

BY DIANE ANDREWS
WITH MYRA HOLMES

He makes me *lie down*

Leading as both shepherd and sheep

IT WAS DURING THE SECOND YEAR OF MY HUSBAND'S senior pastorate that I panicked. I was busy being a wife and mother, leading the women's ministry team and investing in the lives of our church members. I was serving and doing and all for good causes. The ministry that kept me busy was a great calling. But I was empty.



My heart's desire was to serve the women of our church. I envisioned them as baby birds in the nest and I, the mother bird, had nothing to feed them. My personal storehouse was empty. I was not praying. I was not having quiet time with God consistently. I needed to replenish myself.

The process of renewal began when I attended a prayer summit. As the leader prayed, "Lord, there's an empty pastor's wife here that needs to be filled," I recognized my need to rest physically and renew my relationship with Christ. That day I felt like a dried-up sponge that was dipped in the Holy Spirit, encouraged and refilled. Since then, I've learned to stay close to God through regular Bible study, prayer and retreats.

In part because of my experience, I founded R&R Retreats for women like me who need to be filled. R&R organizes weekend retreats to encourage women to rest and to renew their relationship with Christ. Unlike retreats that are filled with speakers and workshops, R&R Retreats always dedicates one afternoon to quiet time. I've seen lives changed at these retreats because as women spend time with God, he changes their hearts.

I'm convinced that we—women and men—will live in chaos if we don't take time for rest and renewal. It's our life-line. Like David, the author of Psalm 23, we need to learn to be both "shepherds" and "sheep."

David was a shepherd, both in the literal sense as a young man and in a figurative sense as the king of Israel. Yet in Psalm 23:1 David says, "The Lord is my shepherd." He declares that he is also a little sheep that needs a shepherd. He knows that he must listen to the Shepherd's voice and follow him closely.

As I think about living my life as both shepherd and sheep, Psalm 23 is an encouragement.

The Lord is my Shepherd

David begins this psalm with an important declaration: "The Lord is my Shepherd." Most of us are better at being shepherds than at being sheep. The lifestyle of a sheep—staying close by our Shepherd, being still and resting in him—doesn't come easily in the midst of a busy lifestyle. It's hard to stop. I've seen women struggle with the quiet time at our retreats. They don't know how to be quiet; they're uncomfortable; they pace. Sometimes it's a matter of obedience and we have to schedule the time. It doesn't just happen.

While it's a great calling to be a shepherd, it's a greater calling to be a sheep.

I shall not want

Our fast-paced lifestyles carry intense demands: We manage households, parent children, run businesses, pursue careers, support friends and serve in the church. Those demands won't go away, but we can choose how we live in that lifestyle.

David says that because the Lord is his Shepherd, "I shall not be in want" (23:1). If our first priority is to be a faithful sheep, then we will be more effective in our roles and we shall not want what we do not have. It's not always things we

want; sometimes we long for a different pace or different lifestyle.

If we regularly take time to know the Shepherd's voice, it will drastically change our lifestyle. We will be more in tune with his calling and guidance. We will be more obedient and more content. God wants to bless us, but we must have proper priorities.

Green pastures and still waters

It is only when we "lie down in green pastures" and walk with him beside "quiet waters" that we learn to recognize God's voice. Renewal only comes through rest.

Those green pastures look different for each of us. For some it's a retreat like an R&R Retreat. For others it's a hike in the mountains or a cozy study full of books. Some respond to Bible study, music, beauty or even extreme simplicity.

One woman had a beautiful wing chair that she had intended as a quiet place but had never used. It simply wasn't drawing her to God. At an R&R Retreat, she discovered that she responded best to God's voice when she was outside basking in the sun.

Where do you hear God's voice most clearly? Go to that place. Spend time there.

He makes me lie down

Sometimes in our busyness we run through the pasture and trot right past the blessing he has in store for us there. When we don't choose to lie down, our Shepherd will make us lie down in the pasture. He will force us through circumstances or pain or even illness, not because he's mean, but because he doesn't want us to miss the blessing.

When we hold an R&R Retreat I always ask, "Who feels like God made them come?" There's always someone, and they're always blessed through the quiet time.

One woman said that she hated retreats and had come only because her daughter-in-law had invited her. As she found a place outside in the forest during the quiet time she found renewal for her soul. She wrote in our R&R journal, "I have a vision of God stroking my head saying, 'My child, my child, you have finally come home.'"

The challenge for us is to choose to lie down before God makes us lie down. Begin slowly with five or 10 minutes at a time, if necessary. Consider a retreat to get out of your daily environment and encourage rest.

He restores my soul

When we choose to spend time in the pasture we will draw close to the Shepherd. When we show up, God shows up, whether through his Word, through beauty, through a still, small voice or through journaling. Then the Shepherd restores our soul. He guides us in paths of righteousness, but always for his name's sake. Even when we must walk through the "valley of the shadow of death," we will know his comfort.

God is a God of order. We tend to want the comfort, peace and guidance without first stopping. The pasture must come first.

In the midst of our busy, shepherd lifestyles, let us also answer the greater calling to be faithful sheep.

Diane Andrews is founder and director of R&R Retreats, a ministry of Belleview Community Church, Littleton, Colo., that organizes retreats for women from all walks of life. Since its founding in 2001, well over 1,000 women have attended an R&R retreat. Myra Holmes is the Leader assistant editor.