and could barely see the mouth of the passage where they had entered. He knew that if he turned around he could be back to the safer area out in the open.

"Mother, why can't we go back?" Duncan asked. "This doesn't look safe."

"The shepherd knows what he is doing, Duncan. If we turn back now, we will be hungry all summer long. We are going somewhere full of dark, thick grass for us to eat," Mother reassured him.

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“But, Mother, are you sure this is the right way? It's so dark I can hardly see.” Duncan began to get a little panicky as the rain made his wool damp and the ground slippery. “I don't like the dark. I don't like it, Mother!”

“Trust the shepherd,” Mother calmed him. “He's been on this journey many, many times. He'll get us there safely, Duncan. And when the time is right, he will lead us safely home.”

“Back to Birdie?” Duncan asked.

“Yes, back to Birdie and the sunny pasture and the safety of the gate.”

“Have you been here before, Mother?”

“Yes, Duncan, but I don't know the way. That is why I keep following our shepherd.”

Duncan looked around. He still couldn't see very well, and the mist clouded up his eyes. But he could see the shepherd, and that was all that mattered.

Let's Talk About It

1. Why couldn't Duncan see very well?
2. Have you ever been afraid when you were alone?
3. Life can sometimes be scary when we don't understand what is happening. We can feel small and confused. Will knowing that you are never alone help during these frightening moments?

Dear God, thank you for being big and strong. When I am scared, I will call out to you for help. In Jesus's name, amen.

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."


(Deuteronomy 31:6)





Day Ten:

I Will Fear No Evil



The flock's trip through the dark valley was long and wet, and as they came across on the other side, Duncan thought the worst was over, especially as the rain clouds began to clear. However, there was still one more place for them to go that would cause Duncan to put all of his trust into his shepherd.

They turned a corner around the mountain, and the path began to narrow. It was so skinny that each sheep had to travel

single-file in a row, with the shepherd barely able to stand to their side to guide them. Duncan was in the back when he heard some of the sheep making noises up ahead. He could hear the sound of hooves scraping the rocks, almost as if they were jumping on stones.

“What’s going on up there?” Duncan asked, trying to see around the large sheep in front of him. “What’s all that noise?”

No one could hear him because there was so much commotion.

As Duncan got closer, he was able to see more clearly. They had come to a break in the path. To his right was a tall, climbing mountain that went straight up. To his left was a steep cliff that went straight down, so far that Duncan couldn’t see the bottom. The path itself was jagged and rough and uneven. Ahead of the sheep was a gap in the path that had to be jumped over.

One by one, the sheep were jumping over

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the lengthy crack to the rocky path ahead. The loud noises came from the smaller sheep that didn't quite make it all the way. Their front hooves barely reached the other side, and their back hooves had to scramble and kick until they were up and safe. The shepherd was using his rod to support their back ends, pushing them up as hard as he could.

Duncan didn't know what he would do. He knew he couldn't possibly jump across that far. He didn't even think his hooves would reach the other side.

The process was taking quite a bit of time, and Duncan was near the end of the line. He reasoned to himself, *This could be really scary, maybe even as scary as being in the woods all by myself! That was terrifying!* Duncan looked ahead and saw how hard the shepherd was working to keep everyone safe. *But this time I'm not alone. The shepherd is here, and so I am not afraid. I know he will take care of me.*

Duncan kept his eyes on the shepherd as he waited for his turn to cross the threatening crevice, and the fear that had once gripped him like a crushing claw melted away.

Let's Talk About It

1. What was Duncan getting ready to do?
2. Have you ever been scared of trying something new? Riding a bike for the first time or going to a new school?
3. God tells us not to worry about what hasn't happened yet. Instead, we should trust in Him. Is there anything you are worried about that you need to trust God for right now?

God, thank you for comforting me when I am worried. Help me to put my trust in you. In Jesus's name, amen.

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“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:34)



Day Eleven:

For You Are with Me



Duncan was waiting in a long, narrow line of sheep with danger on all sides and nowhere to go but straight ahead. There was a large gap in the path that even the strongest sheep were having trouble jumping over. Duncan wasn't sure what the shepherd would do when it was his turn, but he trusted him nonetheless.

