



Shepherds

Among the

Sheep

by Truman Scott, Ph.D

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

Shepherds Among the Sheep

A Study of the Work of
Spiritual Shepherds

by
TRUMAN SCOTT



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Dedication

To God's Men around the world
Who aspire to be Shepherds like
 The Chief Shepherd of Souls,
 men who see how
He laid down His life for the least,
 who was a mentor who
cared, and was a model of a
 Servant of servants.

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Preface to the Sunset Bible Study Library

Since 1962 Sunset International Bible Institute has been a leader in teaching God's Word, training local church leaders, and preparing preachers and missionaries for effective ministry. Developed in the laboratory of preacher training and proven in the crucible of practical ministry, the Sunset curriculum has grown to forty core courses used both in our resident school and distance learning applications. In 1989 the Sunset Video Studio was inaugurated to record each course of study in a professional format. Those courses, each with a companion study guide, have been used to teach thousands of individual students and develop a world-wide network of video satellite schools in local congregations and mission fields.

Now in printed form that same library of trusted Bible study material is available through Sunset Institute Press for an even wider circle of Bible students, thanks to a benevolent God, an excellent editorial staff and a number of faithful supporters who believed in the project.

This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a video taped course. The voice track of the video tape was first transcribed, then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott who began the video course series in 1989, to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio, to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division who wrote the study guides, to Darlene Morris and the staff of Sunset Translation / Editing Center who edited the manuscripts

and to each faculty member of Sunset International Bible Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

This book and its companion volumes are being translated into the major languages of the world to produce a Bible Study Library which can be used on the mission fields of the world to mature Christians, train church leaders, and grow churches that plant other churches.

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Church Leaders Training Leaders

Introduction: **Shepherds Among the Sheep**

The following pages will give you an introduction into the contents of each chapter of the book. Each chapter has been written to picture biblical shepherds as they work among God's flock.

PART ONE: Focus on the Shepherds

- I. God's Shepherds** — a study of the reoccurring shepherd themes of the Bible, underlining that “shepherding” is an overarching view of God’s leaders. The relationship of shepherd and elder, overseer, leader and ruler will be noted. The shepherd-leader view will stand apart from the executive/management model that many churches have adopted from the religious, industrial, military, and educational worlds.
- II. The Life of a Shepherd** — a biblical shepherd has lived a life of increasing maturity, resulting in exemplary qualities in his moral life, his family life, and in his relationships with the sheep. He is a model of what God regularly does in the life of one who yields his destiny to the Chief Shepherd.
- III. The Work of Shepherds** — from the verbs used in relation to shepherds a reader of Scripture can identify the work of shepherds among the flock. They clearly describe his protective, instructional, and modeling activities.
- IV. The Heart of a Shepherd** — the love of a shepherd for the sheep towers over the skills, the moral qualities and knowledge that he needs to care for the sheep. It will lead

a shepherd to the necessary lengths of sacrifice, to depths of understanding, to heights of patience, and to qualities of care and affection.

- V. **The Aim of Shepherds** — a study of shepherds who help each member become a part of a loving body of servant believers who are whole in life and loyal in their oneness: love, life, and loyalty. The outcome of this accomplished aim is the world recognizing the followers of the One that God sent and loved and learning from them that God loves all peoples despite their lostness.
- VI. **When Shepherds Hurt** — shepherds are men who have feelings, needs, frailties and flaws. Although their maturity protects them from much of the “fiery darts” that are hurled at them, they can be hit and hurt. How they act and how they respond are important to their continuing leadership in the pastures of their ministry.
- VII. **When Shepherds Work Together** — the Chief Shepherd is watching over the whole flock of God. All shepherds in the individual congregations work under His grace. When shepherds work together, the purposes of God are empowered and rich harvest times are frequent.

PART TWO: Focus on the Sheep

- VIII. **The Fold of the Sheep** — the communion of the saints, the Church, is the fold of safety, the place of renewal and growth. A good shepherd keeps every sheep in closeness to the fold and works to keep the fold a desired home and a place of fond memories.
- IX. **Among the Sheep** — a study of ten life situations to illustrate effective “shepherd amongness.” While

shepherds work together to care for the whole flock, the focus is placed on the single shepherd reaching out to the individual need of one sheep.

- X. **Endangered Sheep** — a study of the threatened and damaged sheep from which some, being neglected, may stray and be lost, or be hindered in their expected growth. Shepherds must be knowledgeable and competent in their care of the sheep.
- XI. **The Faithful Sheep** — faithful sheep follow the undershepherds who the Chief Shepherd has assigned them. Sheep have responsibilities given to them that will result in harmony, fruitfulness, and joyful fellowship.
- XII. **The Shepherd's Joy** — a study of how the shepherd's sweat, agony, and longing turn to joy as the Chief Shepherd's aims are fulfilled in the life of each sheep and throughout the fold. When all spiritual leaders are infused with a shepherd's heart and skilled in the care of sheep, then the sheep of God's pasture will go out in security and return to the fold, without the loss of one.

APPENDIX: Select Shepherd Scripture Readings — God speaks clearly of Himself and others who are shepherds among the sheep.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PART ONE

Focusing on the Shepherds:

God's Shepherds

The Life of a Shepherd

The Work of a Shepherd

The Heart of a Shepherd

The Aim of a Shepherd

When Shepherds Hurt

When Shepherds Work Together

God's Shepherds

When God spoke of His relationship with His people or of the appointed leaders' relationship with God's people in the Old Testament He frequently spoke with pastoral language, using words such as shepherd, sheep, pasture, and fold. He probably used this kind of language for two reasons:

- God's people in the Old Testament were predominantly nomadic shepherds with a long and rich pastoral history or they lived in pastoral cultures.
- A shepherd's care of the known needs of sheep was so characteristic and picturesque of God's care of Israel and His expectations of His appointed leaders.

In the New Testament Jesus continued the "shepherd language" to describe His person and work. He clearly drew His language from the shepherd passages of the Old Testament. Although the Church moved out in conquest of a world with more diverse occupations, leadership styles, and designations, the New Testament writers continued the shepherd descriptions of church leaders.

The twenty-first century society of today is even more diverse in occupations and distant in leadership expectations. Yet, shepherding is still sufficiently known and still clearly describes the continuing expectations that God has of His spiritual leaders. So great is the descriptive fullness and history of the shepherd language that it may best serve the present generation by encompassing all other discussions of the broad subject of spiritual leadership. This is especially true since the terms "bishop," "pastor," and even "elder" have been so religiously abused as to hinder accurate understanding and use.

A Shepherd Overview

The Hebrew word *raah* was a primary term for feeding, pasturing, and keeping a flock together in view of providing the best care of the sheep. It was used to validate the rule of kings as they readily and capably cared for their people (cf. 2 Samuel 5:2). Biblical leaders (prophets, priests, and, kings) were considered good shepherds when they fed the flock of God with God's truth, however, God was considered the ultimate Provider for the flock of Israel.

God —The Shepherd God

Both from their pastoral experiences in life needs and God's revelation through the prophets, the people most often praised God as the Shepherd who gave them strength (cf. Genesis 49:24). As "*the Mighty One of Jacob,*" "*the Rock of Israel,*" the God of their fathers, and God Almighty they called on Him as the "*Shepherd of Israel . . . awaken your might; come and save us*" (Genesis 49:24; Psalm 80:1–2). They sang of His care in every season of life (cf. Psalm 23: 1–6). They saw Him and praised Him for His Shepherd care of them as hungry sheep and dependent lambs, full of patience for those with special needs (cf. Isaiah 40:11). In contrast to the failed shepherding of God's appointed leaders, He described what He would do to rescue and care for His abused and abandoned sheep. He stood as the constant model to all future leaders as He foresaw the coming of the shepherds' Shepherd (cf. Ezekiel 34:2ff).

The Shepherds of God's Israel

Most of what is said of shepherd leaders is either said in warning judgment or longing (cf. Isaiah 56:11; Jeremiah 23:1–4; Jeremiah 50:6; Ezekiel 34:2ff). The Eternal Shepherd's deepest and most reoccurring lament and the prophet's wail was that God's sheep were "*like sheep without a shepherd*" (1 Kings 22:17). His most constant endeavor was to give His people leaders with shepherd hearts like His who would lead

feed them “*with knowledge and understanding*” (Jeremiah 3:15). Nothing else seems to matter if leaders fail in “pasturing God’s flock.” The end of God’s patience seems to be near the beginning of a shepherd’s neglect and abuse of the sheep.

The Shepherd of Shepherds

All the care, feeding, tenderness, mighty power, and sacrifice of the Ancient Shepherd of Israel erupts in the coming of the long announced Shepherd of shepherds. It is appropriate that the first announcement of the innocent, lamb-like entry of the New Covenant Shepherd was made to shepherds — the first to see Him, to worship Him, to speak to others of Him, to glorify and praise God for Him, and then to return to their shepherding marveling over Him (cf. Luke 2:8–18). Jesus described the scattered sheep of His time in the same way as the Old Testament prophets saw God’s ancient flock “*like sheep without a shepherd*” (Matthew 9:36). In contrast to hired hands, He spoke of Himself as the “*Good Shepherd*” who would gather all of God’s sheep into one fold and serve as the one Shepherd (cf. John 10:2–16).

The apostolic writers spoke of the Lord Jesus as the “*great Shepherd of the sheep*” (Hebrew 13:20), urged all to return to “*the Shepherd and overseer of . . . souls*” (1 Peter 2:25), and extolled the “*Chief Shepherd*” who will give a “*crown of glory that will never fade away*” to faithful shepherds of the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2–4).

Shepherds of the New Covenant

Jesus set the shepherd context in which He intended His appointed leaders to serve with His last hour mandate “*Feed my lambs*,” “*Take care of my sheep*,” and “*Feed my sheep*” (John 21:15–17). Paul reminded the Ephesian elders as shepherds to:

“*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God . . . after I leave,*

savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock . . . So be on your guard . . . I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28–31).

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he also urged the elders:

to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:12–13).

Peter urged eager feeding, watching, and modeling so that the fadeless crown of glory would be their eternal joy (cf. 1 Peter 5:1–4). All the admonitions given to spiritual leaders and the response of those being led relate to the shepherd/sheep relationship seen in the Shepherd God and His exalted Shepherd of souls.

Shepherds as Elders, Overseers, Models, and Leaders

These designations contain a simple, but far-reaching message and leadership mandate. Shepherds are to be wise, trustworthy men who are present and watchful among the flock. They are to be those who precede the sheep in love, life and loyalty, and validate their leadership in caring for the needs of each of the sheep in the fold.

• ELDER (Counselor) (*presbutteros*)

Of the sixty-seven New Testament usages, sixteen specific references are made to “*elders*” in the Church. The word is prominent in a word family that includes ambassador, legate, and other such words. Thus, more than simply age is to be valued. Value is in what age itself has produced in their person.

Age is required to produce knowledgeable, competent, whole, and committed leaders. Their long, faithful and fruitful life experiences among the flock of God have prepared them to achieve shepherd results (cf. Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2–16, 20:17, 21:18; 1 Timothy 5:19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 Timothy 4:4).

- **OVERSEER** (“near-watcher” — mentor) (**episkopos**)

Aside from ecclesiastical minded translations the word “*overseer*” better describes the nearness, watchfulness, protectiveness, and readiness to know and care for both seen and less seen needs of the members. It perfectly describes the attentiveness and involvement of the shepherd (cf. Acts 1:21, Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1–2; Titus 1:7; Hebrews 12:15; 1 Peter 2:25, 5:2).

- **MODELS** (leadership) (**proistamai**)

Beyond the usual translations “rule over,” “manage,” “to take the lead,” the word “models” means: “one who stands before.” Therefore, leadership is seen as a readiness to stand before in protection, in example, in instruction, in encouragement, and proceeding others. An emphasis is on “up-front” visibility and exemplary modeling — a willingness to expose oneself transparently and risk the hurts of that vulnerability. Shepherding overarches all those conditions and events (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:4–5, 5:17; Romans 12:8, 16:2ff).

- **LEADERS** (**agoumenos**)

The word “*leaders*” designated governors, rulers, and chief men with the core meaning being leading and guiding. The emphasis is on going ahead, leading, showing the way. It is not by autocratic rule (cf. 1 Peter 5:2–3), but a leadership that fosters and calls for voluntary, sensitive, respectful, and affectionate submission of the flock (cf. Hebrews 13:7,17, 12:24).

Conclusion

With the backdrop of the shepherding of God in human history, Christ's coming among us as a Shepherd and then groups of shepherds joining Him in the early decades, we are privileged to have rich and ample insights into the acceptable and vital work of shepherds. Shepherds today are chosen men who, by reason of years profitably spent growing and serving in the flock, have gained spiritual maturity and deep insights to the spiritual needs of the sheep. Out of such maturity, they stay near, always ready to help, to protect and meet the spiritual needs of each member in feeding each on the living Word of God. Their shepherding keeps them in the midst and before the congregation as examples to inspire, as shields to protect, and as guides to lead the faithful in fruitful lives.

As older, more mature men, they are respectfully looked to by the younger, less mature members who have requested their guidance; by the older and weary who are more secure with their concerned and protective care; by the strong and eager who yield to their wisdom; by all who hunger for their feedings from the Word.

The Life of a Shepherd

The well-being and progress of the sheep depend greatly on the quality of lives of the shepherds on whom the sheep rely. Jesus made a sharp distinction between “the true shepherds” and the hired hands who would sacrifice the sheep in their own self-interest (cf. John 10:12–13). Ezekiel was told by God about shepherds who placed their human interests over the needs of the flock, neglecting the health, nourishment, healing, and survival of the sheep (cf. Ezekiel 34). Who a shepherd is and how he lives his life makes a crucial difference in the well-being of a flock.

What Can We Know about the Life of a Shepherd of God?

The Scriptures give Christians clear pictures of the life traits that should characterize those men who accept the responsibility to lead and care for the sheep of God. The Church places herself in peril by lowering the life standards of the shepherds of the flock for developing, selecting, and sustaining.

Shepherds of Ancient Israel

A survey of “shepherd passages” in the Old Testament reveal that God yearned for His shepherds to be men who loved the flock more than they loved themselves, that they would sacrifice themselves and their own pleasures to assure the safety and well-being of the sheep. He wanted them to be affectionate, caring, tender, insightful, courageous, and persistent in all of their dealings with the sheep. Few things displeased God more than His shepherds failing to feel about

and to value the sheep as He did. God took personal offence when the lives of the shepherds of ancient Israel did not measure up to the honor and responsibility bestowed on them.

Shepherd passages in the Old Testament: Ezekiel 34:1–16; Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 23:1–4 (cf. Appendix).

Jesus, the Shepherd of Shepherds

The Shepherd God foresaw the coming of a Shepherd who would share fully in His love and care of the sheep of His pasture:

I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken (Ezekiel 34:23–24).

The historic David was long in the tomb when this prophecy was announced. His royal throne had been empty since the invasion by the Babylonians and the last recognized, kingly shepherd would soon be dead in captivity. This prophecy was to be fulfilled in raising up another kingly Shepherd to reassert the Godly care of the people of God: Jesus of Nazareth, the son of David as traced through his legal father and his natural mother (cf. Matthew 1; Luke 3). Jesus proclaimed Himself as the long-awaited Shepherd (cf. John 10:11–16).

The life of the prophetic Shepherd was openly observed by both friends and enemies and casual observers. What He did was transparent and recorded for all ages to see and know.

Jesus drew what was arguably His own portrait in the opening address in Matthew 5:1–8: the beatitudes. He described the royal enterprise that would reflect His purposes and nature: the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matthew 13). He announced His unique claims in His “*I am . . .*” statements:

- “*I am the bread of life . . .*” (John 6:35).
- “*I am the light of the world . . .*” (John 8:12).
- “*. . . I am from above . . .*” (John 8:23).
- “*. . . I am the gate [“door” – KJV] for the sheep*” (John 10:7).
- “*I am the good shepherd . . .*” (John 10:11)
- “*. . . I am the resurrection and the life . . .*” (John 11:25).
- “*. . . I am the way and the truth and the life . . .*” (John 14:6)
- “*I am the vine . . .*” (John 15:5).

To the extent that humanity permits, Christians are to reflect the divine attributes in shepherding souls. Jesus described Himself as “*gentle and humble in heart*” (Matthew 11:29). When the Apostle Peter spoke of Him he described Him as:

- One who “*went about doing good*” (Acts 10:38).
- One who left us an . . .

example that we should follow in his steps . . . who committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to Him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:21–23).

Jesus is called:

- “*. . . that Great Shepherd of the sheep . . .*” (Hebrews 13:20).
- “*. . . the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls*” (1 Peter 2:25).
- “*. . . the Chief Shepherd . . .*” (1 Peter 5:4).

A man’s greatest honor and opportunity for service is to serve as an under-shepherd to the Shepherd of souls.

New Testament Principles in the Development of Shepherd Leaders

A study of the New Testament churches confirms that they had some clear and shared principles to guide them in the development and selection of their leaders. Twenty-first century churches can have confidence in the validity of those principles because they were transmitted from Christ to the churches by Spirit-led Apostles. Whenever and wherever churches were planted in the first century, it is clear that they chose their leaders with a common standard in mind. It seems compelling that all of the churches were taught and practiced the same principles concerning leadership development and selection (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:17, 7:17).

Acts 6:1–7:

When servant-leaders were chosen in Jerusalem it was in response to a stated need. They were chosen in the number required to address the need and were chosen with the qualities needed to accomplish the purpose. High moral and spiritual qualities were set by the Apostles for the men to be given such a crucial servant role. The unity and progress of the Church weighed heavily on their being mature and skilled enough to serve the church in such a crucial time. The emphasis was placed on the **inner qualities** of the men to be chosen:

- “***Full of the Spirit***” — In a practical sense, these men yielded to the Spirit in their lives, bearing the “*fruit of the Spirit*” in Galatians 5:22–23: “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*” They were knowledgeable and skilled in the Word, the sword of the Spirit (cf. Ephesians 6:17).
- “***Full of... Wisdom***” — Through the faithful practice of truth in their lives they had gained valuable insights and comprehensive understanding of people and healthy principles of working with people and in walking upright in their lives.

- ***“Full of Faith”*** — As the word “*faith*” suggests these men were convicted on well reasoned evidence and the source of their convictions was the Word of God (cf. Romans 10:17).

