

Shelby the Shepherd  
and His Special  
Surprise



Wendi Miller  
Illustrated by David Engel

**This book is dedicated to readers everywhere  
who just need to know they are loved.  
Because that is what matters.**

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and His Special \*  
Surprise \* \* \*



“Shelby! Are you awake in there?” Shelby’s mother was standing at the doorway to his room.

“I think Little One has wandered off again. Your father didn’t see him

with the rest of the flock when he moved them out to pasture this morning.”



*Oh, Little One, Shelby thought to himself as he rubbed his sleepy eyes, you are always making me work so hard! But I still love you.*

Shelby slowly climbed out from beneath his warm blankets. He began to think about the wonderful dream he had just had. A man and a woman were in his dream. They seemed to be looking for something, but no one could help them. Little One was in the dream, too. The man was gently patting him on the head. That’s when Mama had woken him.

“Mama?” Shelby called to his mother as he was putting on his little shepherd’s robe. “Do you think Papa will let me have another sheep to care for soon? I’m getting bigger. And stronger. I’m just sure of it!”

Mama came back to the doorway of Shelby’s room. “Papa is a very wise man,” she said to Shelby, “and he loves you very much. I am sure that when he believes you are ready for more of a flock to call your own, he will give you another sheep to care for. Do you trust him, sweet boy?” Shelby’s mother had walked over to him.

“Yes, Mama. I do,” Shelby replied, smiling at his kind mother.

“Well, then,” Mama said with a happy bounce in her voice, “today you can show Papa what a brave shepherd you are by helping your Little One find his way back home!”

Mama was always so loving and encouraging. Shelby was a small fellow. And though he worked very hard, he might just be his papa’s helper for a very, very long time. Still,

Mama treated him like he was the most special shepherd in the world.

“Here is some bread for your day,” Mama said as Shelby followed her into the main room of their home. “And remember to fill your water jug at the well before you leave. If Little One has made his way into town again, you may be gone awhile.”

“Yes, Mama,” Shelby replied. He only glanced at Mama as he took the warm bread from her hands and put it in his small shepherd’s bag. He was looking curiously around the room.



“And be extra careful if you do find yourself in town. It will be very busy because of the census.” Mama knew Shelby was very smart and always careful, but she still liked to remind him.

“I’ll be careful, Mama,” Shelby answered, still only glancing her way.

“And if you are looking for your staff, Papa put it outside by the door so it would be ready for you when you leave,” Mama said as she smiled at her boy.

Shelby grinned so big his cheeks nearly hid his eyes. “Thank you, Mama! It’s my special staff. I don’t know what I would do without it.” Shelby almost bounced to the door as he prepared to leave.



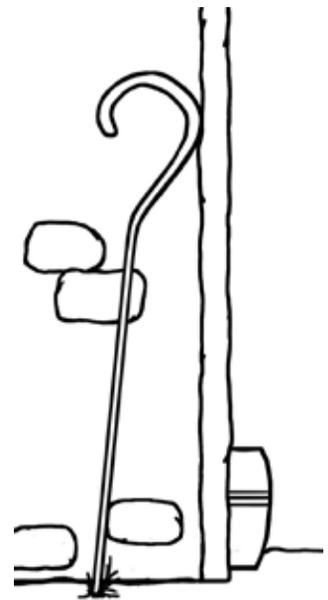
Mama grabbed him for a hug before he could go, then got down on one knee so she could look Shelby in the eye.

“Shelby, my sweet son,” she said warmly, “you are a kind and gentle shepherd, and your Little One knows you love him. Just

remember this: no matter how many sheep are in your flock, you know who loves *you*. That is what matters.”

“Yes, Mama. I know.” Shelby hugged Mama tightly and made his way out of the house into the beautiful day. It was a good day to find a lost sheep.

Shelby picked up his staff from beside the door and walked over to the family well. Papa was there, talking to Shelby’s uncle. Shelby’s two cousins were playing close by. Papa held out his arm to Shelby, and Shelby leaned in for a hug that he knew would be strong but gentle.



