

Sheli: A Shepherd and His Sheep

Deanna Danielle

Rosanne Kaloustian, Illustrator

Deanna D Ricciardi (Apr 15, 2022)

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Sheli is a lesson-filled Christian picture book in which a sheep learns to place the good of others before herself.

Deanna Danielle's earnest Christian picture book *Sheli* considers God's concern for people through the familiar allegory of a shepherd and his flock.

A young shepherd determines that Sheli, one of his sheep, should move to the back of the herd. Sheli is confused by this change and wonders if she's done something wrong. At a gradual rate, the reason for the switch is revealed: at the back of the herd, gentle Sheli is in the perfect position to care for wayward and injured sheep. Indeed, the shepherd has made his choice with the aim of helping his flock stay on course to reach the promised land.

A clear message about trusting in a shepherd's wisdom, even when he isn't visible, comes through this story, which also issues a veiled call to spread the gospel through caring outreach. Indeed, though encouraging, the book is quite didactic in its focus on Sheli's willing acceptance of her role. She is otherwise underdeveloped, functioning as a mere reminder to the other sheep. The fellow members of her flock, meanwhile, are an interchangeable—a pink-eared group in the book's expressive illustrations, which also feature grassy, pastel landscapes. Images of storms and a rainbow further hint at themes of both trials and pleasures.

In the end, this is a brisk but sweet story that summarizes ideas of what an obedient life resembles. But when Sheli recalls her own experiences at the book's conclusion, revisiting key plot points, the text becomes redundant. The accompanying Bible verses (most of them from the Book of Psalms) are a better complement to the topics covered in the text, reinforcing ideas of refuge and assurance.

Written for fellow believers, the bucolic Christian picture book *Sheli* focuses on a sheep who discovers joy by following the path set forth by her shepherd.

KAREN RIGBY (October 27, 2023)

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