1 Timothy 3:1–7:

There had been elders at Ephesus some years prior to Paul’s letter to Timothy (cf. Acts 20:17–38). Evidently, there was a need to strengthen or add to the leaders in the church. Paul gave the young evangelist, Timothy, the instruction he would need to guide the Ephesian church in constituting itself biblically just as he did with Titus in Titus 1:5–9. His instructions were to appoint mature, exemplary, and skilled men in their lives, in their family, in the church, and in the community. Competent leadership does not happen accidentally. It must be an intentional commitment pursued with the greatest level of seriousness and self-sacrifice. There are three, underlying basic principles that must characterize the core values of a church leader’s life:

- **Passionate to be close and helpful to the brethren.** The opening statement, “. . . *If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer . . .*” (NIV) / “*If any man desire the office of a bishop . . .*” (KJV) / “*aspires*” (NAS) suggests a deep longing, a compelling and urgent purpose, a fervent and boiling-over intent. Driven by such fervor, a man will give a high priority to preparing and to serving. The word “*bishop*” or “*overseer*” literally means, “being near-by, at the side of, at the very elbow of.” It is not a hierarchical word as many religious sources suggest (“*over*” gk. **epi**). It describes a mentor, a benefactor, a protector, one who has a close relationship of assistance. A leader is to love people, believe in their potential, and be driven to help each person achieve spiritual outcomes in his life.
- **Eager to do good.** The second statement of motivation (“*desires*”) suggests an eagerness to stretch or exhaust every resource in order to do good. Whether in his own life

or with other people he would have Paul's stated aim “. . . *to be well pleasing to Him [God]*” (2 Corinthians 5:9, NKJV).

- **Determined to live above the common life standards, being exemplary in all areas of his life.** A prospective leader is to be “*above reproach*” or “*blameless*.” This term is not speaking of a flawless life. Actually, the Greek word suggests that such a man would not be arrested if the police went out looking for someone misbehaving himself. This person is a law-abiding citizen and would never be charged for misconduct. Rather, he is exemplary in his conduct. Based on Hebrews 13:7, the concern and scrutiny of the church in their selections were to be focused on life results, on the current outcomes of the lives of the men being considered. Some may have had a worldly past (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9–11), but the issue is how they have grown since their redemption by the Lord.

Grammatically, it would be well to place a colon (:) after the statement, “*above reproach :*” to show that the men chosen are to be exemplary in the following qualities listed in 1 Timothy 3:2–7. The word “*must*” appears in the singular four times in the text, denoting that each elder is to have the indicated qualities.

Exemplary in His Family Relations

What a man is and does away from public scrutiny is important in his leadership role. What is his relationship with his wife and children? What kind of leadership does he provide to his family? What has been the outcome of his years as a husband and as a father?

- **He must be “*the husband of but one wife*.”** This statement has often been limited too much to a leader's legal status. Discussions have focused too narrowly on what he should not be: not a celibate, not a polygamist, not a divorcee, nor a widower. It would be instructive,

refreshing, and insightful if the church placed more emphasis on the **quality** of the marriage relationship. This is especially true because the literal meaning of the phrase is that he must be “a one-woman kind of man.” He sees God’s emphasis on the person and place of the woman and that her diverse needs are to be identified and fulfilled. He understands her equal partnership and uniqueness and value in the marriage is to be honored. She takes precedence over all other human relationships or concerns (cf. Genesis 1–2). In his service to God, his full love and devotion is given to the one woman. He loves her without reservation, loving her more than life itself, seeing and following the example of Christ who gave Himself for the Church. He unselfishly serves her with the same awareness of need and with the same care he responds to his own needs (cf. Ephesians 5:21–23). Experiencing such masculine affection, the wife is secure in the love of her husband. She feels free to respond with dependency on him, trust and belief in him, recognizing and affirming his value and praising his accomplishments. He lives with her intelligently, always trying to learn how to be a more affectionate, thoughtful, and helpful husband. He is considerate of her femininity, understanding that the passing seasons of womanhood call for added and different responses. He honors her as a spiritual equal, treasuring her partnership in the Gospel, profiting from her spiritual insights and feminine ministry. He remembers daily that his relationship to God in prayer depends directly on his right relationship with his wife (cf. 1 Peter 3:7). A man can best serve as a leader of God’s people when he is singularly devoted to his wife, committed to building an exemplary relationship wherein both are being fulfilled in growing together to their maximum, marital maturity.

- **He must manage his household well.** This statement is best translated “*standing before his household*” (**proistami**) as a model, as a guide, as a protector. It is more than functioning efficiently in finances, making good

use of time and other resources. In all matters his family should observe model behavior that gives them a context of security, purpose, and affirmation. The emphasis of the text is on the impact his conduct has on his children. Orderly children who hold their father in high esteem reflect how a man has “stood before his household.” The “*believing children*” statement in Titus often has been the major, disqualifying consideration in the leader selection process. The meaning of the word “*believing*” or “*faithful*” most often has been limited to obedience in baptism. The word translated “*believing*” also can be translated “persuadable, convincible, teachable.” That being a possible, core understanding of the word, then the emphasis would be on the learned mind-set or attitude of the children. What is the attitude of the children toward listening, learning, being corrected? Are they fair minded, reasonable, and open minded? If so, they are probable reflections of a father who, as a leader in the church, would be fair, open-minded, easily entreated, easily informed. Further, it might be well noted that the Titus context suggests that the children’s open-mindedness and teachability are most closely related to morality than to doctrine or to religious activity. This emphasis in Titus 1:6 becomes even more instructive when studied against the backdrop of Proverbs. That book urges the son to be eager to listen to instruction, to prize knowledge and wisdom above all treasures. The writer of Proverbs repeatedly emphasized that heed to instruction saves one from untold moral failures. Titus 1:6 is a one-sentence commentary on the Book of Proverbs. Considering what has been stated concerning children in 1 Timothy and Titus, the emphasis is on the attitudes of the children which result from the type of father/child relations they have had.

This section on the family can be summarized in two sentences:

- A leader must be developing a marital relationship wherein his wife is secure in the mature love of her husband.
- A leader must have children who enjoy a secure relation with their father, expressing high regard for him, having learned from him self-discipline in wise decision making and moral choices.

Exemplary in His Moral Maturity

As men develop toward shepherding a flock they must become exemplary in their ethical and relational qualities (socio-ethical) that will determine the strength of their influence on others. In 1 Timothy 3 there are nine relational traits. In Titus 1 there are eleven such traits. Perhaps this suggests the different conditions between the churches in Europe and in Asia, and also that Paul is simply emphasizing how important it is that our leaders be mature, exemplary Christians. It is obvious that neither of these two accounts or any other listing of virtues contain all of the desirable qualities of Christian maturity. First Corinthians 13 does not give all the qualities of love. Galatians 5 does not exhaust all of the desired results of the work of the Spirit in character formation. Ephesians 4 does not include all of the communication principles of speaking the truth in love. Certainly the accounts in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 do not list all of the relational qualities that leaders must have, but both accounts emphasize the demand for mature, competent men in leadership. They must be mature in the following qualities:

- **Temperate** describes a person who is calm, wise, cautious, vigilant. Such a person is not extreme in anything.
- **Sober** describes one who is serious, under control.
- **Of good behavior** speaks of one who is organized, orderly. He is predictable because of his systematic discipline. He can be counted on to be orderly in behavior and decision making.

- **Hospitable** pictures one who enjoys helping the needy, who understands the plight of traveling strangers, who is unselfish in helping resolve the difficulties of others. It is more than one who is friendly to those he loves or enjoys having in his home.
- **Not given to drunkenness** (literally: “not sitting long as his cup”) extols the virtue of self-control and resisting enslavement or addiction. Possibly, the New Testament prohibition of addiction to wine in a wine drinking society could authorize us to speak against addictions in any area: money, power, work, play, and so forth.
- **No striker** precludes a man being in the leadership who is contentious, quarrelsome, and hurtful in his treatment of others. Beyond being argumentative, this kind of person hurts others by his abusive manners and verbal assaults on others.
- **Gentle** applauds one who is fair, reasonable, not unduly rigorous, or demanding. People feel good and affirmed in a relationship with such a man.
- **Not a brawler** marks one who, perhaps, not as hurtful of others as the “*striker*,” but one who is always finding a provocation to quarrel. He is easily offended, quick to be defensive, and always looking for something to which he can object or find exception.
- **Not covetous** (literally: not fond of, not having a liking of silver) commends one who is free from greed and free to work for the good of others. He is not motivated by the desire for the goods of others but, rather, of everything that is good for others. To Titus, Paul said, the leader “*loves what is good*” and is sensible, just, devout, and self-controlled.

These relational qualities enhance one’s leadership opportunities to gain the respect and co-labor of fellow Christians. Most of the problems in leadership spring from deficiencies in these relational qualities. Strong churches have leaders who are mature in these qualities.

Exemplary in His Church Relations and Service

Beyond a man's family relations and personal maturity, there are three qualities that every leader must achieve:

- **Apt to teach** requires one to have discovered and developed his potential as a teacher. The biblical terms that specifically refer to a spiritual leader underscore the teaching aspect of leadership.
 - ▶ The word “*elder*” emphasizes the wisdom to be used in counseling, which is instruction at its most personal.
 - ▶ The word “*overseer*” emphasizes mentoring or individualized instruction.
 - ▶ The word “*ruler*” emphasizes standing before the sheep in teaching and modeling, a powerful form of instruction.

In the Ephesian letter, Paul characterizes the elders as “*pastors [shepherd] and teachers*” (Ephesians 4:11), charged with the assignment to “*prepare God’s people for works of service / equip the saints for ministry*.” Inept teaching and training members in ministry at the eldership level betrays superficial biblical knowledge and the lack of value being placed on instruction by congregational shepherds. The Church has rightfully denounced congregations focusing instructions on one man which creates a unilateral pastoral system. However, we practice a system in which elders are not able teachers of the Word.

- **Not a novice** literally means not “a recently planted tree.” The emphasis is not simply on being young or old in years, but in being mature. A recently planted tree is not fruitful yet, it needs, itself, to be supported to grow straight and tall and stand erect in a storm. It cannot give haven to birds in its tender branches or comforting shade by its leaves. Likewise, time is required for men to become giants in the forest of trees. Paul cautions churches not to thrust men

into prime leadership too early. That is, before they have demonstrated the deep root-set and fruitfulness of mature growth.

- **Exemplary in the Community.** The Church was not envisioned as a secret society or a clannish fellowship. The Lord saw it as “*. . . the salt of the earth . . . the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden*” (Matthew 5:13–14). The Church and her message were intended to be seen, heard, and examined in the world and by the world. Therefore, her leaders are required to be attractive and convincing in their relations in the community. They display before the world what Christ does in the lives of His followers. By looking at the shepherds of the flock the worldly can find hope for becoming moral, hope for building strong marriages and families, and hope for becoming respected by one’s peers. Nothing is so contradictory and repellent to the world than for spiritual leaders failing to live what is being regularly taught to others. Any hint of religious hypocrisy closes the door to serious inquiry. How a man is regarded in the community will determine how effectively he can lead a church to penetrate that community with the Gospel.

Twenty-First Century Shepherds

The distance of the centuries has not lessened the need of mature, strongly relational, and skilled shepherds of God’s heritage. The openness of modern day societies and the highly educated populace in most nations may require even more advanced qualities of our leaders. The “good old boy” criteria was never a healthy standard for church leadership and is likely less acceptable today. If the Church would make an equal investment in training elders with the investment that is made in training preachers, we would be light years ahead. If churches would demand the same kind of knowledge of our congregational leaders in knowledge, skills, relationships, and

life as is required of local preachers, our congregations would be better served and church growth would be more greatly promoted.

Modern day shepherds must gain the heart of the Shepherd God and know what He has always expected of the shepherds of His people (cf. Ezekiel 34). They must adopt the qualities and purposes of the Shepherd Messiah and point the flock to the Chief Shepherd. They must gain the maturity in life, in doctrine, in shepherding skills, and in spiritual influence that was set as the standard for choosing leaders in the early centuries (cf. 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1). Jesus paid an awesome price for the redemption of God's people and provided a redemptive message for the world. He has promised a victory over the ancient fear of death and is making preparations for a grand reunion of all God's people. All of His efforts should inspire men of this century to make every effort to be all that a shepherd was ever intended to be and to do.

The Work of a Shepherd

Leadership, in the New Testament, is seen as **a work** to be accomplished, not a title to be worn or a position to be filled (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1). Leading and caring for sheep is work that can be exhausting and even dangerous. It is not a work to be entered but by men who are highly motivated, unafraid of work, and fully ready for the stress and demands of the assignment.

The precise nature of the work is outlined in Scripture by the verbs that describe action. In the sections that follow in this chapter, one can see the work well defined and described by the Holy Spirit. The work of shepherds today can be no less than what was expected of God's shepherds across the centuries.

God's Agenda for the Shepherds of Israel (Ezekiel 34:1–10)

On the reverse side of God's laments to Ezekiel about the shepherds of Israel, there is the positive work of shepherds well defined:

- Shepherds are to **feed**: "*take care of the flock.*" In shepherd talk, this would involve searching and finding healthy pastures, leading sheep safely to the best places, and storing up and providing feed for the times that pastures could not be reached. A good shepherd would be concerned for both the quality and quantity of food so the feeding needs of the flock would always be available. The spiritual shepherd would see, likewise, the urgency that every member has the availability of spiritual nourishment. He would be concerned that the available nourishment was

sound in doctrine, inspiring in content, and applicable to the member's needs. Spoiled contents would be thrown away hastily. The teachings would be age-appropriate, spiritually adapted to the level of maturity, and effectively administered by capable teachers. No member would be stifled in growth for the lack of instruction, the lack of mentoring, the lack of discipline, or the lack of encouragement or model.

- Shepherds are to ***strengthen*** the flock. Shepherds know that growing and healthy sheep cannot stay in the fold and never go out into the elements of nature and move around for their feedings. Spiritual shepherds know that people learn and grow by getting involved in the lives and needs of others. Sitting in a pew and never putting into practice the body of knowledge one can receive over the years will never result in spiritual maturity and fruitfulness. Modern shepherds will plan for open doors to be regularly placed before all members to lead them into works of service, outreach, and stewardship of their resources.
- Shepherds are to ***heal the sick***. Sickness comes to healthy sheep as it does to healthy, growing members. Shepherds in both worlds work hard at keeping sheep well, but sicknesses will come. Often shepherds have to pass from preventative care to caring for the sick. Healing must be a constant concern both for survival and for getting back to the business of the flock. With members who are sick in body or sinful in life, shepherds may need to practice James 5:16 by going to their sides, in case of sickness, pray and anoint with oil, and, in case of sinfulness, encourage confession of sin and help find the joy of receiving forgiveness. Shepherds, either personally or by soliciting help from others, may need to identify areas in which a member cannot grow unless the obstacles are removed. A person may struggle to forgive, may fail to confront anxiety, or may be selfish and insensitive. Once

such obstacles are recognized, life plans need to be initiated to bring healing. A shepherd is placed among the sheep to assure that each sheep in the flock is healed when sick. A sick flock is in multiple dangers and, if neglected, shepherds of the flock may be held accountable.

- Shepherds are to ***bind up the injured***. Even with attentive shepherds, sheep will be injured. Prompt and careful care is needed to protect the sheep and to promote healing. Spiritual shepherds see lives that are broken by sin, hearts that are broken by losses of loved ones in death, relationships that are broken by unfaithfulness in marriage, and dreams that are shattered by reverses in carefully laid plans. The shepherds of God cannot be aloof, distant from these tragedies, or too involved in lesser concerns to know or care. Surrounding the wounded ones by love, prayer, and needed assistance is the beginning of treating the wounds of dear sheep. The shepherds of God redouble their efforts as the needs of the sheep increase. They bring the full resources of the “fold” to bear at the point of the wound.
- Shepherds are to ***bring back the strays***. Some sheep wander off, little by little, until they become separated from the flock. Sometimes they are drawn slowly away with some fascination, some promise of pleasure, or even enticed by some evil plan of others. It is important that very little time passes by until the shepherd is urgently looking for the missing sheep. He knows that straying away can prove to be dangerous and even disastrous to the well-being of the sheep. Usually, attentive shepherds can see the early, tell-tell signs of a straying sheep.

In the spiritual world, involvement in the ministries and attendance at some services lessen, the friends that take up a member’s time and the chosen work schedules show loss of commitment, and a member’s giving and spirit of sacrifice begin to tell a wise shepherd of the

pending danger of a straying sheep. Praying earnestly for and going after a straying member become high priorities of God's shepherds. Finding them and bringing them back to the fellowship are what matter. How it is done is important: bringing them back without shaming them or embittering them, using love, mercy, and grace rather than guilt, judgment, and self-righteousness.

- Shepherds are to *search for the lost*. A community leaves no stone unturned, looking everywhere and repeatedly, if a lost child is announced. Day or night, summer or winter, rough terrain or dangerous elements, nothing turns away those who are searching. This and more initiatives should be taken when one soul is lost. The whole church, led by the shepherds, should leave no initiative untried or one hour wasted in trying to bring a lost one home. Often pride gets in the way of shepherds looking at possible failures on their part or of the church that may have discouraged the lost member. Sometimes, the member has been difficult and it may seem "good riddance" when they go their own way. However, this is one for whom Christ died. This is the one who has been gifted for great things in the Kingdom. This is the one who the church has invested many resources to bring them thus far in the faith. Only when a church and her shepherds have exhausted every known resource can they declare the search is over, for now. Even then, there may be later circumstances that open the heart of the lost sheep to the ever-ready church and her shepherds. And, like the return of the lost son in Luke 15, the father and the older brother(s) are eager to embrace the contrite son.

God severely reprimanded the shepherds of Israel because they had failed in their six-fold mission to the sheep. For whatever good they might have been doing, they had failed in their central mission: feed, strengthen, heal, bind up the wounded, bring back the straying, and search for the lost. No

church can prosper if her shepherds are busier in other things to the neglect of the sheep. Time spent on impressive and serviceable buildings, budgets and administration, directing programs, and putting out fires, all to the personal neglect of the sheep will bring them under the indictment in Ezekiel. These concerns cannot be delegated to a staff of well trained ministers and staff workers. **These are specific, shepherd concerns.**

In Jeremiah 23:1–4 and 50:6, God's shepherds were charged with the care and protection of the sheep. To accomplish such an awesome work, they were urged to have God's shepherd heart and to lead with knowledge and understanding (cf. Jeremiah 3:15). Nothing grieved God more than the selfish shepherds of Israel who neglected His sheep. What God expected of the Old Testament shepherds seems to be His continuing agenda for the New Testament shepherds.