Duncan's mother was in front of him. When her turn came, she turned to Duncan and said, "I'm going to go across now,

Duncan. Just watch me and trust. You can do it. You are strong and brave.”

Duncan didn't feel very strong or brave. In fact, the large cliff dropping to his left and the encroaching mountain on his right made him feel very small indeed. But he watched his mother crouch very low and take two steps backward, and at the signal of the shepherd's rod, she bounded straight ahead.

He thought he was watching something in slow motion. His mother's body soared over the cliff, and all four hooves landed safely on the other side. “Hooray, Mother!” Duncan cheered. “Hooray! You did it! You did it!” Duncan had never felt so proud.

Seeing his mother's talented flight encouraged him all the more. *I can do this!* he thought. *I must be brave and strong!* Duncan crouched low like his mother, took a few steps backward, and waited on the shepherd's signal.

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The signal didn't come. Instead, the shepherd walked up to Duncan and stooped down to his level. He rested his hand on top of the lamb's head and kindly said, "Oh, my brave little Duncan. You are very strong, but this crack is too wide for you. In time I will let you try it alone. But not today."

Duncan worried, *Will he leave me behind? I don't want to be alone.* Just then, Duncan felt the strong arms of the shepherd wrap around his body. The shepherd lifted Duncan up, over his head, and onto his shoulders.

Duncan was much taller now up on the shepherd's shoulder. He could see everything: the dangerous cavern below, the sheep that were waiting in line, and the rest of the flock that had already gone ahead of him grazing safely on the other side. The shepherd slowly went forward and carried the little lamb carefully across the dangerous crevice.

When the threat was gone, the shepherd gently set Duncan down. He again stooped to the young one's level and said, "There you go, my special lamb. You are safe now. Go join the others and get some rest."

Duncan leapt over to his mother and exclaimed, "Did you see that, Mother? Did you see that? He carried me! He carried me all the way across. I knew I didn't need to be afraid."

Let's Talk About It

1. Why didn't Duncan have to jump over the cliff?
2. Have you ever been asked to do something that you were unable to do?
3. What new activity could you try, trusting that God will be there for you? You may not succeed the first time, but keep

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trying, knowing that God will be there to pick you up if you fall.

Dear God, thank you for being with me and helping me try new things! Remind me to ask you for help. In Jesus's name, amen.

“Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” (Psalm 55:22)

Day Twelve:

Your Rod and Your Staff, They
Comfort Me



The flock had almost finished its dangerous journey to the greener grass on the other side of the mountain. The path was starting to get easier, and the mood of the flock was changing from anxiousness to ease. Some began pleasantly talking and laughing again.

As Duncan passed a large, gray rock, he

couldn't resist looking behind it. He veered off the path and began to explore.

He hadn't been off the path for but a moment when the shepherd's staff tapped his rear end, causing him to quickly fall back in line. It didn't hurt very badly, just a little sting, but it reminded Duncan of the days early on, when the training was a bit more difficult.

As a tiny lamb in the pasture, the shepherd would regularly train him and the other lambs, teaching them to follow the rod he held to guide them. If they turned the wrong way, they would feel the sting of his staff's correction. Duncan remembered back to a time in his younger days when he was overly irritated with the Shepherd's discipline.

"I'm so tired of all of this correction," Duncan had complained that hot and sunny day to the other lambs. "I just don't like it a bit!"

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Heidi was distracted by a butterfly, and as she leapt off to chase it, she too was corrected by the staff. She agreed. "I'm beginning to get a bit irritated myself. I just wanted to get a closer look at the little butterfly. That's all."

"Maybe we could steal that stick. Then he wouldn't be able to tell us what to do," Duncan had suggested.

As Dunkin returned his mind to the present, he realized that those carefree days in the pasture seemed like a lifetime ago now. As he passed the rock that initially had caught his attention, the shepherd walked behind it. Duncan couldn't see what was happening, but he heard a loud cracking noise.

Heidi ran up to Duncan and said, out of breath, "Did you see that, Duncan? Oh my! There was a huge snake behind that rock where you were going! Huge! The shepherd just killed it with his rod. Just

like that! When I think of what could have happened...”

