**Discernment**
Because of all the glue, I literally could not get the cotton off my fingers and onto that paper sheep!  Those infamous "cotton ball sheep"! It was a craft I will never forget, but not because I have great memories of making them.

It was a struggle for sure! I will never forget the story about Jesus describing himself as being the good shepherd for His sheep though. Read John 10 now and reflect on verses 14-15 here,

14“I am the good shepherd. I know My sheep, and my sheep know Me, 15just as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep."

The analogy of Jesus being a good shepherd helps us to understand His character and how much He cares for us. Take a look at the comparisons of good and bad shepherds from the Life Application Study Bible:

* Bad shepherds take care of themselves but good shepherds take care of their flock.
* Bad shepherds worry about their own health but good shepherds strengthen the weak and search for the lost.
* Bad shepherds rule harshly and brutally but good shepherds rule lovingly and gently.
* Bad shepherds abandon and scatter the sheep but good shepherds gather and protect the sheep.
* Bad shepherds keep the best for themselves but good shepherds give their best to the sheep.

Understanding the contrasting view helps us also to understand what He is not. In verse 7 Jesus tells us that He is the gatekeeper for the sheep and that we will know His voice. As a young believer, I struggled with discernment. But over time as I spent time in the Word, in prayer and with His people I began maturing in my faith and learning what was from the Good Shepherd and what was NOT. Keep persevering in your faith and ask the Lord to show you the next step, He will!

If we have not met, I want you to know that I walked into this church 26 years ago with a 5 year old daughter and a 2 month old son in tow. This church embraced me but bigger than that the gospel and what God did in my life changed this ordinary girl forever! And I know He will do the same for you! He will! Enjoy church, the SPF ministry and this SPF newsletter. Allow yourself to get excited about what God has in store for you and your children.

Don't give up!
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