God's Shepherd Assignments to Appointed Shepherds of Ephesus (Acts 20:17–38)

The Apostle Paul, speaking to the appointed shepherds of Ephesus, stated seven assignments to be fulfilled, both in regard to the flock and to themselves:

- “*Keep watch over yourselves . . .*” Be attentive to their own faithfulness (v.28). Nothing delights Satan any more than for shepherds to fail in their own spiritual growth and service. Shepherds, along with their concern for the sheep, need to be especially attentive of their fellow-shepherds. Once a man becomes a shepherd, God is still at work in his life. And so is Satan at work to tear down the best among us. He knows the truth of Zechariah 13:7, “*Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.*” Jesus applied the truth to Himself in Matthew 26:31 just before Satan had his best shot at crucifying the Shepherd. Shepherds need to be concerned about the continuing doctrinal soundness, the warmth and depth of a man’s love toward

the flock and in his family, the time spent in prayer and in the study of the Word, and the moral clarity of each, fellow-shepherd. Openness in confession, fervency in group and individual prayer, and candor in sharing must characterize every group of under-shepherds. Shepherds must make themselves individually accountable to one another. Their work is so profoundly important that the Church cannot risk the loss of one.

- “*Keep watch over . . . all the flock*” (v. 28). Shepherds can have favorites in a flock that behave delightfully and consistently well. Then, there are some others who are obstinate and difficult to be around. There are still others who are so marginal that it becomes easy to forget them. There could be prejudicial barriers in matters of race, gender, economic status, and maturity. Paul urged the Ephesian shepherds to watch over “*all the flock*” in the fold. Each one is to be valued, tenderly cared for, and protected with all diligence.
- “*Be shepherds of the church of God . . .*” To feed, sustain each sheep according to the individual needs (v. 28). Shepherds know that all sheep get hungry and must be fed. They can be led to the pasture, they can have feed laid out before them, and must be kept ever near a place to drink. Like the shepherds in Ezekiel 34, shepherds today can disappoint God in neglecting the spiritual needs of the sheep. What is preached in the pulpit, taught in the classes, shared in small groups, and given in personal mentoring must be good for spiritual growth and faithful service. The shepherds need to stay abreast of available teaching materials and learning opportunities. They must stay attuned to the changing and varied needs of the flock. They must stay alive to the generational needs and dangers facing every age group and every segment in the flock. They must help each member maximize his/her ministry gift potential.

- “*Keep watch . . . savage wolves will come in among you*” Be vigilant to every conceivable threat to the sheep (v. 29–31). Every sheep in every flock is in possible danger of multiple threats. Accidents, getting lost, overtaken by intended evil, feeding on infected pastures, and overfeeding are ever present. Shepherds must have the “over my dead body” attitude in protecting the sheep. No danger, no threat, and no person has claim on any sheep in the fold of God. Shepherds are not hirelings that flee in the face of danger. They serve under the “Good Shepherd” and share in His sacrificial love for the sheep (cf. John 10:11–12).
- “*Commit . . . to God and to the word of his grace which can build you up and give you an inheritance . . .*” Pursue greater strength and hope in a vibrant relationship with God and in His Word (v. 32). Paul urged the Ephesian shepherds to stay “in the Book.” Shepherds must have an unbroken flow of strength and hope to keep them strong, focused, and directed. They can become weary in doing good, in confronting problems, and in losing battles. Shepherds who spend little time in personal, in-depth study of the Word, soon start sharing their poverty of knowledge, purpose, and motivation with the members, starving the sheep entrusted to their care. They essentially leave the flock without shepherds, one of the greatest reasons for God’s grief (cf. Mark 6:34).
- “*Help the weak . . .*” Support the weak (v. 35). Shepherding is not just about dynamic programs, bulging buildings, expanding budgets, and being pace-setting churches. She is to be known for her heart and outreach to the weak. It is not about ignoring the pleas of the weak and hoping they will go away. It is about lifting those who stumble in their walk, about patiently picking them up again after another fall, about being attentive to their real needs and supplying them through sacrificial service. Paul

is an example of how far one should go supporting the weak. When he had little for himself and worked to support his preaching, he also supported the weak. Shepherds do not hide behind “the benevolence budget” in decisions to support the weak. They make sacrifices so that no one among them has unmet needs.

- To enjoy the blessing of unselfishly helping those who have nothing to give in return. The expression, “*It is more blessed to give than receive*” (vs 35) was addressed to shepherds to encourage them in their sacrificial giving of themselves to insure the good health of the flock, to help them fight their battles against the lurking wolves, to remain strong in the Word, and to sustain all members.

A Three-Dimensional Picture Is Drawn of Leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12)

Industry, courage, and skill stand out as part of the job description of leaders of God’s people:

- **Industry:** Leaders are described as “*those who work hard among you . . .*” Leaders work rigorously on behalf of the church. Beyond what is seen during the public services, there are the hours in prayer, in visiting, in mentoring, in soul-winning, in minding the affairs of the Body, and in watching for opportunities for growth and service.
- **Courage:** Leaders are seen as those who “stand before the church.” Leaders stand as protectors against error coming into the Body (cf. Titus 1:10–11), as models of the virtues and values of the faith, as teachers of vital truths, and as encouragers in righteousness (cf. Titus 1:9).
- **Skill:** Leaders are pictured as those who “*admonish*” the members. Leaders are more than “good old boys.” They are effective in teaching, in strengthening, and in encouraging members in their talk and walk in the Lord.

Insightful Information Concerning Leaders

(Hebrews 13:7, 17)

Some of the richest insights into the work of God's leaders are given in these verses in the concluding chapter of Hebrews: Lives well lived, skills well used, and responsibilities faithfully fulfilled.

- **Lives well lived:** Leaders are noted for the “. . . *outcome of their way of life . . .*” Leaders are like all other men. They are the composite of all their experiences as impacted by the influential people in their lives, the values they have adopted, and the skills they have learned. Each of them have made some mistakes, failed to take full advantage of opportunities, and lived through some tragedies and plateaus in growth. What distinguishes a leader is that he has learned from his experiences and continued to improve in his life and service. When selecting leaders, the question to ask is not what did he fail in doing, but what has been the outcome of his life? In his marriage is he now an exemplary husband? Is he now an accomplished servant? Has his years of parenting resulted in responsible, adult believers? The selection of leaders is not a “line-item veto” on every act across the years of his life. However, has all of his life and labor resulted in his being a model of Christian manhood and a trustworthy Christian leader?
- **Skills well used:** Leaders are respected as having “. . . *spoke the Word of God . . .*” A valid test of the validity of a man’s leadership is how directly his life and service have impacted the lives of others. From his teachings of the Word have lives been impacted and changed? Has he made a difference in the lives of many in his ministry of the Word? Whatever else is to be said about a leader, his knowledge and personal dependence on the Word and his

sharing it effectively with others are of paramount importance.

- **Responsibilities faithfully fulfilled:** Leaders are seen as those who “*. . . must give account . . .*” to the Lord. The most sobering responsibility of a leader is giving an account to the Lord concerning his own faithfulness and the faithfulness of those he leads. Members need to know that a leader, at the end of the day, has to be accountable for why members are not being responsible, why the church is not growing, why souls are not being taught, and why opportunities are not being used. Members have a lot to do in making the accounting hour a pleasant one or one that weighs heavily on the leader. Too many of the weighty hours of accounting have dried up the enthusiasm and serving spirit of many leaders across the centuries.

Peter, an Elder, Urged Fellow-Elders to be Faithful as Shepherds (1 Peter 5:1–2)

It is brief, but Peter said much about shepherding in his comments to the elders in Asia Minor. He spoke of a core mission, a core responsibility, and a core attitude:

- **A Core Mission:** Shepherds are to “*. . . feed the flock of God*” (KJV). Whether Old Testament shepherds or New Testament shepherds, the core work is to sustain the sheep, making sure that they are nourished adequately and regularly. This is not a work that can be delegated to other workers, leaving the shepherds free to do nothing of core importance for the sheep. When feeding time comes, shepherds are to be among the sheep.
- **A Core Responsibility:** Shepherds are “*serving as overseers*” of the flock. Oversight has more to do with a custodial responsibility than authority over another. The term actually involves “nearness,” “at the very side of,” “at

the elbow of.” The shepherd is near to protect, to mentor, to care for the sheep. Shepherds are to be close to the life, to the needs, to the work, and to the family of every member. A shepherd knows the name of each sheep, the preferences, habits, and the vulnerabilities of every one. He is near when called. The sheep knows he is near, knowledgeable, and ready to come when called.

- **A Core Attitude:** Shepherds are to do their work “*...not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be ...*” A shepherd knows his duty, but does not serve out of duty, but he serves more out of an attitude of love for the sheep. It is never a question of “will a shepherd help a sheep”? He has already decided in his heart and has already settled all questions in his mind about his service among the sheep. A shepherd does not begrudge the time he spends for the sheep. The sheep can count on the readiness and sweet spirit of their shepherds to help them in their walk with God.

Pin-pointing the Work of Shepherds (Ephesians 4:11–13)

When speaking of the structure of leadership in the local church, Paul pinpoints the place and purpose of shepherds in their shared work with evangelists. They are assigned the specific work of equipping the saints in view of results in five, important church growth areas. With each assignment being introduced by the Greek word *eis* (into, in view of, in the direction of), it is suggested that it is an ongoing work as new members are coming into the fellowship and there being always much for every member to learn.

- “*For works of service*” (v. 12). A healthy, functioning church has many opportunities to minister in as many ways as there are different ministry gifts assigned to the many members. It is the assignment of the shepherds to

help each member discover, develop, and employ the specific, ministry gifts God has given. It is the joy of shepherds to empower, guide, and assemble the resources to accomplish the ministries of the church. The works of service would include the ministry of the Word to the lost, community outreach in doing good to all men, and the response to the needs of the saints.

- “*So that the body of Christ may be built up*” (v. 12). Every church has much work to do to assure that every member is functioning adequately in the basic, Christian traits: coping with stress, winning over anxiety, freely serving others, being open and transparent, sensitive, unselfish, confident in the Lord, forgiving, and self-disciplined. A “wounded” church cannot fight long or well or be fully devoted to her assignments. Shepherds must be decidedly concerned about the health and strength of the church to achieve her mandate in the world.
- So that all may “*reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God*” (v. 13). “*Unity in the faith*” is an unfailing partner with “*the knowledge of the Son of God*.” Knowing this, shepherds must keep educational initiatives in motion that are steadily deepening the relationship with God and sharpening obedience to His teachings (cf. Matthew 28:19–20). For unity to prevail within a church there must be systematic and reproducible truths being consistently taught in every initiative of the congregation.
- “*Become mature*” (v. 13). Shepherds are guided by the expectancy that all of their work will result in the members becoming fully grown and fruitful. Like a mature tree, the members are to produce after their own kind. They are to produce other Christians who become mature and fruitful in kind (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2).

- “*Attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*” (v. 13). With Christ as the ultimate measure of moral and spiritual qualities, all Christians are guided by the shepherds to reach the highest levels of spirituality as life and opportunity allows. Such growth stretches one beyond his comfort zones, brings him to face challenges bigger than himself, and takes him deeper and further than anything he has known. What one becomes when the Spirit has formed a Christ-like character within him makes him unrecognizable from his former self. He is a “*new creature*,” having experienced reversal and renewal and waiting for resurrection and glorification. By committing to the values and world view of Jesus and submitting to His servant ministry, the believer takes on the divine nature (cf. 2 Peter 1:4).

These growth needs of the church are not optional niceties or just good when possible. They are urgent necessities whose accomplishment is laid at the feet of the shepherds (cf. vs. 14ff.). The consequences of failure leave new converts as unfed infants and expose the whole church to troubling teachings and uncertainty. The risk of being swept away in doctrinal error and deception is very real. The rewards of diligent and faithful shepherds doing their job are endless and joyful.

Overview of the Work in the Personal Lives of Leaders (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1)

The previous chapter, using nouns, described the life of the shepherds. Implicit in each quality is an action that illustrates the work of a shepherd. It takes devoted work to develop an exemplary marriage, to parent wisely, to develop the required moral characteristics to lead a church, to be mature in working with members, and to relate to the world. Becoming a shepherd requires that a man has worked purposely and faithfully to be useful in the hands of God in caring for His flock.

Conclusion

The work of caring for God's people is a "*good work*," worthy of whatever any man has to do to prepare himself for the assignment and worthy of any work he must accomplish. It is a work that identifies with the Shepherd of shepherds, Jesus. It is a work connected with a long line of shepherds who faithfully fulfilled their appointment. It is a work that applauds the Shepherd of Israel for the tender and loving care given to sheep of His pasture.

The Heart of a Shepherd

After the previous discussions about the work, the life, and knowledge of one who shepherds God's flock, as important as each topic is, the "*heart*" of a shepherd calls for the most attention. Proverbs 4:23 tells the Christian: "*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*" What a man is in his heart, ultimately, reveals everything about the man. His motivations, his basic values, his overwhelming commitments, and what he thinks about in his most treasured times are at the fountain head of all that he is and what he does.

What Is the Heart?

Some would define the "*heart*" as the seat of the emotions, the source of all affections and feelings. By this definition, feelings become a prominent issue in a study of spiritual leadership. Another perspective broadens and deepens the discussion in defining the heart as an integral composite of **the mind, the will, and the emotions** of a person. This perspective combines the *rational*, the *volitional* and the *emotional* aspects of a person.

Every complete person has been given a **mind** with which to research, to reason, to compare, to challenge, and to reach a conclusion. The cognitive aspect of the heart is seen in Proverbs 23:7: ". . . as a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (NKJV). How effectively and consistently he uses the mind, what values and attitudes he mixes into the research, what authority he honors, and who and what resources he brings into the discussion are important in the outcome of his thinking. In giving the mind to any person, surely God would want him to think biblically, submissively, and with an attitude of wanting to think like Jesus in arriving at every conclusion. The goal of

every mind, intentionally, is to gather adequate knowledge and understanding of the truth so that a right conclusion can be reached and a rejection of anything erroneous can occur (cf. John 8:32). Thus, a heart conclusion is based on sound thinking resulting from an attitude of courage and candor (cf. Proverbs 2:2, 22:17, 23:12; Ecclesiastes 1:13, 9:1).

Every complete person has been given a **will** with which to decide to act upon what the mind has determined is true, important, and/or urgent. Out of an informed will comes the call to action and commitment. A decision, influenced by revealed truth and prompted by recognized need, must be made to launch any action of lasting value. James forcefully points out that conviction, a result of a mind at work (faith), without a decision to act (works) is a spiritual sham (cf. James 2:14–26). There is wasted virtue in believing but not acting on one's convictions. That is true of “demons” and humans who use their mind to think rightly but refuse to use their will to act responsibly. Without the responsible and prompt use of the will a person is not serving God with all of his heart. Psalms 119:59 explains how an informed mind impacts a willing spirit: *“I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes.”*

Every complete person has been given **emotions** with which to ignite a conclusion of the mind and a decision of the will. Regardless of how right a conclusion may be or how laudable is a decision to act, unless there is the spark of excitement, of enthusiasm, and of passion, an act will either not get started or will yield little of its potential. Lamentably, an act that is based on emotions without due diligence to determining if it is right or pursued without the conviction of a well-informed decision will be like a missile out of control.

All of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes speak of how the mind is to determine the truths of God and to act faithfully upon the revealed knowledge. All of the Psalms sing out of the deep feelings that come when one commits himself with all of his heart. Such heart-felt emotions erupt in praise and reverence to the person and the testimonies of a Holy God. The heart of a

shepherd is one that thinks soundly, determines to act rightly, and to do so with all of his well-directed emotions. These heart qualities are seen in the Shepherd God, the Shepherd Messiah, and in the shepherd instructions of the Apostles.

The Heart of the Shepherd God

A reading of Psalms 23 shows the heart of God in His attentive care of the sheep. He attends to all of their needs, leads them in rich pastures and along quiet streams of water, and provides a restful place. Through dark shadows of fearful times, He protects them from dangers and seats them peacefully at choice banquets. He gives lasting assurances throughout one's journey in life and speaks of a "forever" relationship.

A reading of Ezekiel 34 shows the heart of God both in his adamant rejection of His appointed shepherds for their failure to have His heart in the care of the sheep and in His promised and tender care of His precious flock. His heart aches when His sheep wander away, are sick, are wounded, and are exposed to potential danger. His heart is angered when those who are appointed to care for His sheep think only of themselves and even abuse the sheep because of their greed and selfishness.

One of the most touching pictures of the heart of the Shepherd God is painted by Isaiah of God's intimate and personal attention to His flock: "*He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young*" (Isaiah 40:11).

The verbs used in this brief but telling passage are full of inspiration and challenge: "*tends, gathers, carries,*" and "*gently leads.*" The Shepherd God's actions set the standard for all who would join Him in shepherding His sheep.

The Heart of the Shepherd Messiah

The Shepherd God, fully frustrated with how greatly His appointed shepherds had failed in caring for His sheep, spoke of a day when He would renew His presence among the sheep with another shepherd who would share His love and purpose for the sheep: The Messiah Shepherd.

A careful reading of the Gospels reveals the gentle care of Jesus to those with multiple needs, the patience with those who were slow in learning, and even the fierceness with those shepherds of Israel who were acting as the earlier shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel 34. Perhaps the heart of the Shepherd Messiah was best seen as He shared the grief of the widow of Nain in the death of her only son (cf. Luke 7:11–17), as He felt the plight of the sinful woman thrown at His feet in Jerusalem (cf. John 8:1–12), or mourned at the passing of His dear friend, Lazarus (cf. John 11:28–37), or as He looked out over and lamented over the recalcitrant city of His fathers (cf. Matthew 23:37), or even in His Shepherd prayer in John 17.

The clearest and most compelling pictures of the heart of the Shepherd Messiah were those seen in the agony of the garden and in the excruciating, passion events of the following day. His full heart was engaged throughout the last days: He devoted His **mind** to reaffirming His knowledge of the will of God, He committed His **will** to submit to the will of God and He devoted every **emotion** to completing His mission on earth.

The Heart of the Under Shepherds

Shepherds among the flock of God in any century must focus their minds, will, and emotions on reflecting what they see in the purposes and ways that the Shepherd God and the Messiah Shepherd focused their whole hearts on the well being of the sheep. They have in Ezekiel 34 a well-defined list of things to avoid and the contrasting standard for serving the needs of the flock. They have the picture of Psalms 23 as a commentary on all of the actions of God in the Old Testament

to lead His people in righteousness, protect them from enemies, and bring them back, again and again, to the banquet table. One will learn much in traveling with the Messiah along the dusty roads of Palestine and seeing His caring ways of dealing with the sheep of God and going to the regions of Mount Zion for the last events of His redemptive ministry.