“Hello, my boy. Off to find your Little One?” Papa asked with a smile.

“Yes, Papa. I believe I will find him in town again, so I am going to search there,” said Shelby, thinking again about his dream.

“You’re always looking for that silly sheep,” Shelby’s older cousin teased as he walked up to the well. “I doubt he’s smart enough to make his way into town. He’s probably been



eaten by a wolf already.” Uncle grabbed Shelby’s cousin for a playful wrestle to remind him to be nice to his little cousin.

“I think looking in town is a wise idea, Son.” Shelby breathed a sigh of relief when Papa spoke up and agreed with his plan. “Town is full of many people for the census. I’m sure

the extra noises and pieces of food are enough to draw a curious little sheep in that direction.”

“Yes, Papa.” Shelby smiled.

“Papa, what is the census?” Shelby asked.



“It is a counting of all the people,” answered Papa. “Everyone has to return to his own town to register for it. That is why our Bethlehem, the town of David, is so busy right now. The many families who began here must return here, even though they may have moved away a long time ago.”

“Why didn’t we have to travel, Papa? Is Bethlehem our town? It must be. I’ve lived here all my life!” Shelby exclaimed.

Papa chuckled. “And so have I, my son. Yes, Bethlehem is our town. It has been our town for many, many years. And we have already registered. Now, how about you be on your way to find that lost Little One?”

“Yes, Papa.” Shelby finished filling his jug with the cool water from the well. “I will be home soon.” He turned to go, waving over his shoulder to Papa and holding tightly to his water jug and staff.

“Be safe, Son,” said Papa.

“I will, Papa.” And Shelby began his journey to Bethlehem.

It was quite the journey for a little shepherd to make.



Shelby walked a little...



...and explored a little...

...and ate a little.



As he was about to travel over the last few hills, he began to hear the noises of town. Papa was right. It wouldn't have taken much for his curious Little One to decide that Bethlehem would be a good place to wander off to.

Bethlehem wasn't a place Shelby often visited. He only went there when he was helping Papa or looking for Little One, but he had seen it enough that he knew his way around. He also knew some of the townspeople and shopkeepers. They were very friendly, and they often helped him find his wandering Little One.

Once Shelby arrived in town, he walked carefully between the many rows of people and animals filling



Bethlehem's streets. Papa and Mama were right. There were so many more people than usual! He had to look carefully for Little One.

He held tightly to his staff as he walked past the stable, through the street, and up next to the inn. He looked up to see a man and woman standing at the door of the inn. Little One was with them! The innkeeper had just opened the door to the

man's knock as Shelby came around the corner. Could it be? It was! It was really them, the man and woman who had been in his dream!

Shelby stood there for a moment, not sure what to do. He just watched as the innkeeper shook his head and closed the door. The man looked sad, and the woman looked tired.



The man patted Little One's head, and then he held the hand of the woman to support her as they walked on.

Shelby walked up to them as quickly as he could while still being careful not to startle them.

“Well, hello there,” said the man as Shelby got closer. “Are you looking for this fine little sheep?” He was as kind as

Shelby thought he might be. As the man spoke, he leaned down to pat Little One on the head again.

“Yes, sir. I am. My name is Shelby, and he is my sheep.” Then Shelby began talking so quickly that he almost couldn’t get all of the words out. “You see, he wandered off from our home during the night, and I have been looking for him. I call him Little One. He’s part of my very own flock. Well, he’s the *only* part of my very own flock, but I hope to have more sheep to call my own someday! Right now I only help my papa.”

The man smiled at Shelby’s story. “I thought you might be the shepherd of this Little One,” he said. “Is that right? You call him Little One?” he asked.

“Yes, sir. I do. I call him Little One, because he is small. Like me.” Shelby leaned his head down. He had hoped the man would not notice his small size, and there he had gone and talked about it all on his own.