Duncan’s eyes widened. “Oh, Heidi, can you imagine what would have happened if we would have stolen his stick back in the pasture when we were young?”

Heidi smiled. “I know. It doesn’t seem so irritating anymore, does it?”

“No. It’s actually kind of comforting. I know he only wants what’s best for us.”

Let’s Talk About It

1. Why didn’t Duncan like the shepherd’s stick?
2. Have you ever been punished for disobeying?
3. God disciplines us because He loves us. Give an example of when you learned a good lesson after being disciplined.

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Dear God, even though I don't like being punished, thank you for loving me enough to help me stay out of trouble. In Jesus's name, amen.

“The LORD disciplines those he loves,
as a father the son he delights in.”

(Proverbs 3:12)

Day Thirteen:

You Prepare a Table before Me in the
Presence of my Enemies



The sheep had been on a long journey from the green pastures to the high mountain range. When the shepherd had found a nice, flat area with plenty of fresh grass, the sheep were finally given an opportunity to rest. They strolled around, nibbled some grass, and relaxed.

The shepherd, however, did not rest. He kept moving, looking all over the area.

“What is he doing, Mother?” Duncan asked.

“He’s getting the land ready for us, Duncan. Watch him and see what he does.” Mother directed her gaze to where the shepherd was busy pulling plants out of the ground.

“Why is he pulling our food out, Mother? I’m hungry.” Duncan was very concerned.

“Some of the plants here are very bad for us, Duncan. He’s pulling out the bad, poisonous plants so that we don’t accidentally eat them.”

Later, Duncan noticed the shepherd pouring something out of a flask and onto the ground. “What does the Shepherd have in his hand, Mother?”

Mother casually replied, “A flask.”

Not satisfied with the answer, he asked again. “But what is he doing with that flask?”

“There are dangerous snakes around

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here, Duncan. The shepherd cannot keep all of them away, but when he finds a snake hole, he pours oil around it, preventing the snake from getting out.”

As the sun began to set, Duncan noticed that the shepherd hadn't stopped moving. “Mother, he keeps walking around and around, holding his stick.”

“That stick is called a rod,” Mother corrected.

“But what is he doing with his rod? Why doesn't he sleep?”

“Duncan, the shepherd is here to protect us. He wants this to be a safe place for us to eat, so he is always watching for dangerous animals,” Mother explained.

“Dangerous animals? Oh no! Like what, Mother?” Duncan began looking around fearfully.

“Wolves, bears, coyotes, lions—there are many dangers that surround us, Duncan. But do not worry. Even if we were

surrounded by every wild beast, the shepherd would make sure we could eat here in safety.”

“Wow. I guess there’s no end to what the shepherd does for us.” Duncan walked over to the shepherd and nuzzled his head in his hand to say thanks.

The shepherd understood and smiled.

Let’s Talk About It

1. What dangers surrounded Duncan and the other sheep?
2. Is there anything dangerous where you live?
3. How does God protect you from these dangers?

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Dear God, thank you for protecting me from the dangerous things that are all around me. Teach me to always come to you for help. In Jesus's name, amen.

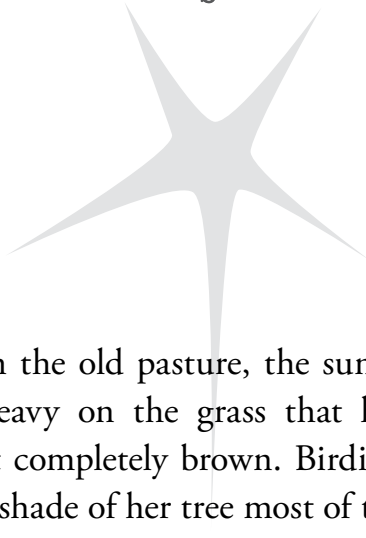
*“God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.”*

(Psalm 46:1)



Day Fourteen:

You Anoint My Head with Oil



Out in the old pasture, the sun shone hot and heavy on the grass that had turned almost completely brown. Birdie kept cool in the shade of her tree most of the day.