Issues of Life in Spiritual Shepherding

From inspired, apostolic writings one can see the transforming impact of the heart upon the life and work of a shepherd of God's sheep:

- **Acts 20:17–38:** Being Spirit-appointed to be among other shepherds of God's sheep in a local pasture (cf. Acts 20:28), one must be courageous against certain threats to the sheep, be introspective in concerns among the shepherds themselves, and be committed to the Word of Grace as a source of strength and hope. Being a shepherd at his biblical best is a Spirit-guided endeavor, one that is devoted to the protective care of sheep, and concerned for fellow-shepherds, and energized by the Spirit-empowered Word. The seriousness of the admonitions of Paul is shown in reminding them of his frequent and tearful encounters with them and bringing them together in prayer and soberness.
- **Ephesians 4:11–12:** The “*pastors [shepherd] and teachers*” share in a multi-sided ministry. It will take a devoted heart to fulfill his part of the assignment. Saints have to be equipped in their ministry assignments and led in developing their Spirit given, ministry gifts. The shepherds must guide the saints in employing their giftedness fruitfully in ministry activities. They must build up the body of Christ to achieve “*... unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*”

This teaching will keep the saints from lapsing into an adolescent faith and being vulnerable to damaging error. Rather, they will be mature:

... speaking the truth in love . . . grow [ing] up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body . . . grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:15–16).

To lead with a full heart, a shepherd will have to have already traveled the road himself or else it will be the “blind leading the blind.”

- **1 Thessalonians 5:12–13:** One, who like a shepherd, stands before the sheep, will be working out and among the sheep, busy in admonishing each one. The flock recognizes his value and is aware and sensitive to his efforts. He is respected and loved by the flock because he is at work making things happen to the benefit of the flock. He is not an absentee shepherd or too busy in his own affairs to know which sheep need attention. This level of commitment thrives on the fullness of a shepherd’s heart.
- **1 Timothy 3:1–7:** As a lover of God’s people who yearns to stay close to them as a mentor (*epikopos-overseer*), a leader is one who has devoted his best thoughts, his decisive choices, and his deepest longings to becoming all that God has desired for His appointed shepherds. His heart, with all of its thoughts, choices, and feelings, has been united in a life-long quest to be God’s man for His people. The outcome of the devotion of his heart has brought him to be exemplary in his family relationships, his moral maturity, his ministry activities, and his reputation in the community.

- **Titus 1:5–16:** In addition to the qualities in 1 Timothy 3, Paul described didactic qualities of leaders. They must, by sound doctrine, be able “persuaders” of members who need to change their ideas and ways. They, with their firm grasp of the truth, must be forceful “confronters” of antagonists of the Gospel. It takes “heart,” that is, a sound mind, a decisive will and a good balance of emotions to serve the dual teaching role. Only with a convicted heart, a patient spirit and a bold grasp of the truth can an elder/bishop convince both the member of their misconceptions and those that could be described as “... *rebellious people, mere talkers, deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group . . . for the sake of dishonest gain.*”
- **Hebrews 13:7, 17:** The person being described in this passage is one “... *who spoke the word of God to . . .*” the flock of God as a teacher, a protector, and a model, that is a “ruler.” He has shared the Word, a certain assignment of shepherds, to guide the faithful. He is to be a model in the “*outcome*” in his life. While some acts or life choices may have been less than exemplary, the “*outcome*,” the overall results of his decisions, are to inspire respect and emulation. This “up-front” man deserves the voluntary, submissive respect of the ones being helped because his assignment is to “... *keep watch over*” their souls and bears the heavy accountability for the well-being of each believer committed to his charge. His day is not over until he has made a shepherd’s report to the Chief Shepherd on the conduct of each sheep. It is imperative that the sheep conduct themselves well to insure that a good and joyful report can be made.
- **1 Peter 5:1–4:** This is one of those densely rich passages that brings many of the responsibilities of spiritual leaders together in one place: **elders** (experienced and wise counselors), **shepherds** —verb form (sustaining the needs

of the sheep) and *overseers* (mentors and benefactors) (cf. Acts 20:28 and Titus 1:5–7 for similar listings). These uniquely assigned men are to serve and shepherd willingly and eagerly, always being examples. Abusing their authority, serving out of constraint, and being motivated by dishonesty and self-service would be reprehensible among these men.

Achieving a Shepherd's Heart

From all that has been written above, it is clear that some men have tried to be shepherds without ever having a shepherd's heart. Predictable results invariably come. The sheep suffer, God's purposes are not achieved, the Shepherd God is dishonored and gravely disappointed, and, ultimately, the shepherds lose their place and heritage. Serving with all of one's educated mind, with one's submissive will, and with correctly directed emotions, a man grows in becoming and serving well as a shepherd of God's people. The transformational, building blocks toward achieving a shepherd's heart include the following:

- **A yielded, submissive believer:** Having heard the Good News, one is careful in understanding and believing both its promises and demands. He determines to do what God requires, exactly how He wishes and for the reasons He reveals, and he obeys urgently with all his best emotions. If he will continue to humbly search and consider the Scriptures, be committed to do what he determines is true, and obey it gladly and promptly, he will grow in being a surrendered, self-less believer.
- **A lover of the holiness of God:** The Christian walk, motivated by an obedient faith, begins with repentance, a deliberate and purposeful change of mind resulting in a radical change in life. As one matures, a life-style spirit of daily repentance emerges. It is motivated by a growing

love for the holiness of God. It imbibes of the spirit of Isaiah in his visit to the temple scene in Isaiah 6. In looking upon the holiness of God, Isaiah was overwhelmed by the royal grandeur of His presence and the affirmation of the seraphim, singing about the holiness of God: “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory*” (Isaiah 6:3). He was profoundly convicted of his uncleanness and abject unworthiness to stand in the presence of the Holy God. He cried out of his sense of lostness and human futility. In a display of mercy and grace, a foretaste of the love of God in the Christian age, cleansing and acceptance were extended to the confessor, Isaiah. So must the shepherd heart develop in its humility before a Holy God, sobered by his unworthiness and elated by his cleansing and the gift of serving.

- **A reverent worshiper:** The Book of Psalms has been the worshiper’s hymnal of praise and devotion for millenniums. No book reaches its heights in proclaiming the awesome greatness of Jehovah. In providence and mercy, in correction and guidance, in creation and renewal, in salvation and judgment, in compassion and loving kindness, and in shepherding and protection God is lofty lifted up and worthy of praise and adoration. The heart of the shepherd reveres the Shepherd God, feels deeply the heavenly invitation to come into His presence, and revels in the glory of His holiness.
- **A servant to others:** The best shepherds are those whose greatness is best seen in their giving up of themselves to bless the lives of others, to do what is best for others. Our Chief Shepherd rightly spoke of Himself as “*the good shepherd*” (John 10:11) because He came to serve, not to be served. Because of His shepherd heart He lived up to the promises of the Shepherd God in Ezekiel 34 as one who would not neglect or abuse the sheep but would attend to their every need. Serving others comes out of strength.

Serving succeeds only when one is strong enough to bow to the needs of even the undeserving. Serving is best done looking up to the one to be served. Serving well requires one to set aside his own, often superior abilities and ambitions, to attend lesser needs on more elementary levels, like a busy and highly skilled father who gets down in the floor and plays with a child in his limited vocabulary and more mundane concerns. A servant voluntarily checks his credentials of position and pride at the door and attends the needs of others without any expectations of recognition, applause, compensation or flashy, self-serving photo-ops.

- **A passionate searcher of the lost:** Following Jesus in His personal ministry one both hears and sees Him dedicated to “*... seek and save what was lost*” (Luke 19:10). Every nerve in His body screamed out against going to Calvary, but every beat of His heart cried out for the lost and the glory of the God of salvation. There is no explanation for His leaving the regal throne room, coming to the earth, being a selfless, impoverished servant among men, and going to the Roman execution on a cross without the consideration of His passion for the lost. A person who is the direct beneficiary of that passion, who is an avid student of the redemptive plan, and has seen countless lives changed and given lasting hope by the Gospel can do nothing but be a passionate searcher of the lost. Good shepherds go out into the gorges looking for lost sheep. Good shepherds place their bodies between the sheep and the ravaging wolves so as not to lose one. Shepherding is all about not losing sheep and searching for lost sheep.
- **A convicted custodian of truth:** Truth is discovered, defined, and retained with someone paying substantial prices. It is precious and must be defended and confirmed by faithful guardians of truth, even in fierce battles. Its value is seen in its richness for this life and for its promise

of a better and eternal life. The world is full of those who would revel in being able to steal the truth from others. Paul often confronted false teachers: those imposing human philosophies (cf. Colossians 2:8), those who argued for the veneration of angels (cf. Colossians 2:18), those insisting on ascetic practices (cf. Colossians 2:20–23). Paul said that one who “*. . . correctly handles the word of truth*” is able to confront the ungodly teachers who would destroy the faith of some (2 Timothy 2:15–18). A spiritual leader is required to be able to confront false teachers and literally, shut their mouths, “*they must be silenced . . .*” (Titus 1:10–11). The spirit of confrontation and answering inquiries is to do so “*. . . with gentleness and respect*” (1 Peter 3:13–16).

- **A covenant keeper:** God is a covenant maker and a covenant keeping God. To be a son of such a God, one must have the same heart toward solemnly making promises and faithfully keeping promises. This would include the full range of covenant promises: promises in marriage, promises in parenting, promises in leadership, promises to members being served, and promises in financial and business matters. In every society keeping promises faithfully and promptly is fundamental to a good relationship and a productive ministry.

Conclusion

If a shepherd’s heart involves all of his rational, volitional, and emotional strengths and potentials then, a modern-day shepherd can know the pathways to achieving the central core of mature service. By being mature in heart, a shepherd among God’s people is scaling one of the highest peaks of the journey of spiritual leadership.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of

worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will . . . Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality (Romans 12:1–2; 9–13, NIV).

Serving with a full heart, a man joins the long line of shepherds who have and are serving in shepherding God's flock. As James A. Garfield (1831–1881) felt he was stepping **down** from the eldership to become the 20th President of the United States, so should every appointed shepherd feel the honor, the sober challenge, and providential empowerment of the Chief Shepherd.

The Aim of Shepherds

A precise view of the shepherd's aim (priorities, objectives) is of central importance in providing a context in which essentials are definable:

- Knowing the aim helps a church determine how prospective shepherds are to be prepared in their lives, attitudes, and skills.
- Knowing the aim enables a church to choose shepherds well.
- Knowing the aim defines the job description and the job standard for congregational shepherds.
- Knowing the aim projects the expected results of shepherding well.

Ignorance, neglect, or distortion of shepherd aims explain a majority of the reasons why the flock of God faces avoidable peril and hurt. A vibrant, growing church will be led by shepherds who understand the aim of shepherding.

In defining the aim of shepherds, three distinctions must be made:

- The distinction between what the Church is in her essential nature and what the Church does because of her essential nature.
- The distinction between the essential, identifying priorities among all the positive aims of Shepherds.
- The distinction between the practical approaches and expected outcomes in the faithful pursuit of the shepherd's aim.

Unrelentingly, Jesus determined what the Church was to be in her essential nature, what it was to do because of what it was, and what were the expected outcomes. Deletion of any one of these three aspects or confusion among them obscures a shepherd's view of his aim.

The Essential Nature of the Church Clarifies the Shepherd's Aim

The shepherds form a church and lead a church as they view her essential nature. If their view is correct but incomplete or correct but focused on only one aspect of the essential nature of the church, serious losses will follow. Is the essential nature of the Church evangelistic? Educational? Benevolent? Worshipful? Militant? Social? There are those who would say “yes” to each of these, making a strong case for each of these aspects of the essential nature of the Church. The more balanced response would be to glorify God through an obedient faith and servant heart giving priority attention to each of these approaches in ministry. Making any one of these ministry approaches the whole or major aspect of the church would leave vital priorities undeveloped and fruitfulness precluded.

The Church was to be a ministering body of servant-believers. Jesus focused His mission on ministry (cf. Matthew 20:28; Luke 19:10; John 10:10). The incredible model of a king bowing in service to men vying for positions and authority punctuates the unique spirit of the Christian faith. Jesus struggled to form a central sense of ministry in His disciples (cf. Luke 22:24–27; Matthew 20:20–28, 23:11–12; John 13:4–5; 13:16). He knew full well that the “Church of the towel” would have power to sway the nations and make a lasting difference in society. The Spirit, consistent with the purposes of Jesus, gifted the Church for ministry (cf. Romans 12:6–8; 1 Peter 4:10). The apostolic leaders were to equip servant believers for ministry (cf. Ephesians 4:11–13).

Ministry is the overarching nature of the Church. Her ministry to God is worship and wholesome lives; her ministry to the body is well defined in the “one-another” instructions; her ministry to the world is the preaching of the Gospel everywhere to everyone and doing good to all men. Knowing the essential nature of the Church enables one to accurately define and nobly pursue a shepherd’s aim.

Priorities Clarify the Shepherd’s Aim

Shepherds must set priorities as their primary activities. The priorities are activities or practiced beliefs by which a people want to be known or identified to all others. The usual list of identifying priorities, though valid to test our faithfulness in the Body, often differs from the list determined by Christ.

- **John 13:34–35:**

Jesus designated mutual love as a priority identification of believers. The “upper room” model of love spoke of mutual friendship, affection, service, sacrifice, and loyalty. The newness of the priority was seen in its intensity and purpose as modeled by Jesus. Fraternal love was to be the badge of discipleship, the means by which the world would know that believers were genuine followers of Christ. While many argue and divide over differing views, by their lack of fraternal love, they invalidate before the world all of their other claims to faithful and compelling discipleship.

- **John 15:8:**

Jesus singled out wholeness, issuing from a life relationship with Himself, as a primary concern of the Church. Lives of mature, fruit bearing are impressive and inviting to people of the world. They long to know how Christians can achieve such qualities in life. They can soon learn that the fruitfulness in the lives of disciples comes out of their relationship with Jesus. He is the source of life even as the vine

gives life to all of the branches. Jesus makes the fruitfulness of the vine/branches relationship an evidence of discipleship.

- **John 17:21–23:**

Jesus designated oneness as a priority of His followers. The oneness of relationship, resources, and purposes that characterizes the Father and Son is the stated objective of believers. Unity overshadows and takes precedence of most all other considerations. To Jesus, being one in purpose with God took precedence over leaving the prerogatives of divine Sonship in heaven to effect the plan for saving man on planet earth. To Jesus, glorifying the Father was more important than the agony of Calvary. Shepherds lead the flock in keeping lesser considerations from overshadowing the greater importance of unity. A united church, able to maximize her resources, makes it easier for the world to see that Jesus was specifically sent by God to a lost and needy world. Shepherds must lead the flock of God in fully understanding and practicing the priorities that Jesus has established: fraternal love, wholeness of life, oneness in faith, and mutual loyalty.

Expected Results Reaffirm the Shepherd's Aim

A church who lives out of her essential nature of ministry and pursues her major priorities of love, life, and loyalty will achieve predictable results:

- The world has a valid basis for distinguishing authentic believers from defective or disguised claimants. Diminishing or hurting brethren just to prove who is right in a church argument stands in stark contrast to the “*. . . Love each other as I have loved you*” (John 15:12) model of Jesus. It forgets or disregards the pressing reason for fraternal love:

- ▶ “*Love one another. As I have loved you . . . By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*” (John 13:34–35).
- ▶ “*This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples*” (John 15:8).

The world could care less about all of the “proof-texts” for a church’s unique views or distinctive beliefs until they know for sure that being in that church is a safe place, where people are treated with value and respect and where their family can enjoy a peaceful environment for growth, service, and worship. Shepherds must effectively develop an environment for conflict resolution and healing, for forgiveness and reconciliation without falling into the trap of “peace at any price.”

- The world will know of the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:21). A church whose history is dotted with unresolved conflict and disrupting divisions cannot be very helpful in communicating to the world that Jesus is the divine Son of the living God. Who would take her seriously when she has not even practiced the basic, priorities given by the Master Teacher to love one another, to be in a fruitful relationship with Jesus, and to be one? Jesus is saying that the best, most trustworthy measure the world has to determine the truthfulness of His claims of divinity is the serious conduct of His followers. Why get serious about Jesus if His followers are not serious about obeying His basic priorities?
- The world will know that God loves His Son: Jesus the Son of Man (cf. John 17:23). When people come to believe that Calvary is a love story, following Jesus is compelling. The greatest act of love ever told came to a climax on a cross. It was love by God for a lost world (cf. John 3:16). It was love by Jesus for sinners (cf. 1 Timothy 1:15). The love story is one that begins and ends with the love shared between Father and Son. That is what makes the Good

News message so compelling. That dynamic core is never seen through a church where fraternal love is not dominant, where unity and mutual loyalty do not prevail. The warmth and care felt in a church can be quickly traced to the love sources in the Father and in the Son.

- The world will know that God loves and longs to embrace each sinner (cf. John 17:23). Among the deepest needs of a human person is to feel loved, wanted, and valued. God the Creator knows the need and supplies the need in offering His grace and peace in a Good News message of redemption and sanctification. A church focused on the priorities given by Jesus has the energy, resources, and freedom to focus on sharing the Good News. Her needs are being met in a fraternal relationship of love, wholeness, and loyalty.
- Jesus wanted a world brought to union with the Father. Before He defined the action, extent, content, and intent in the Great Commission He clearly defined the essential nature, priorities, and expected results. Making the union with the Father possible by His sacrifice He fully expects the Church in all ages to call all men into that saved union with the Father (cf. Matthew 28:18–20).

Conclusion

In a few words, the shepherd's aim is to help grow a church to the glory of God:

- A church whose essential nature is ministry: ministry to God, believers, and the world.
- A church whose priorities are fraternal love, life wholeness, and body oneness.
- A church whose intended results identify them as authentic believers, intent on everyone viewing Jesus as divine, loved, and commissioned of God to convince the world that God loves everyone and longs for union.

6

When Shepherds Hurt

Shepherds are men who have feelings, needs, frailties, and flaws. Although their maturity protects them from much of the “fiery darts” that are hurled at them, they can be hit and hurt. How they act and how they respond are important to their continuing leadership in the pastures of their ministry.