“Oh. I see. Well, I hadn’t noticed that either of you was small. In fact, by the looks of your marvelous staff, I had

thought that you would be quite the wonderful shepherd!”  
said the kind man.

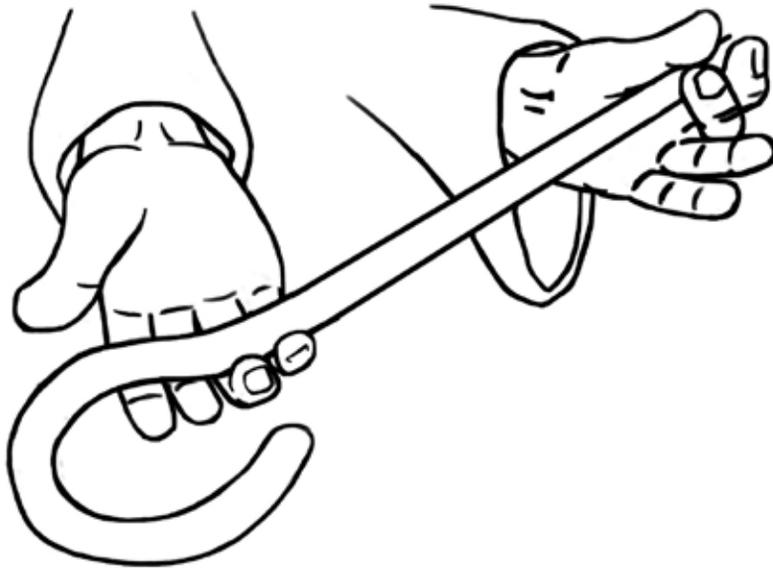
At that, Shelby smiled his big smile. “Thank you, sir. I carved the staff myself. It’s my very special staff, and I don’t go anywhere without it. It helps me do things that the other boys can do, even though they are bigger than I am. It helps me rescue my Little One when he has fallen beyond my reach. I grab him up with the hook and sweep him right back up from down on the ledge.”

Shelby so mightily demonstrated his fantastic “sweep” that he nearly lost his balance.

“And,” Shelby continued, “I can fetch the pail from the well when I’ve accidentally dropped it in. It’s a special staff.”



The man had taken Shelby's staff in his own hands to



give it a closer look. "Yes, it is a very special staff," he said.

"You see, I am a carpenter," he continued, "and I work with

wood every day. So, I am able to see very quickly that this staff was made with a great deal of love and care. Only the most special shepherds have a staff like this. Your Little One is a fortunate sheep, indeed."

The man handed Shelby back his staff and took the hand of the woman in his own again. "Might I ask you a question now? I can tell you are a very wise shepherd, and I could use your help," the man said.

“Anything! You can ask me anything!” Shelby replied with excitement.

“Well, my wife and I are here for the census, and the inn is full. We were asking just now if there are any rooms left, and the innkeeper said there are none. But he did say that there is a place close by that has some warm hay. Would you happen to know where that is? He said my wife and I



could stay there to get out of the cold night air.” The man had nodded in the direction of the woman. When Shelby looked at her, he noticed for the first time that she was going to have a baby. And soon!

“I do know where that is,” Shelby said. “It is often where I find my Little One when he has wandered off from our

home. It isn't far. I would be happy to take you right to it.” Shelby felt so special that he wanted to jump up and down. It was the first time that anyone had ever asked for his help, except for when Mama asked him to clean his room.

“We would be very grateful, sweet shepherd boy,” said the woman.

“Lead on, young Shelby. You and your special staff!” said the man, and Shelby took the lead to show them where they could spend the night. Little One followed closely by Shelby's side, glad to have been found by his trusted shepherd.

In no time at all, Shelby led the man and woman to the place the innkeeper had told them about. Just as the innkeeper had said, it had some warm hay and would be a dry place to sleep. There was even a manger that still had fresh hay left in it that the animals had not eaten.

