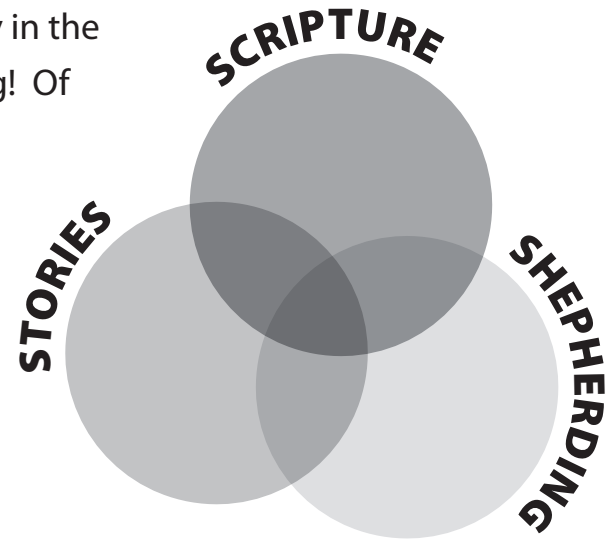


The **SHEPHERD'S** Secret Weapon

The experienced shepherd knows exactly what to say in the hospital emergency room or at the funeral home: nothing! Of course, that's hyperbole. The shepherd of course says something. But not continuously. He has a sense of what to say and when to say it. A sheep herder with his flock is not constantly talking to them. But he is listening. Comforting with his presence. Watching for danger. The shepherd-teacher also understands the value of silence in the Bible study session. She asks a question, and gives learners time to gather their thoughts. He waits them out, knowing someone will answer if he can restrain himself from rescuing them. Some teachers get into the habit of responding between every learner comment.



The solution? You guessed it: silence. After someone has shared, just sit there silently. Especially if you've conditioned the group to wait for you to respond, it may take a minute or two. But eventually, someone else will speak. And then another. Sometimes you might even call for a minute of silence. Ask a question, or read something, and ask the class to think about it for a minute (it will seem like five at first!) before anyone responds. You might even ask them to write something down during that time of silence, to "get their thoughts together," if you will. This is particularly effective if you have a group dominated by a few extroverts.