This chapter assumes that the shepherds under discussion are men who have matured in their personal qualities, are capable in their job descriptions, and are actively fulfilling their job standard.

Personal Qualities

According to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, these men are:

- Passionately driven to be close to the dear brethren and have stretched their resources of time and energy to do the good work of serving.
- They stand before their families to protect, inspire, and guide, being singularly devoted husbands and good instructors of their children.
- They have risen above those common, human flaws and have become exemplary in a wide range of convincing moral and relational qualities.
- They are experienced in leadership and able teachers among the brethren.
- They are a clear testimony of uprightness in the community and in all dealings with those in the world.

Job Description

According to Ezekiel 34 and Acts 20:17–38, shepherds are:

- Unselfish feeders, guides, and protectors of the flock.
- Alert to all dangers, quick to rush to the sick and wounded.
- Courageous to brave all threats to bring back those driven away and to search for those who are lost.
- Very conscious of the specific and unique attacks of Satan, watching for one another, and committing themselves to a continual search of the Word for strength and direction “*. . which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified*” (Acts 20:32).

Job Standard

According to Ephesians 4:11–16, shepherds should be accomplishing measurable results in the congregation in which they serve:

- They are inspiring and promoting opportunities for the whole church to be busy in serving others (v. 12).
- They are building a strong church that is growing in number, opening doors of mission and service, and strongly lead in sound doctrine (v. 12).
- They are leading a church through conflicts, external and internal, to be united in beliefs, values, and attitudes (v. 12).
- They are leading a church in becoming mature (v. 13) — a beatitude church (cf. Matthew 5), a love church (cf. 1 Corinthians 13) and a Spirit church (cf. Galatians 5).
- They are leading a church that is attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (v. 13) — a church that thinks, feels, and acts like Jesus.

With all of these strengths, shepherds still get hurt. They bruise and bleed like everyone else. What they do in those circumstances not only can impact the church, even for decades, but can determine how fruitful and faithful they will continue to be.

How Do Shepherds Get Hurt?

Some shepherds shoot their own feet, but most of their hurts come in being shepherds. The sources of hurts are varied: other shepherds, preachers, the sheep, and unbelievers.

Hurt by Other Shepherds

Paul spoke candidly with the “*elders of the church*” from Ephesus (Acts 20:17–30) urging them to “*... keep watch over yourselves . . . [because] from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*” There is hardly anything that hurts a shepherd more than to suffer in a split of the congregation. Deep friendships are shattered. Souls are discouraged, some quit and some are lost, never to return. Young ones witness the worst side of Christian living, with all of the consequences of such a spectacle. The good name of the Lord and His church in the community is maligned and set back by years and decades. Resources are squandered and opportunities are missed. Many members pay enormous prices in sifting through the debris of a division.

Personally, in a church division, shepherds often doubt their own leadership abilities or worthiness. They search futilely to understand why the division occurred and how the shepherds could have resolved the conflict. Some may feel rejected, unappreciated, and unwanted. Many take on themselves the full guilt in blaming themselves for the disaster and the ruin of many years of dedicated work by many people.

Paul saw the solution in three areas:

- **The shepherds must keep watch over one another** (v. 28). Though shepherds may be men of steel and well tempered in the fires of experience, they all need encouragement and affirmation from their peers, they need accountability and understanding, and they need correction and direction.
- **The shepherds must be committed to the Word** (v. 32). Whether it is a personal, systematic study of the Word, an on-line study program, a group study with other shepherds, reading or listening to sound and inspiring materials, attending Bible and Leadership lectureships, every shepherd must keep being built up in the faith and in the hope of eternal life. Each shepherd needs to be assured that his shepherding counterparts are growing in the Word and preparing to be more effective in shepherding. A shepherd's pledge to his fellow-shepherds should include being committed to the continued study of the Word.
- **The shepherds must be dedicated to selfless serving** (vv. 33–35). Like Paul, the shepherds are serving without interest in monetary gain and find a special blessing in serving the weak who cannot give back in return. The shepherds drink deeply of a personal promise of the Lord, *"It is more blessed to give than receive."*

Shepherds need, not only to spend much time together praying, serving, making decisions, leading others, and putting out fires, but they need to spend leisure time together getting to know each other better, building a deeply felt friendship, appreciating the true, inner strengths, and understanding the flaws of each other. It is inspiring to see the shepherds pray together, even as it is inspiring to see the shepherds play together. Even the sheep can appreciate the lighter moments in the lives of their shepherds.

Hurt by Preachers

The overwhelming number of preachers are God-redeemed, Christ-filled, and Spirit-gifted men. They are

pleasant to serve with, fruitful in ministry, and faithful in their teaching. No shepherd would want to do his work without the partnership of a godly, gifted, and dedicated servant evangelist. Paul put them together in a mutual ministry of building up the body of Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:1–13). Yet, shepherds are occasionally hurt in trying to work with a less willing and wrongly motivated preacher. Even more rarely, a preacher might be described as one of the “*savage wolves*” who “*come in among you and will not spare the flock*” (Acts 20:29–30). Paul’s wise admonition to shepherds was to “*be on your guard.*”

How can shepherds be on guard in all cases?

- **Close scrutiny on who is invited to serve as a preacher.** Bringing a preacher into the fellowship is one of the most crucial and problematic decisions shepherds can make. Whether the work of searching is conducted by a well-oriented Search Committee or by the shepherds themselves, a clear vision of the kind of man, the specific work to be accomplished, and the description of the life, work, and nature of the local church must be communicated to applicants. Most of over seventy-five applications a typical congregation will receive are not a “fit” for the needs of the church. The choices will most likely come down to two or three men. The decision of inviting one or more of the few remaining applicants to come for an on-site interview becomes a vastly important decision to be reached after much prayer. The final decision, with sober input from the congregation, can mean much to the future of the congregation and worthy of contrite fasting and prayer. Much can ride on the wisdom of the final choice.
- **Careful efforts to agree on clear job descriptions and job standards.**

An effort that is “born badly” can have long lasting consequences. It is imperative that both the shepherds and the new preacher will have discussed and agreed on the exact job description. To be accountable, to be accurately directed, and to be fruitful a preacher must know the expectations of the job. The shepherds and the preacher should come to grips if the man is gifted to help meet the specific needs of the church. Nothing could be more frustrating and destined to fruitlessness than for a preacher to commit himself to a set of job expectations when God has not assigned him to such ministries and has not given him the Spirit-given potential to accomplish them. Nothing could be more unfair and unfraternal than for shepherds to call a man to do what the man is not gifted to perform.

Equally as important to the job description is the job standard. The shepherds and the preacher should have clearly in mind what is the expected outcome of their mutual work. By use of the job standard, they should be able to determine if the mutual ministry is achieving the standard expectation. To make sure that the standard is not human-originated, shepherds and preachers have been given the job standard in Ephesians 4:11–13:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors [shepherds] and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

From this text, it is clear that shepherds and evangelists working together should be able to see God bringing the increase in the following ways:

- A church busy in serving others (v. 12).

- A church being built up (v. 12).
- A church growing toward unity in the faith (v. 12).
- A church becoming mature (v. 13).
- A church attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (v. 13).

For the preacher, specific emphasis will have to be placed on his effectiveness in preaching, teaching, evangelism, and reaching out to the members in need.

Hurt by the Sheep

If the shepherds are truly **among the sheep** they will sometimes get hurt. Fighting against those attacking the sheep, going to dangerous places where sheep have fallen, getting in the middle of two sheep fighting, getting hit inadvertently as sheep are rushing to feed or drink are just a few of the ways that shepherds can be hurt serving the sheep. Every shepherd knows of the dangers, readily accepts the real possibilities, and finds the greater blessing of giving rather than receiving.

Is there nothing else to be said? Is there something that can be done to lessen the hurts or to heal from the hurts?

- **Members must be taught their responsibilities as sheep.** Much is said about shepherd responsibilities. Too little is taught about sheep responsibilities to their leaders. In Hebrews 13 there is a treasure trove of teachings for members in fulfilling their responsibilities to leaders:

- ▶ Members are to “*remember*” their leaders, literally, look to them with feeling (v. 7).
- ▶ Members are to “*consider*” (study carefully) the lives of their leaders. They are not to dwell on the day-by-day flaws but on the “*outcome*” of their lives. They are to see what their leaders have achieved over the length of their life and service (v. 7).
- ▶ Members are not to criticize or diminish their leaders, but to “*imitate their faith*” (v. 7).

- ▶ Members are to have confidence in their leaders. Literally, the Greek verb teaches members “to cause themselves to believe” in their leaders, to take the personal initiative to believe in, give the benefit of the doubt, not to believe every rumor or impugn the motive in every unanswered question (v. 17).
- ▶ Members are to “*submit to their authority*” that has been given to the leaders to carry out their responsibilities. The word, as in the case of the submission of a wife to her husband (cf. Ephesians 5:22), means to “voluntarily arrange your life in response to.” The reason cited was that the leaders have the heavy responsibility of watching for the souls of members and must give an account for them (v. 17).
- ▶ Members must be committed to making the work of their leaders a “*joy and not a burden*” (v. 17).

Added to this selection in Hebrews would be 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 (NIV):

Now we ask you brothers [and sisters], to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other” (cf. 1 Timothy 5:12–14).

- **Members must be motivated in doing good.** Grandma said, “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” Paul said “... *be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 15:58, NKJV). Members who are fruitfully serving in meaningful ministries have little time and less desire to hurt the shepherds or anybody else. Good planning, active leadership, exemplary modeling, and budgeting adequate ministry resources go a long ways in reducing the frustrations out of which many members lash out at shepherds.

- **Members must be affirmed in their growth.** Significance comes from doing meaningful things that are recognized and acknowledged by people of regard. Shepherds who are attentive to the many good things that are being done by faithful members and are expressive in affirming the members privately and publicly will exponentially feel lessened resistance and hurtful acts.
- **Members must be cared for by the shepherds.** The sheep of Ezekiel 34 who were being neglected and abused by the shepherds of God would soon lose whatever regard and warmth of feeling they might have had. That loss of respect and dependence sets up the context for resistance and rebellion and consequently hurt to the shepherds. When sheep know that shepherds are watching for their soul's benefit, that they are working hard in the Lord on their behalf, and are making a good report to the Chief Shepherd they will believe in, respect, love, and submit to the responsibility oriented authority of the shepherds (cf. Hebrews 13:7–17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13).

Hurt by Unbelievers

There is hurt to be expected from outside the family of God. They have no commitments, no covenants, no basis of gratitude, lesser values, and little spiritual knowledge of the shepherds. For the most part they may not have submitted to God and will feel no obligation to spare a shepherd from hurt. A shepherd is another number, another customer, a man across town and may not have done anything recently to merit special attention. Worst, unbelievers may feel hostility to religious leaders and leaders of a particular, local church because of some real or perceived hurt that was incurred in the unbeliever's family. Nonetheless, a shepherd will do good to all men whenever he has the opportunity (cf. Galatians 6:10). He will love his enemies and pray for those who make life difficult for him (cf. Matthew 5:43–44). He will look beyond the sinful

and broken lives of unbelievers and any hurts they cause and see that they, too, can be washed, sanctified, and justified “.. . *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God,*” even as each member has joyfully experienced (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:11).

How Do Shepherds Heal from Their Hurts?

After all has been done that a shepherd can do to lessen the occurrence and severity of hurts from any source, there remains the fact that shepherds must have the maturity to heal as quickly and as well as possible. Hurts will come no matter what happens. A concern that is greater than the fact of hurts is the necessity that shepherds be whole, healed, forgiving, and ready for reconciliation. Few things limit and even destroy the work of shepherds any more than their slowness or inability to process their hurts and heal. A bitter, resentful, defensive, or vindictive shepherd is a threat to everything that is holy and right in the family of God.

How can a shepherd heal? There is a seven step process that will work for any person who has incurred a hurt. Basically, he must learn to process the anger that comes in a hurtful situation and consistently turn it into understanding, acceptance, forgiveness, and service. Anger management is a choice. A choice of forgiveness and reconciliation or a progressive and hurtful ill will, a retaliatory defensiveness, or even, repressive retribution.

- A choice to be honest, to acknowledge hurt and anger.
- A choice to make a healthy response, to repress, to explode, or to give direction and control to hurt emotions.
- A choice to confront the hurt, to verify if it is real or perceived, if it is important, if it is current or in the past.
- A choice to understand the offender, to put in context the significant hurts that have been verified, to ask “why” questions.

- A choice to desire the best for the offender, to practice the Calvary choice on behalf of the offender, to practice love.
- A choice to forgive the offense, to stand at the side of the offender as a defense attorney and plead the case for clemency.
- A choice to confirm the forgiveness in word and in deed, to decide to be a servant and assume some responsibility in the rehabilitation of the offender.
- A choice to maintain vigilance and discipline in anger management from future hurts, to practice the preceding principles each time that new hurts occur.

A healed shepherd is able to help others who are hurt to discover the joys of being healed. He is able to serve with a more robust, enduring, and patient spirit. He is less defensive in facing criticisms. He is more courageous in facing threats. He stays longer at his shepherding job than those who know less how to heal. He leaves a legacy of tenderness, compassion, and love, long to be remembered by the lives he has touched.

Conclusion

Profile studies indicate that 45 percent of church leaders do not know how to heal. No wonder shepherds do not last long, on the average, in leading congregations. No wonder, too often, some shepherds have a reoccurring history of causing friction in churches. No wonder many shepherds withdraw from shepherding with bitterness, ill-will, resentfulness, and feelings of defeat and being unappreciated. All shepherds will get hurt. It is the Lord's intent that all shepherds will find healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Being whole, they will serve long, they will serve well, and they will enjoy the memories of having served faithfully.

When Shepherds Work Together

The Chief Shepherd is watching over the whole flock of God. All shepherds in the individual congregations work under His grace. When shepherds work together feeding, guiding, and protecting the flock the purposes of God are empowered and rich harvest times are frequent.

What Do Shepherds Do Together?

No one wisely begins a new job without a clear definition of the job he is to perform. No set of congregational shepherds can work effectively and fruitfully together without all of them knowing that they are under divine mandate to accomplish specific assignments. They must be similarly committed to fulfill their responsibilities. The problem of the fated shepherds in Ezekiel 34 was that they knew what God required but were more guided by their greed than by their devotion to their assigned mission.

In Chapter Three, The Work of a Shepherd, the job description was discussed in some detail. The nouns used in Scripture designate the work of a leader:

- *elder* — a wise, perceptive counselor.
- *overseer* — one who stays near the people as a mentor and guide.
- *shepherd* — one who sustains the needs of the people.
- *leader* — one who stands before the people as a model, defender, and guide.
- *steward* — one who manages the household of God.

The verbs seen in Ezekiel 34 and Acts 20 used in relation to leaders accurately reveal the expectations of God for those accepting His call to spiritual leadership. Before developing the theme of this chapter, note the outlines for the job descriptions taken from both the Old and New Testaments. These outlines review what has been studied so the practical sides of working together can be developed.

Ezekiel 34:4–5

The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd . . . (NKJV).

- Strengthen (feed) the flock.
- Bring healing to the sick.
- Bind up the wounded.
- Bring back those driven away.
- Search for the lost.

Acts 20:17–38

... Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God . . . be on your guard! . . . by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

- Be attentive to the faithfulness of fellow shepherds (v. 28).
- Keep a close watch over all sheep of the flock (v. 28).
- Feed, sustain each sheep, individually (v. 28).
- Be vigilant to every conceivable threat to the sheep (v.29–31).
- Pursue greater strength and hope in a vibrant relationship with God (v. 35).
- Support the weak (v. 35).
- Enjoy the blessing of unselfishly helping those who have nothing to give in return (v.35).

Shepherds who work together must have the skills, commitment, and common vision of accomplishing each of the job assignments in the growth of the church.

A Working Plan for Shepherds

There are some imperative principles that must guide shepherds in working together.

Imperative One: Shepherds being mutually supportive in encouraging continued growth among themselves.

A phenomenon of leadership in any field is that men arriving at the top of their profession quit studying. In part, it is because of the added responsibilities of the appointment that leaves less time than before to pursue learning opportunities. With some “on the way up the ladder” there was a driving desire to excel which required adding new skill-sets and becoming expert in select areas of work. Paul, in any regard, emphasized the value of continued growth when he committed

the Ephesian elders: “*Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*” (Acts 20:32, NIV). There is no time in which one can choose to quit learning.

- Most elders feel it is right and productive to spend church money to educate children and youth, even adults, but are hesitant to include budgeted funds to underwrite their attendance at leadership seminars and Bible lectureships.
- Some elders encourage the building of a church library but do not insist on good leadership books and materials being included.
- A look at an elder’s personal, home library and counting the number of good books on biblical studies and leadership is a fairly good commentary on his commitment to his own growth.
- The reading practices of an elder of materials designed to promote his growth speaks volumes on his understanding of the need of the church to have growing leaders.

Good shepherds are in constant search of pastures for feeding the flock. So, growing shepherds spend disciplined time in personal and group prayer, in personal and group study, and in searching widely for things to learn that will enhance their giftedness and skills.

Imperative Two: Shepherds sharing a common vision, with committed goals.

A team of horses must pull together, pacing itself to maximize its strengths. A football team must have a common vision of winning, a shared goal to reach, and a united plan of action. The higher purposes of a group of shepherds demands no less unity.

- Shepherds need to spend some quality time to claim a united vision and renew it periodically. The vision must overarch every major decision and drive the shepherds forward in difficult times. New shepherds must “buy into” the vision and enthusiastically contribute their enriched part. Evaluation time must be devoted to see if the vision is being faithfully pursued and what might be needed to accelerate the accomplishment of the vision.
- A vision without specific goals remains a powerless dream. Goals without a powerful vision chase after illusions with only short term and shallow results. Well shaped goals are desired results that are consistent to an overarching vision. If the vision is “honoring God with all of our might,” then, on a weekly basis, what does that look like? What are the specific end results that must occur?

Good shepherds keep a worthy vision before the church, repeat it often in their shepherd meetings and prayers, and return regularly to measure their faithfulness to the vision. Invariably, a church that is wandering has lost her vision, having no end results in mind. Renewal and resurging growth begins with a rediscovery of a compelling vision and setting some worthy goals. Accomplished goals are either revised and increased or replaced by new and challenging goals. A valid vision may remain the same.

Imperative Three: Shepherds being mutually determined to build the church by building each member according to the God-given giftedness of each.