The man looked around. He seemed tired, but grateful. “I believe this will work just fine.” He handed his staff to

Shelby and gently helped his wife find a comfortable place to rest. Then he looked at Shelby and said, “I am thankful that you found us today, Shelby.”



“I am glad I could help, sir.” Feeling brave because the man and woman were so nice to him, he went on. “I even hoped that I would find you. You see, I had a dream last night, and you were in it. And so was your wife. And so was Little One. And my dream came true when I found you today. I almost didn’t know what to do. I was scared, and happy, all

at the same time! I know I must sound silly. Please don't laugh," he said to the man and woman.



The man and woman looked at each other and smiled. Then the man turned to Shelby and started telling him a story of his own. "I would never laugh at a story like that, brave shepherd boy. You see, I also had a dream that was very special. In my dream, an angel visited me and told me very special things about the baby who is about to be born," said the man as he nodded to the woman. "He even told me the baby's name."

"What will his name be?" asked Shelby.

"We will call him Jesus," said the man. "He will be very special. The angel even said that he will save his people."

Shelby just looked at the man and woman and smiled. He felt so warm inside that he didn't want to leave them, but

he knew that he needed to get Little One back home. But, before he left, he had one more question. “If he is to be so very special,” Shelby asked, “does that make you scared? It sounds like a very big job to do. I’m so small, *every* job is a big job. But this seems like a *really* big job.”

This time, the woman, who had been very quiet, spoke softly to Shelby. “An angel spoke to me, too. I was scared at first. I wondered how I could have been chosen for something so special. But the angel told me not to be afraid because the Lord is with me. I know He loves me, and that is what matters.”



“My mama is always telling me that,” said Shelby.

“When I am feeling lonely or afraid, she always tells me to remember who loves me. Good mamas must say things like that. You’re going to be a good mama to baby Jesus, I’m sure of it,” Shelby said with a smile.

The woman smiled back, and so did the man. Even as they smiled, however, Shelby could tell they were both weary from their journey, so he told them it was time for him to go.



“I am so glad we met you, Shelby. You, and your Little One, and your special staff,” said the man. “I am Joseph, and this is Mary. And we will always be your friends. Be safe on your way home.”

“I will, thank you. I’m very glad I met you, too.” And with that, Shelby was on his

way out of the hustle and bustle of Bethlehem and into the cool evening air to find his way home. Little One, still chewing on some hay, was right by his side.

As Shelby and Little One journeyed home, Shelby thought about Joseph and Mary and the baby about to be born. He felt very special, indeed, because he had been able to help them. Maybe he would make a good shepherd, after all. And he wondered to himself what it must be like to see an angel.



Just as the sun was setting, Shelby came up over one last hill and saw the lights of his home. He took Little One to the

sheepfold and made sure that he was safely inside. Then when Shelby reached his house, he leaned his staff by the front door, right where Papa had left it for him that morning. When he went inside, Mama greeted him with a warm hug.

“Did you find Little One?” Mama asked.

“Yes, I did, Mama!



He was in town. The nicest man and woman had found him.” Shelby didn’t say much more because Mama had set out a plate of food for

him. Shelby was quite hungry after his adventure that day. Little One had stopped often along the way to graze, so their journey home was a long one.

“Well, I’m glad he is home safe and sound. And I’m glad you’re home safe and sound, too, my special shepherd boy.”

Mama smiled and sat down next to Shelby as he finished his meal.

“Mama, is Papa outside?” Shelby asked Mama when he had cleared his plate.

“Yes, Shelby, he is. He’s getting ready to watch the flocks for the night,” Mama explained.

“I am going to sit outside with Papa for a little while tonight, if that is OK with you,” Shelby said to Mama.

“Of course it is,” Mama replied. “Every good shepherd must learn how to keep a careful watch of the flock during the night. Sheep can be silly animals, and a good shepherd must keep them safe at all times.” Mama handed Shelby a warm blanket. “Remember your staff, too, my sweet boy.”