But on the mountainside, the sheep were cool and the grass was lush and green. All was going well until something unexpected happened. It wasn't a wolf. It wasn't a bear. It wasn't a snake. It was much smaller. It was a bug.

Not just one bug, but many bugs began

swarming around Duncan, the little, pesky things. All the other sheep ran away to the shepherd, afraid to get near the little bugs. The shepherd quickly put an oil repellent on all of the sheep. It seemed to work, and the bugs eventually left them alone.

After a few days, however, Duncan began acting strange. His nose itched. It itched really bad! He tried rubbing it on the ground, but the itching didn't stop. He went over to a tree and began frantically scratching his nose against the bark, but the intense irritation just seemed to get worse. When the shepherd found him, Duncan was running all over the place, banging his head against any rock, bush, or tree he could find.

“Duncan,” the shepherd called. “Duncan, come over here.”

Duncan, despite his agony, obeyed the call of the shepherd. The shepherd took out his flask and rubbed the oil all over Duncan's

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nose. “That should start to feel better.” Then the shepherd explained, “It looks like those nasty nose flies laid some eggs right here on the soft spot of your nose, Duncan. When the eggs hatched, the little larvae—which are baby flies—made your nose itch.”

Duncan finally relaxed and laid his head on the shepherd's lap. The oil took away the horrible itching. The shepherd continued to talk calmly to Duncan, reassuring him that everything would be okay.

He then began to sing, and all the other sheep came over to listen. It was a nice song about how God heals and takes care of his people. The soothing tune lulled Duncan into a nice, itch-free sleep.

Let's Talk About It

1. What caused Duncan to act like a wild sheep?
2. Have you ever been really sick?
3. Are there any sick family members or friends that you could pray for right now?

Dear God, thank you for healing me when I've not been feeling well. Please help my family and friends right now who are sick. In Jesus's name, amen.

“Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed;
Save me and I will be saved, for You
are the one I praise.” (Jeremiah 17:4)

Day Fifteen:

My Cup Overflows



The summer months passed quickly by, and before long, it was time to head back to the safety of the pasture. Winter was coming; they would need the protection from the harsh, cold days.

The sheep followed the shepherd back the same way they had come. The journey was just as difficult, the path was just as treacherous, but to Duncan, it seemed much easier than before. He trusted the

shepherd completely and was able to follow obediently without fear.

As they rounded the last hill, Duncan spotted the tree where he had played Hide and Seek with Birdie so many months ago.

Birdie, Duncan thought. *I wonder if she is still around here.*

The flock was led through the gate and back into the safety of the pasture. In the distance was the barn where Mother said they would stay on the coldest days.

“I wish I could see Birdie,” Duncan told his Mother. “I wonder if she remembers me.”

“I am sure she remembers you, Duncan. How could she forget such a wonderful friend? However, you do look a bit different with those horns growing bigger every day.”

Duncan was very proud of his horns. They weren't all the way in, but they were growing. His mother continued. “Duncan, there's something else you should know.

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Birdie will not be staying in Bethlehem for the winter. She will probably fly south for the winter with her family. She might have already left.”

“Already left?” Duncan exclaimed. “How could she leave without saying good-bye?” Duncan ran to the gate, anxious to get out and look for his friend. “Birdie!” he cried. “Birdie, are you out there? Can you hear me?” Duncan paced back and forth, not knowing what else to do.

Just then, the shepherd appeared on the other side of the gate. “Duncan,” he called as he opened the door just slightly so others didn't get out. “Duncan, follow me.”

Duncan obeyed and followed the shepherd out the door. The shepherd stooped to Duncan's level and pointed to a nearby tree. “I think there's someone over there who wants to say hi to you.”

Duncan looked, and there, high in a tree, was Birdie. She was much bigger, but

he knew it was her. He tossed a thankful look at the shepherd and ran over to Birdie.

“Birdie, I’m back! I’m back!” Duncan called.

Birdie spotted him right away and chirped and tweeted her way down to see him.

“Oh, Duncan, it was such a long summer without you! And my how you’ve grown! I’m so glad to see you!”