Church attendance, Bible study, and ministry projects often become an end within themselves, even as many church activities are self-serving. There is no substitute for the goal to build a church in strength, in ministry, in number, and in honor of God. An imperative initiative in building a church is by starting with each member. The church is built one-by-one, member-by-member, from within each.

- God has designed each member for specific functions within the body (cf. Romans 12:3–8; Ephesians 4:11–13; 1 Peter 4:10). It is imperative that the shepherds are determined that every member discover, develop, and employ the God-given, ministry gifts. Shepherds must provide the environment of encouragement, development, and involvement for each member to grow.
- Shepherds must avoid micro-managing the flock, but rather they should involve every individual in ministering and decision making. As the members claim ownership of ministries, they will grow and the work will be more fruitful.
- A work must not be built around a dynamic preacher or a dominant eldership, but rather on the activities and resources of the gifted members.
- Shepherds must be patient and tolerant as members make mistakes while they are learning to serve. However, invested members are the most valuable assets of a growing church. They become invested through developing their gifts and devoting them in the growth of the church.

Good shepherds know that the church is no stronger than the combined strength of individual members who have discovered, developed, and employed their God-given gifts of service.

Imperative Four: Shepherds being committed to gaining a united approach to the understanding of Scriptures.

Any movement that successfully reaches its goals is united in shared beliefs. Both energy and resources are poorly spent when shepherds are divided in the identity and importance of core beliefs. They can be frequently distracted by issues that are given undeserved importance unless they are united in their approach to understanding the Scriptures.

- It is imperative that all shepherds of a local church are informed and committed believers in the fundamental truths of Scripture: divinely and verbally inspired, in errantly revealed, historically trustworthy, prophetically true, believable miracles, normative and currently relative (1 Peter 1:22–25; 2 Peter 1:19–21; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).
- It is imperative that all shepherds have come to a crucial understanding of the essential and supporting truths of the Scriptures, distinguishing them from what is true but not normative for all time and circumstance.
- It is imperative that all shepherds have the maturity in acknowledging the differences between revealed and normative truths and personal preferences and unsupported opinions.
- It is imperative that all shepherds value the unity of the church over insisting on views that are poorly supported and questionable in interpretation, with the potential of dividing the flock.
- It is imperative that all shepherds are life-style students of the Word and frequently study together. It is pointedly important that shepherds know the values and beliefs of the other shepherds.

It is important that the shepherds lead with one mind and are similarly submitted to Christ. This essentiality can only be achieved with study that leads to a unity of purpose, a unity of values, and a unity of core beliefs (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10).

Imperative Five: Shepherds learning better each year how to manage conflict among themselves and in the flock.

Unmanaged conflicts destroy momentum, waste resources, divide a flock, and destroy relationships. It causes the biggest tragedies in the loss of souls, the shame poured on the church before the community and the dishonor to God. The majority of church divisions result from mismanaged conflict. Divisions

are usually avoidable when the shepherds know how to reconcile differences, either among themselves or in the congregation.

- Shepherds must know that conflict is unavoidable because of the expected differences in the flock. In every flock there are different levels of maturity, different experiences, different ministry gifts, different ministry approaches, different perspectives, and good, but different purposes. Members must be taught how to appreciate the diversities among them.
- Shepherds must know how to channel conflicts toward creativity, innovation, and united efforts. Differences in the flock can be honored and, at the same time, they can be blended together to achieve a better, end result.
- Shepherds must lead the flock toward a unity of vision and purpose and establish a covenant of fraternity that bonds them together. Such unity and fraternal esteem help guard against conflicts going to an extreme.
- Shepherds must communicate clearly and often, both to the whole flock and to individuals that need extra attention. Appropriately informed members are less likely to make hasty judgments and inflammatory statements that create an environment for injurious conflict.
- Shepherds must be wise and willing to go to contentious members to determine the sources of their conflict and deal humbly and candidly with the unmet, felt need. It may be a need for information, a need of biblical instruction, a need to be valued, or a need of caring discipline.
- Shepherds must be purposely attentive to the instruction being given to the flock. Sound, comprehensive, and balanced instruction is a major builder of unity and is an effective deterrent to conflict. Particular attention must be constantly focused on the pulpit. One man has the eyes and ears and, most often, the heart of the whole congregation every week. In that role he will most often have the greater

influence on building unity and promoting peace or sowing seeds of division.

Conflict is an opportunity to bring people together in meaningful and positive initiatives. Loving shepherds, well schooled in the Word and in working with diverse people, can make conflict a moment of growth and fruitfulness.

Imperative Six: Shepherds knowing the central importance of spiritual formation in promoting God-honoring church growth.

Too often church leaders commit to growing a church based on “consumerism” strategies, on “build a large building and they will come” philosophy, or hire a charismatic preacher to attract “high end” givers and prestigious, community figures. Time has confirmed that church growth must be centered in a people who have centered their lives and principles in Christ and have found in Him the answer to their every need.

- Shepherds know that spiritual formation does not occur in isolation. Rather, it is experienced through growing Bible knowledge, inspiring worship, sacrificial giving, service to others, and in evangelism, domestic and global. Thus, they will work hard to provide every member the opportunities for growth found in each of the five doorways to spirituality.
- Shepherds know that people will only grow in spirituality by focusing on the fundamentals of spiritual living: walking in the way of the cross, living a life-style of repentance, being a life-long student of the Word, being a servant believer, learning to forgive, becoming whole in all relations, choosing the pathway of freedom in Christ, and living in the hope of eternal life. These will lead each person in these “pastures” of life and ministry.
- Shepherds know that the spiritually mature people of history have persisted in the Christian disciplines of prayer, giving, meditation, and fasting. They will model

such disciplines and will urge all members to persist along these avenues of spiritual formation.

Imperative Seven: Shepherds being tirelessly focused on developing leaders in ministry and shepherding.

In professional baseball, it is said that a team can never have too many quality pitchers. So much depends on pitching in the success of a team. Churches cannot do well without a sufficiently, constant number and quality of leaders. The “leadership pipeline” must be full of developing leaders at every stage of the congregation membership.

- Training classes in leadership in the local church should be regularly and continually conducted.
- Leadership seminars for appointed leaders (deacons, elders) should be annually scheduled in the church calendar.
- A specific and significant allocation in the annual budget should be given to leadership development.
- Developing leaders need to be encouraged in attending brotherhood functions designed to promote leadership growth. Financial aid should be considered.
- Leadership materials need to be provided for growing leaders.

The shepherds must be an example of growth and continuing development as an inspiration to all others in the church. Shepherds should be models in being ahead in knowledge, developed skills, technological advances, and excitement about growing.

Supplementary Considerations

There is an endless number of suggestions that can enhance the effectiveness of shepherds working together. Each is open to discussion and will vary in application. They come

out of the experiences of shepherding by many others. None of them rise to the level of what is biblically normative. One should take and use them if they seem to work in a given situation.

Consideration One: Develop principles of shepherding meetings. Shepherds must meet regularly to consult on their work among the flock, to assess the needs of each sheep, and to remove barriers to the fertile pastures of growth. Because time is of value the meetings need to be orderly, focused, and prioritized. Some guidelines need to be clearly understood and ascribed to by all shepherds:

- One shepherd needs to be made responsible for bringing the meeting agenda together, getting it in the hands of each shepherd, and presiding over the meeting.
- One shepherd needs to be made responsible for recording and distributing the notes on each meeting, regular or special. The internet could be used for e-reports and storing, along with enhancing much of the shepherding communication.
- While a full consensus on all decisions is desirable and usually worth the fullest of discussion to finalize a matter, an agreement needs to be reached of what constitutes a majority vote. There may be some stated matters that would require all of the shepherds to reach a consensus (employment matters, significant financial commitment, disciplinary actions, and others). Without some understanding of how to break an impasse the minority will always determine the direction of the church.
- The percentage of shepherds that would be required to establish a quorum would need to be agreed upon to determine when a decision can be made.
- All decisions made by the majority of shepherds become unanimous decisions, as far as any outside of the meeting are concerned. No shepherd should speak of the differences outside the meeting. Unless, there are new and

valid considerations, no shepherd in the minority should continue to press his views on the decision. Only, if agreed by the majority of shepherds, should a previous decision be reopened for discussion.

- All discussions should be conducted with care, candor, courage, and with a full commitment to a shepherding covenant of fraternal love and sensitivity. No shepherd will try to intimidate the other shepherds with anger, threats, or stubborn withdrawals.
- Responsibilities must be designated by name and date of completion in order to assure a decision being implemented and accountability being established. Follow-up reports must be required to keep all shepherds fully informed on the progress of each decision.
- All shepherds should have a voice in a discussion but no one voice should rule.

To be sure, shepherding meetings are not the most important aspect of leadership. Yet, when done they need to be done with purpose and productivity.

Consideration Two: Develop a system of shepherding responsibilities. What is everybody's business is nobody's business. Every shepherd needs to have a designated responsibility, complete with accountability for getting it done promptly and well.

- One system may be to have each shepherd coordinating several ministries, with each ministry charged to the guidance of a deacon and a group of workers.
- One system may be to have several shepherds working together in overseeing a ministry with guidelines, a budget, and assigned workers. They would be responsible to make decisions within the guidelines and be periodically accountable to the whole group of shepherds.
- One system may be to rotate the chairmanship of ministries among the shepherds so each shepherd, in a

matter of several years, may know both the workers and the nature and value of all of the ministries.

- One system may start with determining the giftedness of each shepherd and assigning him to work in the oversight of a ministry in which his primary giftedness best relates.

Whatever the system, shepherds must be informed, involved, responsible, and accountable. They must be nearby mentors (*episkopoi*) or overseeing the flock, not indifferently “overlooking” the flock!

Consideration Three: Develop shepherding assignments based on giftedness. As ministry programs must be planned around gifted members and according to their individual giftedness, so shepherds will best work in the areas in which they are primarily gifted.

- A shepherd will probably be richly gifted in a number of areas and can work effectively in multiple ministries, but he still must be careful to work most where he is gifted the greatest.
- A shepherd is called to serve because he has gained skills in serving over a period of years. Yet, he should continue learning how he can better use his giftedness.
- A shepherd needs to mentor those who are gifted in his same areas of giftedness and model before them an effective use of ministry gifts.

The other shepherds should know the areas of giftedness of their fellow shepherds and encourage them to focus where God has assigned them to serve.

Consideration Four: Develop shepherding friendships. Shepherds need to pray together. So should they play together. All work and no play can stifle shepherds as it does younger boys. They need to develop a friendship and find joy in leisure time together.

- Shepherds need to find commonality of interests, both as a group and between others in the group of shepherds. It may be sports, it may be travel, it may be in select vacationing, or it may be in shared hobbies or other creative endeavors.
- Shepherds need to draw on the full value of sharing a dinner table together, free from talking about the business of the flock.
- Shepherds need to encourage their wives both to join them in moments of leisure or to share time together as shepherd wives.
- Shepherds need to look for opportunities to encourage, commend, and comfort one another, using all of the tools of communication available.
- Shepherds, as good friends, need to learn about the lives, accomplishments, defeats, hopes, and opportunities of their fellow shepherds.

Good shepherds know that rewarding friendships are built by genuinely caring about one another and accepting one another against the known backdrop of one's life.

Consideration Five: Develop plans for keeping each shepherd strong and effective. Paul encouraged the Ephesian elders to watch out for each other (cf. Acts 20:28ff). Satan is eager to catch a shepherd of God's flock in an unguarded moment as a wolf attacks a sheep. Fellow shepherds guard the backside of each of the other shepherds.

- Shepherds dare not forget to pray earnestly and continually for the other shepherds.
- Shepherds dare not fail to be attentive to beginning trends signaling trouble in the life of another shepherd.
- Shepherds dare not overlook the need to study together and build up the faith of one another.

- Shepherds dare not linger in seeking the forgiveness of another shepherd against whom they may have been offensive.
- Shepherds dare not default in practicing the principle of Matthew 18:15 as it may regard a fellow elder.
- Shepherds dare not underestimate the regular need for attending seminars or being involved in a growth challenging event.
- Shepherds dare not wait too long in encouraging a shepherd to take a sabbatical to regain strength or to work through a crippling problem.

Shepherds are in the best position of nearness, knowledge, and concern to look out for one another. Any threat against one shepherd is a threat against the whole group of shepherds. The avoidable loss of one shepherd is a loss that impacts all of the shepherds and the flock.

Consideration Six: Develop an exit strategy from shepherding that is wise and affirming. One of the most delicate and difficult passages is when a shepherd needs to pass on the baton of shepherding to others. Such a passage may be necessitated by health, age, ineffectiveness, over commitment, or worse, lapses in morals or doctrine.

- Some congregations elect shepherds for terms, renewable on confirmation by the flock: first term for two or three years, if confirmed, the next term for three or four years, and so on. The terms might be staggered so only a few shepherds come up for confirmation each cycle.
- Some congregations set a terminal age at which time a shepherd automatically yields his shepherding responsibilities.
- Some congregations expect their shepherds to be candid to one another in gently asking another shepherd to resign.
- Some congregations expect a shepherd in his maturity and wisdom to remove himself from the role of shepherding,

- but they lovingly accept any deficits that result from his continuing in service.

The point of this discussion is that what is best for the flock, what is honorable to a faithful shepherd, or what makes one's decision the least stressful should be seriously considered by the faithful brethren.

Consideration Seven: Develop a mind set that honors shepherds on the sidelines. One day or another, all shepherds come to an end of their usefulness and fruitfulness. Whether we honor them in death or honor them as the men who love the flock but are no longer able to do what is needful, a grateful flock and loving fellow shepherds need to excel in their gratefulness to past shepherds for the years served.

- Out of gratefulness, a flock needs to occasionally honor past shepherds as a living part of the history of the flock, both in public events or smaller group settings.
- Out of gratefulness, continuing shepherds need to treasure the wisdom of the past shepherds and consult with them in select situations and invite them to be a part of special events.
- Out of gratefulness, the younger members of the flock need to know what the past shepherds have meant to the well-being of the flock.
- Out of gratefulness, the past shepherds should be invited to continue in some level of service in which they once excelled and still can make a contribution.
- Out of gratefulness, for those who are deceased, their widows should be lauded for their heroism and selfless service in the history of the church.

A grateful people reflect love in practice. A grateful people express themselves in what they value. A grateful people will put into practice what they applaud. A grateful people enjoy the

smile of an approving God who wants His people to honor and love one another.

Conclusion

Shepherds who work well together are one of the most promising basis for hope of a healthy and well fed flock. Only by working together can shepherds keep the needs of the sheep front and center of every plan and action. In working together, there is a minimum loss of sheep. There is the optimum use of resources. Threats are early detected and promptly defeated. The best pastures along calming streams are always before the flock. Back in the fold there is safety, warmth, and rest. In working together, shepherds can devote their best efforts to making every thought and every initiative count toward achieving unity and peace among shepherds and in the congregation. God is most honored and His will is most accomplished by shepherds who work together.

PART TWO

Focusing on the Sheep:

The Fold of the Sheep

Among the Sheep

Endangered Sheep

The Faithful Sheep

The Shepherd's Joy

The Fold of the Sheep

In pastoral conversation the fold is the place of safety, the place of renewal, and the place of growth. It is a shelter in a storm and a place where greater closeness is felt with the other sheep and with the shepherds. It is the place for the sheep to come back to after a day in the field and after facing dangers. A good shepherd keeps every sheep close to the fold and works to keep the fold a desired home and a place of fond memories.

The Fold, the Church, is a place where:

- Love prevails.
- A spirit of servanthood is in constant display.
- An attitude of caring touches every action.
- A readiness to forgive every hurt is active.
- A community of peace in which conflict is transformed into reconciliation.
- A warming welcome awaits every new member of the flock.
- All of the sheep adore the Chief Shepherd.
- All the sheep are obedient to His leadership.
- The flock finds their place in the Fold.

The Sheep Must Understand the Value of the Church

The Church must be something more than a social meeting place, a family tradition, or a place where ulterior motives are at work. It must be dear to members for profoundly deep and valued reasons:

- The Church was dear to our Lord, so dear that he died to give her birth.
- The Church was dear to the Spirit, so dear that He fulfilled His mandate to empower her and direct her by apostolic teachings, spoken and written.
- The Church was dear to generations of faithful believers across the centuries, so dear that they died that she might carry the saving message of Jesus to the nations.
- The Church was so dear to early, nineteenth century reformers that they began a continuing struggle to restore the Church's nature, her purpose, the apostolic practices in godly living, in worship, in the message, in the evangelistic fervor, and in doing good.

That quest must continue so there will be an increased focus on building strong, healthy churches that will be called the “...*pillar and foundation of truth*” (1 Timothy 3:15). That endeavor will require increased numbers of faithful members to give themselves in selfless service.

The Sheep Must Be Committed to Church Growth

Shepherds can make a difference in the survival and fruitfulness of the church by helping the members to understand what is needed and how to promote church growth. The sheep of God’s fold must be committed to the principles of church growth. There are ten principles introduced in the following pages that shepherds can teach the members.

- **The Affirmation of Biblical Beliefs.** A growing, healthy church must preserve her distinct identity in a confused religious world. She must give pointed attention to her unity and proficiency in knowing and carrying out her purpose. She must be careful to progress in spiritual growth, moral integrity, and family building. All of this must keep pace with her growing knowledge and fidelity to the biblical beliefs as revealed by divine inspiration in

the Word. The affirmation of these biblical beliefs will not just happen. The affirmation must be intentional.

- ▶ Shepherds must keep the pulpit faithful, alive, and on fire in expositarily preaching, with informative, convicting, and persuasive proclamation.
- ▶ Shepherds must encourage the study habits of the members to be disciplined, systematic, in-depth, and comprehensive, with Bible reading at the core.
- ▶ Shepherds must keep an emphasis on the centrality of the Bible in the didactical life of the church, being constantly demonstrated in every discussion, decision, and design.
- **The Infusion of a Hunger for God.** Rising to the stature of Jesus and becoming like Him in His reflection of God (cf. John 14:7–11, Hebrews 1:1–3) is the very essence of the Christian faith and what it most ardently wants to share with the world. The Psalmist described the longing for God in Psalms 42:1–2:

As the deer pants for the streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

- ▶ Shepherds must help members learn how to fast and pray and draw near to God in worship.
- ▶ Shepherds must encourage members to make regular visits to the Book of Psalms and some of the great writings on the Psalms (e.g. Treasures of David by Spurgeon) to stimulate a hunger for God.
- ▶ Shepherds must constantly urge the preachers to present deeper studies into the names of God to help the church explode with understanding of the extraordinary nature of Jehovah God.