“Thank you, Mama. I will.” Shelby stepped outside, picked up his staff, and made his way to where Papa was.

“Hello, my son. I saw that Little One had been returned safely home. Was he in town?” Papa asked as Shelby came closer.

“Yes, sir. A nice man and woman had found him, so it was no trouble at all. I even helped them find a warm place to spend the night. The inn had no more room because of all the people,” Shelby told Papa.



“That was very kind of you, Shelby,” Papa replied. “Now, shall we keep our watch together for a little while?”

“Yes, sir,” Shelby replied with excitement. And they settled in to make

sure the sheep were kept safe from any nighttime dangers.

Shelby thought about the exciting events of his day. He had found Little One, safe and sound. He was able to help his two new friends. Joseph even liked his special staff. And now, sitting with his papa and uncle and cousins, he was keeping a night watch, just as a good shepherd would do.

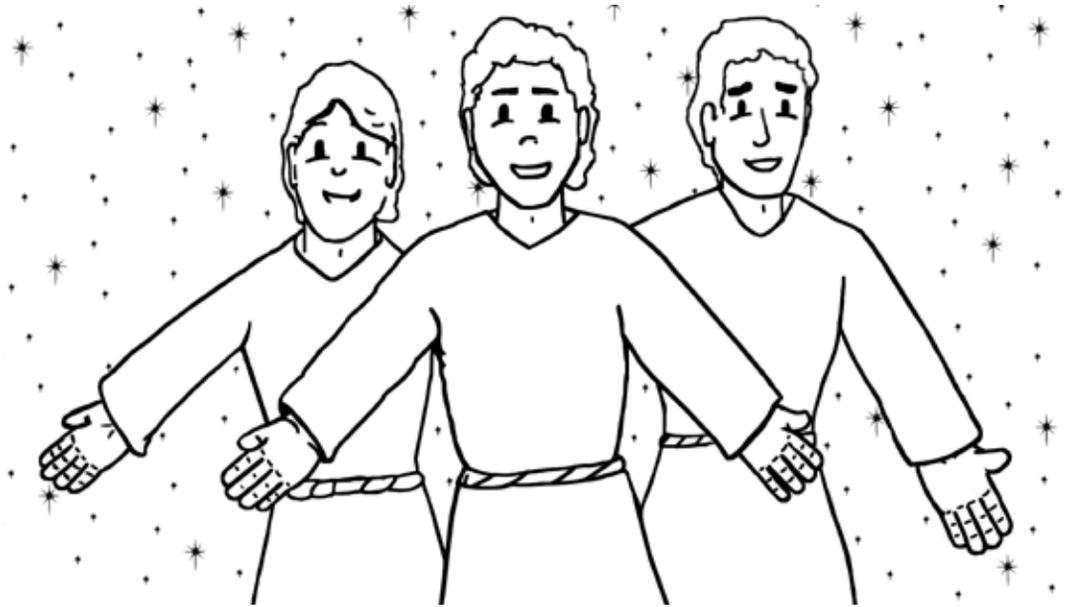
**And then...it happened.**



The sky lit up with the brightest light Shelby had ever seen! It was an amazing sight! Uncle was frightened, and started to gather up Shelby and his cousins to take them inside.

But then, an angel appeared and spoke to the shepherds.

“Do not be afraid. I bring good news, joyful news for all the people. Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born. He is Christ the Lord. And I give you a sign. You will find the baby wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger.”



When the angel finished speaking, many more angels appeared and they all started praising God, saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men.” Then the angels left as quickly as they had appeared, leaving the night so still the startled shepherds could hear the sheep breathing.

“What did we just see?” Papa asked. “Glory to God, what did we just see?”



Shelby jumped up and down, swirling his staff in the air.

“Angels! We just saw angels! Just like Joseph and Mary did. We have to go, Papa. We have to go now! I know where they are!”

“Who?” Papa asked.

