

*He restores my soul.*

Have you ever been downcast? What does it mean to be downcast? Typically when one is thought of as being downcast they are in low spirits, depressed and feel disheartened about their life. Therefore, everyone is downcast at one point or many times in their life. However, this is *not* a state the Lord our Shepherd wants us to be in. Therefore, He restores our soul and does so with His quiet, gentle, reassuring Spirit. This chapter of Keller's book looks at three different reasons why a sheep becomes downcast. We will look at these three reasons as they apply to the Christian life and in doing so we will learn techniques of how to allow the Father to restore our soul by drawing from His wisdom to avoid being in such a state.

The three reasons a sheep may become downcast are:

1. Looking for a soft spot.
2. Too much wool
3. Too fat

**Looking for a soft spot:**

Are you looking for the soft easy spot? There is danger in a Christian looking for cozy comfort in this world. Don't misunderstand this as God will not bless those who follow Him. He certainly will bless the faithful. However, those blessings are not meant only for our comfort but to equip us to minister to others. When we speak of looking for the easy spot the lesson lies in *focus*. Are you focused on Christ providing you with the easy life of blessings or are you focused on following Christ *whatever* the cost. To learn more about this let's look at what Jesus meant by "take up your cross and follow Me." (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23)

Read Luke 9:22-27

How do verses 24 & 25 put God's call for us to have absolute surrender into perspective?

Backing up to verse 22, what are the things that Christ faced?

If we are to absolutely surrender to Christ and deny our life, how do these verses put into perspective *what* Christ is calling us to do when He made the statement "take up your cross and follow Me?" Following Jesus is easy when life runs smoothly. However, our true commitment to Him is revealed during trials. Jesus assured us that trials will come to His followers (John 16:33). Discipleship demands sacrifice, and Jesus never hid that cost.

**Too Much Wool:**

Keller states in his book starting at the bottom of page 77

“Wool in Scripture depicts the old self-life in the Christian. It is the outward expression of an inner attitude, the assertion of my own desire and hopes and aspirations. It is the area of my life in which and through which I am continually in contact with the world around me. Here is where I find the clinging accumulation of things, of possessions, of worldly ideas beginning to weigh me down, drag me down, hold me down. . . . If I wish to go on walking with God and not be forever cast down, this is an aspect of my life which He must deal with drastically.”

What are these worldly things that weigh us down? To understand this we must realize what the Scripture means by an idol and what are some modern forms of idolatry. An idol is *anything* in our life that we put before the Lord. All the various forms of modern idolatry have one thing at their core: self. We no longer bow down to idols and images. Instead we worship at the altar of the god of self. This sort of modern idolatry takes various forms.

*Material idolatry* can set in when we start to covet what our neighbor may have. What does Exodus 20:17 say about this? How can this coveting lead to “too much wool” that will lead us to being downcast?

*Self indulgence idolatry* is when we have fulfillment of the self to the exclusion of all others and their needs and desires. Usually this is manifested in self-indulgence through alcohol, drugs and food. However, there are many other ways that this type of idolatry rears its ugly head. What are the three core lusts listed in 1 John 2:16? How does self indulgence idolatry relate to these?

**Too Fat:**

Have you done well in your life? Or do you feel like you are a mature Christian that will not give into the temptations that an immature Christian may give into? Keller says, “Often when we are most sure of ourselves we are the most prone to fall flat.” (top of page 80) This attitude can set a Christian up to be a downcast sheep by being so sure of themselves that before they know it they have had a great fall.

What does 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 tell us about this?