- **The Development of Healthy Members.** Those new converts coming out of the world and into the church are often marked by sin and dysfunction. Families within the church have not always developed fully, functioning people. Christ, who increasingly comes to the center of our lives, brings harmony, direction, and a harvest of values and virtues.
 - ▶ Shepherds must lead members in a continual study of the Bible to confront Christ in the Word. These daily confrontations demand self-examination, devotion to prayer, and mutual confession to one another. These reoccurring disciplines ultimately bring members to good health.
 - ▶ Shepherds must help members to identify areas of needed growth through effective Christian counseling and personality testing.
- **The Focus on Brotherly Love as a Signature Statement of the Church.** With Christ's love serving as the standard, Christians are to affirm our identity as His disciples with our quality of love for one another (cf. John 13:34–35). Without fraternal love, all of our other attributes and exercises of faith are hollow and annoying (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1–3).
 - ▶ Shepherds should instruct members how to find biblical models for developing healthy mind-sets by which they can build good relations in the body (cf. Philippians 4:8).
 - ▶ Shepherds should lead in a study of the harvest of qualities that members are to lovingly share with their spiritual siblings and so model Christ (cf. Galatians 5:20–21).
- **The Development of an Inspiring Worship.** God-centered worship is the prerequisite for growing healthy churches. Members come to worship to fill their hearts

with God and go out to share Him with every person they meet. Growing churches exalt God in their worship assemblies, they celebrate His works, they renew their commitments, and they draw other worshipers to God.

- ▶ Shepherds must be, in heart, knowledge, and skills, a major catalysis in achieving an inspiring worship service.
- ▶ Shepherds need to lead the church in each of the eight pathways of worship (adoration, praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession, commitment, and meditation). They can, thereby, fully develop an inspiring worship that is rich in content, in purpose, and in desired outcomes.
- **The Creation of a Passion for Lost Souls.** Moving closer to the heart of God inflames one with a passion for lost souls. The members must understand how God prepared the Scheme of Redemption through the ages, how He sent his Son to die for their redemption, and how He created the church to seek and nurture souls until Christ comes again.
 - ▶ Shepherds must teach the priorities of soul winning from the Word. Church buildings have to be maintained at great expense but they still crumble or must be replaced in time. Souls live forever.
 - ▶ Shepherds must teach all members to long for lost souls, to help train a select number to seek the lost, to model in sowing the Seed, and to share in gathering the harvest. Shepherds must be dedicated models and teachers of soul winning.
- **The Planned Growth of an Empowering Leadership.** Good leaders see visions of a growing church. They make growth plans and study how to finance and implement the plans. However, just as important, they know that

members must be trained, motivated, involved, empowered, and led to fulfilling objectives.

- ▶ Shepherds know the answer to the argument whether good leaders are born or made? The fact is good leaders are not born already made. They have to be trained.
 - ▶ Shepherds know that the cycle of leadership training must be pursued from convert, to involved member, to core and active member, to a deacon, and on to an elder.
 - ▶ Shepherds must understand that the Scriptural agenda for mature development must be held before the congregation at all times (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9).
- **The Involvement of Members According to their Giftedness.** God, in His sovereign will, has bestowed His gifts in ministry. Each gift is a Kingdom assignment. He empowers the gifts through training, develops them through ministry opportunities, further shapes them through Body Life, and through His presence. He, thereby, equips the church to accomplish His will in the world.
 - ▶ Shepherds are in a good position to help people to believe that each is a gifted person (cf. Romans 12:6–8; Ephesians 4:11–13; 1 Peter 4:10–11; 1 Corinthians 12).
 - ▶ Shepherds can help the members understand that in their humanity God has gifted them but, by redemption, their gifts become Kingdom assignments. The members, then, become Kingdom bound to identify, develop, and employ their giftedness.
 - ▶ Shepherds can help the members identify their ministry giftedness. The identification of their gifts can be accomplished by observation, fulfilling experiences, and fruitful labors. The identification can be accelerated by Ministry Gifts profiling (www.Teamministry.com).

- **The Training of Members in Conflict Management.** What Satan cannot block, make difficult, or retard with external resources he stirs up conflict internally to destroy every good effort within the Church. Effective conflict management is one of the great imperatives for healthy, growing churches. The church is first and last a community of peace makers (cf. Matthew 5:9). One of the most needed spiritual traits of every member is to learn how to turn the adversity of conflict into positive diversity.
 - ▶ Shepherds need to be teachers of conflict management for the good health and progress of the church and to maximize growth resources.
 - ▶ Shepherds need to make conflict resolution a theme in preaching, a course in the teaching curriculum, a part of marriage and parenting counseling, and a choice, library section at home or church.
- **The Formation of a Unifying Vision.** Beyond taking care of business, a church must unite on an all-consuming vision, identify a singular purpose for the church to exist and develop specific and challenging goals that are consistent with the purpose statement.
 - ▶ Shepherds need to be sure they have acquired the training to unite the church around this triple growth challenge: vision, purpose, and goals.
 - ▶ Shepherds need to convict the members that they can do good and lasting things when given a purpose. Aimless ministry and living seldom result in any thing getting done that is consistent with the potential of the church.
 - ▶ Shepherds need to keep the vision, purpose, and goals vividly before the church by means of sermons, visual materials around the building, the church bulletin masthead, calling cards, telephone advertising, and other methods.

- ▶ Shepherds, every three-to-five years, need to lead in renewing or revising and reforming a group agreement on the congregational vision, the purpose to pursue and the goals to be reached.

A church will be given every opportunity to grow continually and steadily if the ten principles are being taught and modeled by the shepherds.

- **Members Must Be Led to Understand the Dynamics of a Growing Church.** The following are some shepherd-driven characteristics of healthy, dynamic churches around the world:
 - ▶ A church must hear evangelistic messages regularly taught from the local pulpit. The preacher, right or wrong, has the eyes and ears of the congregation by virtue of the preaching assignment. The church will be as evangelistic as it is challenged to be by the preaching.
 - ▶ The church must spend more time in the Word. Not simply more hours spent in reading the Word, but studying the Scriptures more from the vantage point of evangelism. The Book of Acts is the classic book on evangelism and church planting. Jesus was the Evangelist of Galilee and Paul was a world traveler in search of souls.
 - ▶ A church must become more driven and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As long as the early Church yielded to the Spirit and took His sword into battle, She grew rapidly. The Church today must not be as ignorant of the Holy Spirit as were those disciples at Ephesus in Acts 19.
 - ▶ The church must have more teaching on the stewardship of time and money to combat the materialism that has men in its grip and also to infuse the joy of giving and the excitement of seeing what increased giving can do for a body. People get excited and more convicted in

giving when more of it is directed to soul winning than to bricks and mortar.

- ▶ The church must focus her attention on the big picture, the most pressing priorities, and the most essential matters in life and faith. Every time Christians let themselves become engrossed in things that will amount to nothing five minutes after they are dead, they become that much less a soul-searching church. If negative views become their mantra, the fervor for soul winning dries up to nothing.
- ▶ The church must stretch her sights, enlarge her vision, and lift her horizons to know that She is to be global in her evangelistic outreach. It was “*the whole world*” and “*every creature*” to whom Jesus assigned the Church to take the Gospel. To be sure, being brightest at home enables Christians to throw the light further, but it is not “either-or.” The Church must be committed to both a local, evangelistic fervor and a global outreach.
- ▶ A church must have leaders who are united in firmly believing in each of the above statements and urge the fellowship of believers to pursue each of these realities.

Jesus left this earth wanting His disciples to share with Him in a world-wide enterprise dedicated to saving every soul possible, in every nation, and in every tribe. He sits in glory with the pointed desire that every convert be brought to fullness in Him and every local church be a healthy, thriving, and growing people. He yearns to see His world brought to the enjoyment of grace through global preaching and church growth.

Conclusion

Members, led by spiritual shepherds, know that the Church belongs to God and know that they are responsible stewards of her purpose and treasured resources. With this basic knowledge they will search incessantly to learn what to do to promote growth and fruitfulness. They understand that they are custodians of her nature and destiny. And they will work with all of their might, with urgency and care.

Among the Sheep

The more frequent view of the elders of a church is a group of men who make decisions and are seen at most public assemblies hurrying back and forth to make sure their decisions are being understood and implemented. A better example of biblical shepherding is a shepherd who can touch the hurts, day or night, and go to the sheep wherever it is hurt, conveniently reached or off of the pathway. It is one who cuddles the lambs, exchanges playful shoves with the young and old bucks, and being patient and tender with the ewes near lambing and the weary, aging ewe. It is one who is busy in feeding, protecting, and leading sheep to the safe, enjoyable pastures and back to the fold.

True shepherding at its best spends most of its time among the sheep. Managing and decision making, as tearing, costly and exhaustive as it often is, seldom goes where the people live, laugh, cry, and hurt. Managers and shepherds use different skills, different agendas, different aims — and get different results. All shepherds perform some managing. Few managers perform any or little shepherding. Managers cannot obtain the shepherd's aim of leading the church in love, wholeness, and oneness that results in the evangelistic objectives of the upper room vision of Jesus. The following life situations are heaven made to provide shepherds the moments to be at their best.

Pastoral Guidance — Shepherding by Request

When one establishes himself as a wise, available, exemplary, and competent people helper many will request his counsel. Guidance by request provides one of the most

opportune teaching situations. A need has been recognized, the desire for help has been expressed, and trust has been displayed.

All pastor/leaders are counselors by definition. He may be professionally trained or congregationally developed but he will counsel. He has only to decide how effectively he will counsel. Each man determines the effectiveness of his counseling by developing himself as:

- A man of compassion.
- A man of knowledge.
- A skilled man in the use of counseling methods and tools (cf. Romans 15:14).

A Counselor's Heart

Pastoral guidance at its biblical best must come from a compassionate heart that can hurt with a suffering man and a sorrowful God (cf. Matthew 5:3).

- **Compassion is seen in:**

- ▶ Sensitivity, sympathy, understanding, and acceptance. It is effected when one can put himself in the place of another, feel what he feels and understand without being judgmental. Like a doctor who may disapprove of the choices of the person being treated but treats him with his best skill and care.
- ▶ Belief in human potential. It is looking on a person and seeing what he can become in Christ and relating to him as one with a promising future.
- ▶ Hope for human effort. It is believing that God has gifted every individual who, with encouragement, can develop and employ his giftedness to do great things.
- ▶ Love for the person's outcome. It is wanting the best outcomes in the life of another and helping the person reach his highest good.

- **Compassion begins in:**

- ▶ Awareness of one's own frailties. A person who has never tasted bitter defeat cannot rightly identify with discouraged people and be a credible helper.
- ▶ Honesty about personal mistakes. A person who covers up mistakes probably has not learned either to do better or to encourage others to get up after a defeat.
- ▶ A believing self-worth. Self-doubt empties compassion for others of any strength. To feel for others and to pick others up requires inner strength.
- ▶ A confident reliance in God's way. A compassionate heart finds strength that will last in a partnership with God, with God being the source of strength and purpose.

The warmth within a man is the best pre-guidance help he can give to one requesting counseling.

A Counselor's Knowledge

Counseling is teaching or guiding one to a necessary decision and action. There are three initial dimensions of pastoral knowledge:

- **Knowledge of God in Scripture.** There is no other fully dimensional, reliable knowledge of helping people as one finds in the words coming from the mind of God, the Creator of the universe. Second Timothy 3:16 defines the multi-dimensional applications of the inspired Word.
- **Knowledge of people.** Knowing the basic needs of people is imperative both to know where to start and in knowing what to give to make a difference.
- **Knowledge of self.** Every people helper has limits. There are some kinds of people he can help better than he can others. He is forever growing in knowledge. At any given time there are needs beyond his ability to help. He has his own weaknesses that would make helping some people very difficult and unproductive.

A Pastoral “Must”

After being sobered by repeated examples of Christ entering homes and the apostolic emphasis on visiting, there emerges many practical imperatives:

- Visiting is one avenue of searching for those needing spiritual guidance before the need or hurt goes beyond reach, before hope can be diminished and no growth occur.
- Visiting is at the heart of effective intercession.
- Visiting may be the major contact a member has with the body and confirmation that God is still in His heavens.
- Visiting gives insights from which a more effective teaching program can emerge.
- Visiting makes “church life” more authentic, more personal, more understandable, and more acceptable.
- Visiting contributes greatly to the growth of the visiting shepherd.

Pastoral Admonition — Shepherding by Necessity

Shepherds would probably prefer counseling either by request or in an un-threatened discovery. Many times either after such counseling has occurred or, unknown to the elders, problems escalate in a member’s life that require warning, counsel, instruction, or reproof. The necessity of the circumstance and the necessity of love demand admonition (*Noutheteo*, 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Romans 14:15; Colossians 3:16; Galatians 5:26–62).

Shepherding by Necessity

No spiritual man enjoys reproving or rebuking. He must be constrained by the necessity of the situation. A greater love constrains him to forego the pleasant talk and enjoyable praise and press where it hurts. The constraining love reaches all ways.

- Love for God whose very Person, Word, and Spirit are being violated.
- Love for the person whose covenant with God and fellowship with His people are in jeopardy or his growth in Christ is compromised by sin.
- Love for the body whose ministry is threatened by a loss of one of her members.
- Love for one's own soul that could be threatened by the neglect to admonish a brother.

The Necessity of Admonition

The shepherds who compulsively avoid to admonish or indifferently neglect to admonish set the local church on a dangerous course.

- Members who do not have a clear view of the standards to be met sin more frequently and are slow to self-accountability and repentance.
- Members who are not called to repentance have an unloving confirmation of their unimportance to the body.
- Members who are left un-warned go beyond a congregation's reach, beyond consciences, beyond grace.
- Members who are not admonished stand as dying proof of the shepherd's living failure to respond to necessity.

Pastoral Comfort — Shepherding by Shared Pain

When people hurt there can be the greatest need for shepherding. Such crisis provide the greatest opportunity of penetration, hold the greatest number of risks and least margin of error. Crisis counseling requires the best counseling skills.

Shepherding by Shared Pain

A shepherd must enter the hurting life of others sincerely hurting with them (sympathy/empathy). Very little helpful communication can occur if there is not shared pain. Shared

pain can begin because people share humanity and may have experienced similar pain. The shared pain most felt by the shepherd is to see a close, deeply loved friend suffering such loss. Jesus wept more for the loss of others than for His own loss (cf. John 11:34–35). Such a friendship is built by many other moments of guidance, visitation, admonition, modeling, friendship and intercession.

Shepherding Through Pain

Effective shepherding in crisis circumstances calls for the best in us. Serious training is required to identify, treat, or refer to others. There are some basic principles undergirding all painful experiences.

- Guard against entry, growth and expression of guilt, resentment, frustration, fear, or paralysis.
- Faith in the sovereignty and goodness of God and knowledge of His workings in human tragedy are most in question and need.
- Human warmth and understanding to confirm the value of the person is vital.
- Action must be taken to identify the issue, define the plan, and resources for confronting the hurt.
- Building hope on valid evidence is crucial to overcoming any crisis.

Pastoral Intercession — Shepherding by Prayer

Central to effective shepherding is intercession. By intercession for another the shepherd calls on God to intervene, to correct, to empower, to cleanse, to heal. To be sure, the shepherd sets God's Word in the center of guidance, visitation, admonition, and comfort. However, by pastoral intercession, the shepherd boldly recognizes his irremediable inadequacy and invites the One who gives the only hope of resolution to pour out the needed blessing.

Shepherding by Prayer

The ultimate shepherding skill is the mastery of intercessory prayer. To be effective in intercessory prayer one should:

- Equally master each element of prayer: adoration, praise, thankfulness, confession, petition, intercession, commitment, and meditation.
- Deepen his covenant relationship with God in faithful obedience and in increasing self-accountability.
- Enter such a meaningful fellowship with others that the closeness gives sincerity, specificity, felt need, and urgency to every intercession.
- Never forget that shepherding without constant intercessory prayer robs shepherding of one of its more vital parts.

The Contents of Intercessory Prayer

What a shepherd intercedes for is a revelation of his own knowledge, value, concern, commitment, and hope for the person. An intercessory prayer could include:

- Recognition and praise of the beauty and value of the person — all accomplished works of God.
- An assessment of the current struggle of the individual – declaring that these and deeper insights come from God.
- A statement of the person's most urgent needs – acknowledging that God has the resources of resolution at His sovereign command.
- A submission of self to be available for His leadership in serving the other person.
- An earnest plea to be available for His leadership in serving the other person.
- An earnest plea that God will choose to intervene to bring yet another blessing to the person — accepting that the higher ways, fairness, and goodness of God makes His decision impeachable by man.

Pastoral Modeling — Shepherding by Example

A shepherd is what every man in the congregation is committed to becoming. Every man (youth/new convert/developing member in each season of life) needs inspiring models. A sermon lived, verbal instruction performed, a problem resolved, a hurt healed, a joy expressed, a victory erupting in praise to God, a need humbly requested — all provide valuable shepherding models. The shepherd is a *proistamai*, one who stands before the congregation with an open life committed to following Christ in every thought and action.

Family Modeling

- Young women need a masculine standard by which to choose a husband and a feminine model, as the shepherd's wife, by which to love her husband, love her children, develop feminine virtues, and be a keeper at home (cf. Titus 2:2ff).
- Young men need a married man by which to develop their marital maturity, values, insights, and skills. And a model wife by which to choose a valued life companion and to uplift his young wife to her noble potential.
- Parents need to know what to give their children at every level of each child's development (cf. Proverbs 22:6).
- Families need to have a model in problem management, money management, making the home a center of worship, spiritual education, and evangelism.

Ethical Modeling

- Future leaders will most willingly and purposefully pay the price of a strong value system when they can see an older man who has lived his ethics with resulting profit, prosperity, and well-being.
- Shepherds who want to do right rely on God to define what is right in His Word and freely do what they learn is right giving truth its rightful place in the life of believers.

Vocational Modeling

- Members need to see that glorifying God, loving the brethren, serving the needy in soul and body are the substance of a shepherd's vocation. His occupation, recreation, and rest sustain his vocation.
- Members must feel the heartbeat of their shepherds and sense their watchful presence: excitement over their spiritual growth and well-being; grief over any sheep being lost or plundered.