It was a joyful reunion. They laughed and played and laughed some more. Duncan was the only one let out of the gate that day, and he felt like the luckiest, happiest sheep in the world.

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Let's Talk About It


1. What did the shepherd do for Duncan that made him so happy?
2. What has been the happiest day of your life?
3. Sometimes God fills the cups of our hearts with so much happiness that they overflow! What can you do today that will make someone else happy?

Dear God, thank you for all the happy things in my life. Help me try to make others happy today. In Jesus's name, amen.

“Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock
of our salvation.” (Psalm 95:1)

Day Sixteen:

Surely Goodness and Love Will Follow
Me All the Days of My Life



Duncan and Birdie spent their final days of summer and early fall together in the beautiful pasture. Birdie asked about the adventure to the other side of the mountain. “Weren’t you scared?” Birdie wondered.

“At first I was,” Duncan admitted. “When it got really dark and scary, I could barely move. And the path was so small.”

“What was the worst part?” Birdie asked.

“Well, I’d say just not knowing where I was going or how long it would take to get there. You know, all the questions I didn’t have answers to.” Duncan looked up at the shepherd. “He knew where he was going, though, and that’s what mattered.” Duncan continued to tell Birdie all about the nose bugs, snakes, wolves, poisonous plants, and dangerous cliffs. He also explained how each step of the way the shepherd was there taking care of them.

Birdie stood in awe. “Wow. He is amazing. He really loves you!”

Duncan smiled. “I know. He’s the best. I never want to forget all the great things I learned this summer.”

“You’re very lucky, Duncan, to have someone who is so good to you all the time. That is very special.” Then Birdie said shyly, “I’m a little afraid about flying south, but Mother and Father say that God is always

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watching us and that He is looking out for our good too.”

Duncan nuzzled his little friend. “You’ll do great, Birdie. And when you come back in the spring, we’ll have so much to talk about.”

Birdie smiled and flew around Duncan’s head. Then she swatted him on the head with her wing. “Tag! You’re it!” she called as she flew away.

With that, their final game of tag for the year was underway.

