

God's Witnesses?

In a court of law there are few qualifications for who serves as a witness. They just need to tell the truth. Witnesses have important information to share, such as what they saw. The result of their testimony often affects the outcome, especially if it is a powerful testimony. Are the witnesses special people? Not really. They just have special information to truthfully share.

As we get ready for Christmas, every account of the birth of Christ features shepherds as witnesses. Today, shepherds are depicted in manger scenes decorating the lawn at Christmas time. Looking back to Jesus' time, there was nothing special about them. The shepherds were about as low as you could go on the hierarchy of jobs. Working hours were long, and in fact, often required shepherds to sleep in the fields, guarding the door of the sheep pen against wild animals, and to keep the sheep inside. Did they get hazard pay? They were poorly paid. Their life was seemingly meaningless, but that was about to change.



God had placed the shepherds in a field not far from the stable where Jesus was born. And then came the heavenly announcement. An angel appeared to the shepherds, telling them not to be afraid, and that *“today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11).*

So, the savior of the world was born -- and who did God invite to be witnesses? It was the lowly shepherds, whose life now had great meaning -- at that time, and for all time. *“When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them (Luke 2:17-18).*

They returned to their flock as different people. *“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told (Luke 2:20).*

So, what about you? Have you spread the good news of what you have been told? It doesn't take special people to tell others about Jesus. The shepherds were about as low as they go, and yet God chose to work through them. God is not concerned about the social status of those who come to believe. He is interested in the status of your heart. You have a big advantage: Your qualifications are much greater -- you know the whole story, while the shepherds were experiencing it in real time. Understanding and believing the story makes you a different person.

There is more to the backstory, which foreshadows the future. Is there special significance to the sheep the shepherds were watching? Bible scholars tell us the sheep were on their way to be sacrificed. How symbolic is that? Jesus would later say, *I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me -- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father -- and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I just bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10:14-15).*

Jesus' birth is just the beginning of a life-changing sequence of events, culminating with His own sacrifice. But the story doesn't end there. It's your turn. Today, you can be a shepherd who spreads the good news. We are getting ready to celebrate His birth, and later we'll celebrate His ultimate sacrifice to become the Savior of the world. Our goal is to grow the flock of the one true shepherd. Merry Christmas! Jesus Christ, the Savior is born!

Question: In what ways can you share the Good News, encouraging people to attend church on Christmas Eve, so they can join in on the excitement of the celebration?

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord. It all starts with the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ. People of all walks of life, from Kings to lowly shepherds, witnessed the innocence of the infant baby Jesus, who came to save us all. Let us be witnesses to the true story of his birth and how it has changed our lives. Amen.