“I just know it’s Joseph and Mary. Mary was going to have a baby, and Joseph said it would be a very special baby. And I helped them find the place with the manger because there wasn’t any room left in the inn. I know where they are! We must go, Papa!” Shelby spoke with such excitement that Papa couldn’t help but believe his little shepherd knew exactly where to go.

And so they went.



Up and down the hills they traveled, Shelby, Papa, Uncle, and the cousins, curious shepherds who had just received a wonderful message. Bethlehem had never seemed so far away as it did that very night.

“We are not the most important people,” said Shelby’s uncle as they walked. “In fact, we shepherds are looked down upon by everyone. If this baby is to be such a special person, why didn’t the angels tell someone grand, like a king?”

“Because this baby is special enough for everyone,”  
Shelby replied.

No one could argue with that, especially after they had received the news of his birth from heaven itself.

Finally, they reached Bethlehem. It was still so busy, even in the middle of the night, that Papa feared Shelby might not know exactly where to take the group of very excited shepherds. “Can you find them, Shelby?” Papa asked.

“Of course I can!” And Shelby led them directly to the place where he had left Joseph and Mary.



It was so still and so peaceful that they almost didn't dare to go inside. But Joseph was wonderfully welcoming. He raised his hands in the air to greet the family of

shepherds with a friendly hello, ready to introduce them to a very special baby.



“Come in, Shelby. It’s so good to see you again,” said Joseph. “Who have you brought with you?”

“This is my papa. And my uncle and cousins. We came to see the baby. We were told by angels that he had been born! Can you believe it? Angels! We were out in the fields, and

angels came to us. They told us not to be afraid, even though I still was, a little. And they told us all about the baby! I just knew it had to be baby Jesus!” Shelby caught his breath. He had gotten excited telling his story, just like he always did.

“Yes, I believe it,” said Joseph, winking at Shelby. “I believe it with all my heart that you have seen your very own angels. Come. Come see baby Jesus.” And Joseph led Shelby and his papa and uncle and cousins over to the manger to see this most special child who had just been born into the world.

“It’s just like the angels told us,” Papa said to Joseph and Mary. “They said we would find the baby in a manger, wrapped in cloths. I am amazed. Glory to God in the highest.”

Papa was kneeling by the baby. Uncle and Shelby and the cousins did the same. One of the cousins whispered in Shelby’s ear, “Thanks for showing us how to get here, Shelby. You’re a good shepherd.”

Mary and Joseph smiled at them, and Baby Jesus looked sleepily up at Shelby. “You are going to be very special,” Shelby whispered to the baby. “And now, I feel special, too.”



Shelby and his father and uncle and cousins left Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus so the new family could rest. As they were headed home, the shepherds couldn't help but tell

the folks in town what they had seen and heard. It was such grand, special news. No one would ever be the same.

After the family of shepherds made their way back home, Papa went right inside to tell Mama what had happened.

Shelby stayed outside for a little while. He went over to where Little One had fallen fast asleep. Shelby lay down on the ground and rested his head on Little One's side, snuggling



in his soft, woolly fleece. Shelby looked up into the sky that not too long before had been filled with angels.

Maybe it was the special day he'd had, but Shelby thought the sky looked even more beautiful now.

The stars, especially one particular star, seemed to shine more brightly than ever before. Shelby stood up to go inside, closed his eyes, and smiled his big smile. He felt special. He felt happy. And with a peace that would stay with him for the rest of his life, he said to himself, *Now, I know Who loves me. And that is what matters!*



The End

*Thank you for reading my story about Shelby and his very special surprise. I hope you enjoyed imagining with me, even if just for a moment, that things might have happened just this way. Now, here's the story, as it was told in the Bible by Luke.*

Luke 2:1-20

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 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. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

*God bless you, dear reader!  
And remember, Jesus is special enough for everyone!*



## *Acknowledgements*

A special “Thank You” goes out to these people who played a part in making *my* dream of Shelby the Shepherd come true.

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