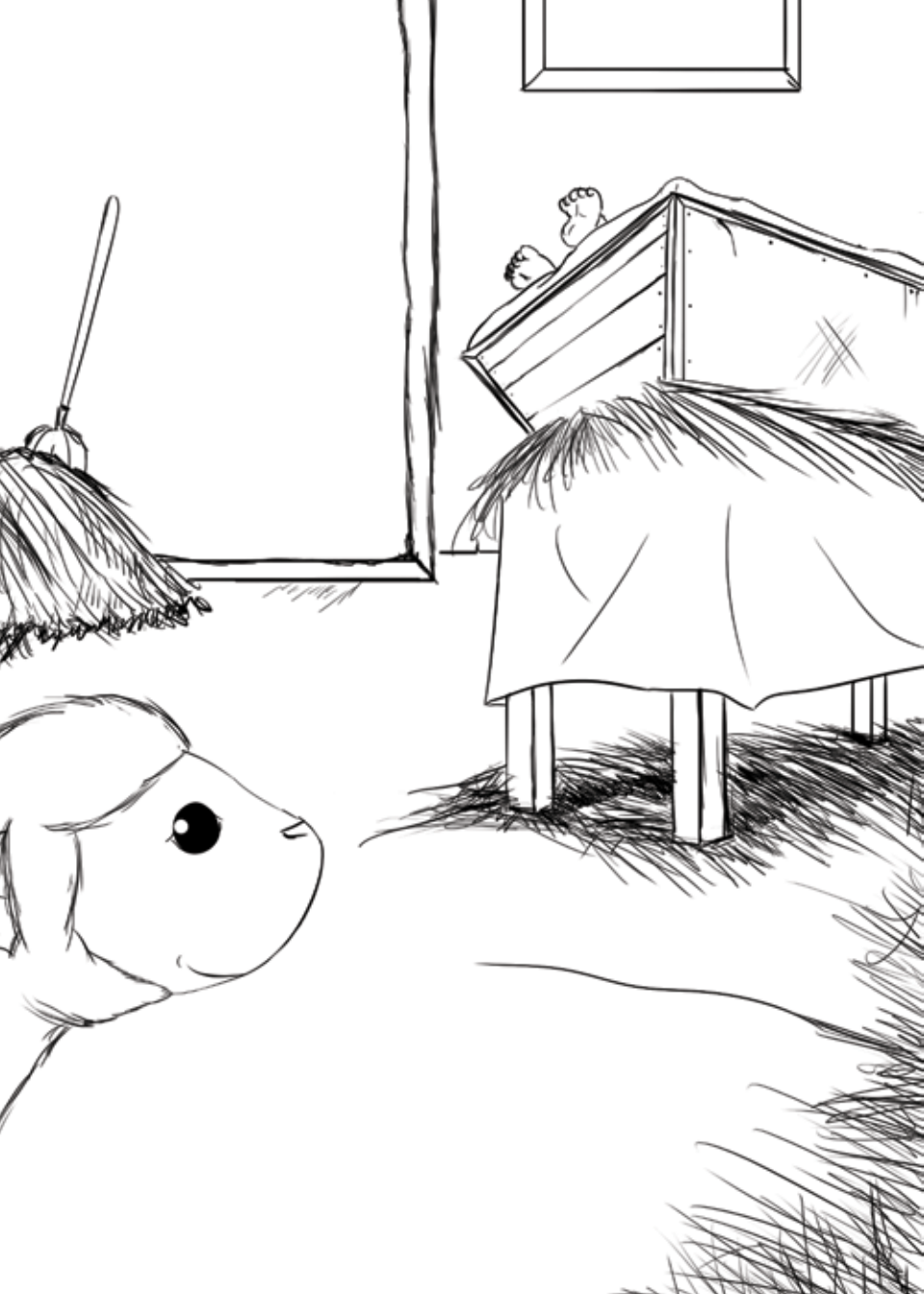
Let's Talk About It

1. Where was Birdie going for the winter?
2. Have you ever been on an adventure and couldn't wait to tell your friends about it?
3. God is loving and good! Do you believe this?

Dear God, thank you for promising to be good and loving. Help me remember this for the rest of my life. In Jesus's name, amen.


“Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.” (Psalm 106:1)





Day Seventeen:

And I Will Dwell in the
House of the Lord



Bethlehem was usually a rather quiet place. People moved slowly, going about their business and rarely bothering the sheep. Duncan noticed, however, that the noise in the city was getting louder and there were a lot more people.

“What’s going on, Mother?” Duncan asked.

“I’m not sure, but it looks like the

shepherd is calling for us. We had better follow.”

The shepherd decided that with the growing number of people around because of the census, he would lead his flock to a more remote part of Bethlehem for a while. He joined a few other shepherds, and together they walked out into the open fields. Duncan liked spending time on the other side of the gate. He only wished Birdie was around to play, but she had flown south to warmer weather many weeks before.

The day was coming to an end, and the shepherds remained in the fields, keeping guard over their flocks at night. It was very dark, and the stars shone brightly overhead. Out of nowhere, an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were absolutely terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to

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you good news that brings great joy to all the people: Today, your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people with whom he is pleased!”

When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over and see this thing that has taken place, that the Lord has told us about!” So they hurried off.

Duncan looked around, still in shock by what he had seen. He almost didn't hear when his shepherd called, “Follow me!” The shepherd was in a great hurry, and without hesitation, the herd sped back to the pasture and was put safely behind the gate. To

everyone's amazement, the barn that the angel was referring to was just behind their pasture. It was the very barn that Duncan was born in!

The shepherd safely corralled his flock, but before he shut the gate, he called for Duncan. Duncan followed without hesitation.

"I get to go!" he exclaimed. He could hardly believe it.

The shepherds hurried with Duncan into the barn, and there they met a man and a woman.

Where is the baby? Duncan wondered. Then he spotted him over in the manger. *Strange. That's where I usually eat,* Duncan thought.

The mother said quietly to all those around, "His name is Emmanuel, God with us. We will call him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins."

