

4 Things You Must Understand as God Awakens You

I want to take you back over 2000 years ago on a cold dark night. I am reminded on that very special night of the birth of Christ (the Christmas altar call as found in the book, *Rebuilding the Altar*), whom the angels decided to visit to announce the birth of the Savior. It was the shepherds! God always uses the shepherds. Look at Moses and David; they were shepherding when their lives were interrupted. "Shepherds", in the Greek is *poy-mane*, meaning "a herdsman, overseer to which ones' care has been committed."

We are all shepherds! God wants to interrupt the shepherds (you). He wants to interrupt the ones He trusts with care of others. We are called to be shepherds to those around us. But first, we must awaken.

There are four things concerning the shepherds who were interrupted on that glorious night by the song of the angels that we want to share with you today, four things you must understand about these shepherds that God chose to awaken that incredible and historic night that speak to us still today.

1. The Shepherd is always on duty. "And in the same area there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). Here they were, living in monotony, but they had no idea what was about to happen. They would be a part of the greatest worship service of all time. What made them so special is that God knew they would be obedient. God knew they would handle the message. These were not normal shepherds. These were Near Eastern shepherds. The tasks of a Near Eastern shepherd were to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep, to defend the sheep from attackers, to heal the wounded and sick sheep, to find and save lost or trapped sheep, to love them, sharing their lives

and so earning their trust. We must be ready to handle the message and be obedient to His calling.

2. The shepherds realized their time had come for their mission. They were awakened from the monotony of life; peace and favor were here. "When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to each other, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us'" (Luke 2:15). I can see them sharing with each other as they walked along, "Dude—nobody is going to believe this." There was such an excitement, they knew they had been visited by God. They were probably running; they were probably weeping; these lowly shepherds were the first evangelists! God chooses the simple things to confound the wise. He chose the watchers of the lambs. These shepherds were going to find the head Shepherd. "For you were as sheep going astray, but now have been returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25). Moms and dads, you are the watchers of the lambs. We all have a mission; we are all called to be shepherds. These shepherds understood they were on a mission. "So they came hurrying and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger. When they had seen Him, they made widely known the word which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at what the shepherds told them" (Luke 2:16-18).

3. When the Shepherd shows up, everything becomes OK. "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (Luke 2:20). I bet when they showed up at the manger scene, Mary knew everything was going to be OK. "But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). We have to have some shepherds show up in this generation, shepherds who will proclaim to this generation that there is a Savior, a healer, a deliverer! These shepherds were the ones who allowed Mary to sit back and say, "I think everything is going to be OK." God proved himself through the shepherds. He

is looking for shepherds He can prove Himself through today.

4. Today, let God awaken the shepherds to the great Shepherd!

"I exhort the elders who are among you, as one who is also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, take care of them, not by constraint, but willingly, not for dishonest gain, but eagerly. Do not lord over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of glory that will not fade away" (1 Pet. 5:1-4). The enemy wants to destroy the shepherds, but the angels will awaken you. You are a shepherd; you are called and have influence. Now use that influence to share with others about the great Shepherd!

He is calling us to awaken; we are the shepherds! This Christmas season, I encourage you to look for God-interruptions and allow Him to use you as a voice of life, wisdom and comfort to others, pointing them in the direction of the great Shepherd. {eoa}

Pat Schatzline *is a leading international evangelist and author. He and his wife, Karen, co-founded Remnant Ministries International. Their latest book is Rebuilding the Altar.*