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Let's Talk About It

1. Where did the shepherd take Duncan?
2. Jesus's mother said that her boy would save his people from their sins. Have you ever sinned?
3. The baby Jesus was God's son who grew to be a perfect man. He died for us and then rose again three days later. The Bible says that if we believe in what Jesus did for us, He will forgive all of our sins! Only then will we truly be his sheep. Have you ever asked Jesus to forgive you, telling Him that you will follow Him like a sheep follows his shepherd?

Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to forgive my sins. Please forgive me and help me follow you. In Jesus's name, Amen.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)





Day Eighteen:

Forever



The shepherd was never the same after that night. Everywhere the flock went, the shepherd found new people to tell what he had been told about the baby. All who heard it were astonished at what the shepherd said.

The sheep gathered around Duncan nightly to hear the story once again about the baby born in a feeding trough. Who was he? What did he look like? Did his mother sing him to sleep? Was the father very proud? What did it all mean?

The cold winter days passed quickly for this particular flock. They all felt very special to have received the extraordinary word from the Creator's angels about his Son.

As the gray earth and sky began coming back to life in a sea of florescent green, new life was also born in the barn with the coming of baby lambs. Duncan watched as the little ones wobbled on their new legs, trying to figure out how to take their first steps. Their mothers would nuzzle them up into a standing position as they learned how to keep their balance. The atmosphere was light and the moods were positive, anticipating the arrival of spring.

It was on one such morning as Duncan was grazing in the grass that he heard a familiar voice.

"Duncan! Duncan!" Birdie flew through the air and landed expertly on a small twig just in front of Duncan's nose. "Oh my goodness, you are so big! You look all grown

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up! You won't believe how exciting it was down south. The flight was so long, and I was so tired; but my mama and papa told me to keep going, and I did and I made it! And there were so many new birds and animals to meet."

Birdie twirled in the air. "Every night I thought about you, knowing that you were able to go on a dangerous journey so I could too. And then it started to get warm and we started flying back, and I was so much stronger, I knew I could make it. I couldn't fly fast enough though because I couldn't wait to see you and tell you about everything, and here you are!" Birdie stopped finally to catch her breath and whizzed around Duncan's head.

"I didn't know if you would come back!" Duncan exclaimed. "I'm so excited to see you and tell you what happened here. You'll never believe this, but a baby was born, a baby boy, here in our barn."

“A baby? A human baby?” Birdie asked, intrigued.

“Yes,” Duncan said, “and everything has changed. He wasn’t just any baby. He was God’s son. I wish you were here. There were angels and visitors, and he was so perfect and—”

“God’s son was born *here*, Duncan?” Birdie asked.

Duncan nodded and leapt around in excitement.

“Duncan, I heard about it. Everyone is talking about it. All the animals know something exciting happened. I can’t believe it happened here! The Creator is doing something great in the world.”

“He sure is, Birdie. He sure is.”

The two friends, excited to be together again, ran off to play. It was true that all of the animals had heard the news of the coming of God’s Son. None of their lives

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were ever going to be the same. They were changed forever.

Let's Talk About It

1. How did Duncan's friends hear about the new baby Jesus?
2. Have you ever told any of your friends about what Jesus has done for you?
3. Jesus said that He is getting a home ready for us to live in when we go to Heaven. We will never be sad. We will never get hurt. We will be with Jesus and others who love Him forever! Who can you tell this exciting news to?

Dear God, thank you for promising that I will live with you forever because of what Jesus did for me! Help me to be brave to tell others the good news. In Jesus's name, amen.

“The world and its desires pass away,
but the man who does the will of God
lives forever.” (1 John 2:17)

Duncan is a curious little lamb who lives in Bethlehem. He and his friend Birdie share many adventures while exploring the forest, encountering enemies, and going on dangerous journeys. The most exciting adventure of all, however, is the one that leads them to witness the birth of Jesus. Duncan can't wait to spread the great news!

Bringing the words of the beloved Twenty-third Psalm to life in an easily comprehensible format, *Duncan's Journey* is an engaging story that resonates with children and adults alike. Prepare to be charmed by the simple tale of a little lamb who learns just what it means to follow our Shepherd.



Becky Emerick lives in Zionsville, Indiana, with her husband and their four children. She is passionate about her Shepherd and loves teaching His Word to her children in fresh and exciting ways.



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