Growth Modeling

- The shepherd shows the sheep his commitment to growth and excellence, he is becoming more knowledgeable, competent, whole and committed to his pastoral vocation.
- He is a shepherd because of pronounced strength. People see him measuring and finding inspiration for his continued growth in his model, The Shepherd of shepherds.

Confrontational Modeling

- Truth must be affirmed, error must be exposed and dismantled. Those in error must be called to the side of truth; those un-yielded in error must be marked and isolated.
- The shepherds or models do not hesitate to put themselves in the path of anyone who would ravage the flock. Both wolves and sheep know where the shepherd stands.

Pastoral Friendship — Shepherding by Shared Leisure

In the life and teachings of Jesus, different levels of friendship are displayed:

- Nurturing a friendship with those who will return friendly acts (cf. Luke 14:12–14).

- Encircling oneself with friends who can share joys and sorrows (cf. Luke 15:1–9; John 13:1–2; Acts 10:24).
- Extending friendship for the singular, unselfish purpose of serving the need of another to be loved and made to feel special. While a shepherd needs intimate friends for his own survival and growth, sharing leisure with the needy often is more timely and helpful than a sermon. Jesus built a pastoral friendship with His disciples (cf. Luke 12:4; John 15:15); He spent leisure time with many of the lost of Israel so much so He was seen as a “*friend of publicans and sinners*” (Luke 7:34). Even Paul made friendship a key in his evangelistic ministry, having friends among the officials of Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:31). Shepherding by shared leisure speaks clearly to the recipient:
 - ▶ A spoken message of love, caring, and longing is more easily understood away from pulpit, stained glass, and church pew.
 - ▶ Sharing “private time” is giving to another from one’s most valued assets.
 - ▶ Taking time to enter another’s world of leisure builds bridges of mutual understanding and respect.

Even “dumb” sheep of the field are most bonded to shepherds who both feed, lift, and play. How much more would treasured people of God be blessed by the friendship being extended by a thoughtful shepherd?

Pastoral Encounter — Shepherding by Chance

Sometimes the best pulpits, counseling offices, classrooms, or small group studies are the unscheduled, inadvertent meetings at the mall, garage, restaurant, ball game, hospital, and other places. A shepherd who is always happily looking for his sheep plans “unbudgeted” time to visit momentarily with them and leaves an unexpected blessing at the surprise encounter. Sometimes the “chance” meeting can be reasonably

anticipated. Knowing the habits or life patterns of people a shepherd can have some confidence where or when to find a member.

- Chance meetings may be the most non-defensive ways to begin the revival of a disrupted relationship with a delinquent member.
- Chance meetings do not obligate or “fence in” a reticent member but can create a favorable opening for more meaningful contact.
- Chance meetings give insights to the values, interests, and needs of members.
- Chance meetings introduce a shepherd to a member’s circle of friends or family.

Chance meetings may be a re-enactment of the parable of the man not even looking for a treasure but finding it when busy for other reasons (cf. Matthew 13:44).

Pastoral Instruction — Shepherding by Design

The shepherd, like his Chief Shepherd, is pre-eminently a teacher. Despite varied abilities, every shepherd must be an able spokesman of the Word (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17–18; Titus 1:9–11;). Wherever and however instruction can occur the shepherd should be sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled to adequately communicate God’s message.

- Wherever: organized classes, small groups, one-on-one, pulpit, home visitation, and others like these. The shepherd has developed the knowledge to respond to each kind of teaching opportunity (cf. Titus 1:9).
- However: teach (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2), persuade/exhort (cf. Titus 1:9), refute (cf. Titus 1:9–11) and preach (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17).

Too often flocks have been attended by untrained, incompetent shepherds who are seriously limited by lack of necessary knowledge and teaching skills.

Pastoral Communication — Shepherding by Involvement

Subordinates (slaves) are not informed, but commanded; they are not consulted before decisions are made, but expected to comply whatever their views may be; they are not given group objectives or explained the value of their personal contribution, but assigned quotas or tasks; they are not encouraged or given guidance in difficulties, but left to stumble alone driven by imposed guilt or threatened rejection; they are not praised for effort and accomplishment, but left to wonder even if the effort is worthwhile or appreciated; they are not given a more challenging opportunity that even more closely relates to their felt interest or strengths, but ignored, left in a vacuum or assigned “busy work” that seems valueless and provides little opportunity for perceivable growth. Happy, meaningful, productive involvement follows effective communication:

- The verbal, tonal, and corporal vehicles of communication must be mastered.
- The expressive, responsive, perceptive, and reserved areas of communication must be exercised and kept in balance.
- The comfort zones of communication must be identified and respected.
- The basic human achievement needs must be carefully followed.
- The communication framework must be faithfully relied upon.

Shepherds are effective, truthful, and inspiring communicators. Failure at this point often compromises or destroys devoted shepherding at many other points.

Conclusion

Men come to the work of shepherds after years of gaining knowledge and skills through serving in the flock. They continue their service by being near, active, and among the sheep. The sheep welcome their involvement, learn from their service, and love them for their work's sake. Shepherds are bridge builders, transforming authority into service. They walk the pathways of the members, lifting their burdens, and facilitating their struggles. They make little boys look forward to the day that they too can serve God as shepherds. They make little girls look forward to serving God with shepherd husbands. They delight their Shepherd of shepherds in being like Him in their loving, selfless service to the flock.

Endangered Sheep

The calmness of the scene of contented sheep in the pasture or the flock of God in uplifting worship does not belie the dangers that threaten well-being and life. Knowledgeable shepherds are constantly aware of impending dangers and are on guard (cf. Acts 20:28–29). Because they know sheep are endangered they are in constant preparedness to identify and repel threats and repair damages in the flock. God’s major concern for His ancient flock was of the shepherds themselves who abused, neglected, and abandoned the flock (cf. Jeremiah 23:1–4, 50:6; Ezekiel 34:2ff). God’s concern was re-echoed of New Testament shepherds (cf. Acts 20:28–30; 1 Peter 5:2ff). In His might, working through His faithful shepherds, God knows He can keep His sheep safe from danger. While an eye must be fixed on the distant hills for the approaching enemy, they can only win when emptiness, sickness, and confusion within make the flock vulnerable to attack. Therein lies God’s joy or sorrow concerning His shepherds. Will they care for the sheep or leave them endangered by every threat? Where do spiritual shepherds focus their attention to protect the sheep and keep them strong and secure?

Sheep Whose Newness Is Defective or Forgotten

Good News preaching affirms that responsive faith in Jesus Christ, as God’s Son, frees one from:

- the practice of sin.
- the resulting, inevitable guilt.
- the inescapable collapse of personal significance.

Repentance turns one from the practice of sin, forgiveness resolves the issue of guilt, and sonship fills one’s emptiness and

lostness with a valid promise of longing. Faithful shepherds are careful that the message to the world calls every individual to a clear understanding of how freedom from sin, guilt, and insignificance is accomplished by repentance, forgiveness, and sonship which is centered by faith in the person, message, and finished work of Jesus Christ. Faithful shepherds are just as careful that the freed ones do not forget their first love. Their shepherd vigilance demands that every believer be reminded of their former enslavement, the freedom they enjoy in their union with Christ, and the need of renewal in repentance, forgiveness, and sonship.

Endangered sheep either have not accurately understood the dimensions of their alienation from God (cf. Titus 3:3–7; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11) or what being freed required (cf. Romans 6:2–14). Perhaps, they have understood it well, have rejoiced in it for a time, but have become entangled in matters that have distracted them from their daily view of the defeated cross through an empty tomb (cf. Galatians 1:6–10; 2:16–21). Sheep will be less endangered when shepherds continually resound the theme of newness in Christ.

Sheep Whose Wholeness Is Never or Slowly Experienced

No man enters Christ a whole, complete person. They are new but not whole. Being born anew is the beginning of becoming whole, growing to the full stature of Jesus (cf. Ephesians 4:11–16). Wise shepherds have a vision of the virtues, values, and vocation of a whole person and set in motion those instructional experiences to help the new person become whole. Note an overview of some of the virtues of a whole person:

- **The Virtues of a Whole Person**

- **Forgiving:** a forgiving person has learned when hurt to be healed through forgiving the offender. Or else unhealed hurts progress to resentment, bitterness, hate, and violence.
- **Unselfish:** how one interprets their past experiences (memory) and what function is assigned to one's emotions determines how subjective (selfish, thinking first or only of self) he/she is.
- **Discipline:** one's effectiveness in confronting a problem and systematically resolving it is a constant measure of maturity and mature results in life.
- **Fearless:** one's freedom to affirm his/her own worth, purpose, and beliefs divides productive leaders from passive dependents.
- **Hopeful:** what one sees in every event, problem, or person and how one depends on faithful and effective use of resources.
- **Sensitive:** the vision that can look beyond a blameable action or circumstance and see an unmet need crying out for fulfillment results in service and healing rather than judgment and condemnation.
- **Committed:** the largeness of one's circle of service and the energy available to touch many people or some very deeply reflects a quality of commitment.
- **Expressive:** how much of oneself is openly shared with another determines the strength and depth of the relationship. Transparency of feelings (need, joy, hurt, and other emotions) is the test of expressiveness.
- **Serenity:** effective processing of stressful agitation frees a person for good health, concentrated resources, and a productive and inspiring lifestyle.

A whole person is growing in each of these virtues and strengths. Good shepherds are systematically teaching each

member the value, beauty, and skill to become whole in each virtue.

► **What are the skills to be learned?**

Virtue Skills:

Forgiving	Anger Management
Unselfish.....	Memory Management
Discipline.....	Problem Management
Fearless	Assets Management
Hopeful	Resource Management
Sensitive	Needs Management
Committed	People Management
Expressive.....	Communication Management
Serenity	Stress Management

• **The Values of a Whole Person**

Nothing short of a summary of the whole of God's Word may suffice to present shepherds the value system they need to help each member build. Perhaps a beginning summary would be the core principles of the new Kingdom of Jesus given by Him in the eight beatitudes of Matthew 5:2–10. A whole person has these clearly defined ways of living:

- Life style: happiness in simplicity.
- Life burdens: happiness in renewal.
- Life commitments: happiness in finishing a job.
- Life directions: happiness in single-mindedness.
- Life agonies: happiness in kindness to others.
- Life view: happiness in purity.
- Life conflicts: happiness in reconciliation.
- Life beliefs: happiness in loyalty.

Jesus wanted His followers to learn how to position themselves, with a predetermined, characteristic way to any given concept, person, or situation.

- **The Vocation of a Whole Person**

The identification of the driving force, the consuming purpose, the sense of “I really must do it” begins to speak of one’s vocation. Shepherds must help each member with claiming and living consistently with the vocation of the believer.

Sheep Whose Fullness Is Severely Limited and Even Lessening

Fullness grows in one’s depth of understanding of God, self, and the world. Fullness is seen in one’s ability to think and live objectively and spiritually.

- **GOD:** The shepherd helps a member think about God in some of the following ways:

- ▶ To reach for more and more areas where only God’s will is heard.
- ▶ To grow in more intense concern for God’s concerns.
- ▶ To increasingly agree with God over personal sin, ministry, and values.
- ▶ To more clearly determine what is good, valuable, and beautiful as seen through the eyes of God.
- ▶ To be more deeply engrossed in the beauty of God in worship.
- ▶ To become more dedicated to a greatness that exceeds one’s capacity for adoration.
- ▶ To be possessed by an unbroken awareness of the presence and nearness of God.
- ▶ To be so awe-struck by the exalted majesty of God that awareness of sin, longing for cleansing, and a pressing readiness for ministry fills one’s soul.

- **SELF:** The shepherd helps a member think about self in the following ways:
 - ▶ To orient one's human inwardness toward the holy.
 - ▶ To administer one's whole life in the name of God, the only Autonomous Master.
 - ▶ To strive for inner anonymity.
 - ▶ To devote oneself to purposes that lead away from self.
 - ▶ To view life as thankfulness (joy over gloom), reverence (peace over grief), adventure (substance over emptiness), giving (return over grasping), hereafter and here now (promise and responsibility).
- **WORLD:** The shepherd helps the member think about his sojourn in the world in the following ways:
 - ▶ Since God is everywhere, at all times, and in possession of all things, real responsibility and freedom is only found in Him, not in unbridled lust or irresponsible treatment of others.
 - ▶ Learning the difference between possession and gift is avoiding loneliness and embracing love.
 - ▶ The essential elements of sacrifice are self-dispossession and offering to fill the emptiness of others.
 - ▶ Ideals are neither idols or ends in themselves, but thoroughfares to God.
 - ▶ Man's destiny is to aid and to serve, not to be served by the more needy.
 - ▶ Fullness is an attitude of value and respect to all reality, to God, to self, to persons, and to things.
 - ▶ Love is not consumption, but affection, friendship, service, sacrifice, and loyalty to others.

Conclusion

What kind of shepherds can lead believers to newness, wholeness, and fullness?

- Jeremiah 3:15: “*Then will I give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.*”
- Jeremiah 23:4: “*I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,’ declares the LORD.*”
- Ezekiel 34:23: “*I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.*”
- Acts 20:32, 35: “*Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified . . . In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

The Faithful Sheep

The description of a “faithful” member is often discussed and is the subject of many religious articles. The simplest and most frequent response is that a faithful member is one who attends regularly the majority of the worship services and is active in the life of the church. That response might cover most cases but it may not be either an accurate assessment or deep enough to help shepherds in encouraging the sheep to grow.

Why is it important to know what constitutes “faithfulness” among the sheep? Why should the discussion go beyond regular attendance in the public services and some level of involvement in the work of the church? There would be no need if a shepherd is only interested in what he sees. The question is important because a shepherd’s vision of what a faithful sheep looks like will guide him in working with members to achieve the desired levels of maturity.

The Characteristics of Faithful Sheep

The following views of faithful sheep describe the purposes and goals that faithful shepherds need to have in their assigned mission of caring for the sheep. While most of these characteristics start from the inside they will manifest themselves in observable and measurable actions.

- Devoted in worship.**

Communal worship with fellow believers on a regular basis provides encouragement, inspiration, accountability, shared beliefs, and gift sharing as no other activity in the Christian faith can provide. Hebrews 10:24–25 (NIV):

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The identity of a believer is reinforced in fellowship with others. The growth in biblical knowledge, understanding of core beliefs, and learning the nature and value of consistent practices are shaped in the assemblies of the saints. Learning of the devices of Satan and finding models and methods for defeating his schemes frequently are learned in sharing the hours of the week in worship. Awareness of the powerful resources to grow, to serve, and to extol the greatness of God is best grasped at the side of those who are bowed together in worship. Some of the most important experiences occur in the moments of corporate worship. Awed in the holy presence of God, called to accountability, convicted in sin, rejoicing in salvation, and committed in service are God's gifts to the worshiper. Most of all, God is glorified, exalted, and honored in the worship assembly. A "faithful" member is deeply drawn to every opportunity to worship such a holy God with His saints (cf. Psalms 73:10–17; Isaiah 6:1–8; Acts 2:41–47, 20:7–12; 1 Corinthians 11:17–34).

- **Fervent in Biblical Studies.**

A direct meeting with Christ in His Word is among God's greatest gifts to the believer. Beyond the messages of the creation, Christians would know very little of God, His plan to save man, or His earnest desire for relationships. All of the divine efforts to reveal Himself through the prophets and Apostles and other inspired writers were on behalf of the believers. The protection that was divinely given to preserve the Word down through the centuries and through multiple translations aimed at giving every

generation the access to eternal truths. Shepherds have much to do in getting the members in the Book:

- ▶ There should be much public reading of Scriptures by well trained readers.
- ▶ Members should be urged to read daily and be given reading schedules.
- ▶ Members should be taught how to read and to understand the Bible, with classes and individual instruction.
- ▶ Sermon series should be preached to teach the content of the books and chapters of the Bible.
- ▶ Priority attention needs to be given in developing the most challenging classes and study opportunities taught by capable and devoted Bible students.
- ▶ Small group studies should be encouraged with materials provided or suggested that will deepen the members' Bible knowledge.
- ▶ Money needs to be invested in building a serviceable church library focused on inspiring Bible study.
- ▶ Members need to be guided in building a home library of Bible study materials and helped in purchasing the most useful books (better versions of the Bible, Bible Concordance, Bible Dictionary, Bible Handbook, Bible Geography, a Topical Dictionary, Introduction volumes, select commentaries, and Word Study books for the more enterprising, and other resources.).

- **Growing in Life-Wholeness.**

Studies confirm what shepherds know by painful experience: members who really love the Lord too frequently perform poorly and are prone to be discouraged too easily. A leading reason is that 65 percent of members in the typical congregation are dysfunctional in two or more areas of maturity. Some are not coping well with stress or processing anxiety. Some are needing to grow in the relationship areas of their lives: reaching out to others,

being accessible to others, and caring and feeling for others without being judgmental. Some are passive in influencing others for good, lacking in a sense of personal worth, a sense of competency, a sense of belonging, or a sense of purpose. Some, when hurt, struggle with healing and forgiveness, but rather, become defensive and even hostile. Some act impulsively without self-discipline and responsible planning. While their love for Jesus is evident and encouraging they struggle with life, not being able to live abundantly. What can shepherds do?

- ▶ Commit themselves to the goal of Paul relative to fellow-saints:

We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy which so powerfully works in me (Colossians 1:28–29).

- ▶ Avail themselves of various testing tools to measure the maturity of traits. One of the most used is the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis. Shepherds would make a wise investment if they could secure the services of a certified analysis or assist a qualified member in becoming certified.
- ▶ Knowing the areas of trait maturity, shepherds could conduct classes to teach members in gaining the skills to live more abundantly.
- ▶ Counseling may be required to give special help when specific traits are especially deficient and pronounced blockage needs to be removed because of life-style mind set.
- ▶ Often growth is accelerated by identifying the biblical resources and learning to make the best use of them: prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship, mentoring, and so on .

An aggressive program of growth can change a trait profile from being dysfunctional in several areas to be fully free to grow and become what God has designed every member to be.

- **Developing and Employing Giftedness.**

The discovery of fire changed the course of humanity. Its use has impacted almost every phase of life. So, is the discovery of the giftedness of members, the training in the use of the gifts, and building an environment where the gifts can be used in the ministries of the church. Romans 12:6–8, Ephesians 4:10–12, and 1 Peter 4:10 speak of the dynamic of gifted members at work in building the Church. If only the minister and a few other members are carrying the bulk of the ministries and the majority of the members are spectators of activities the church will not and cannot grow. God did not design the Church or any living organism to depend on a few to do the work and others to watch. A bee-hive, a sports team, a surgical team, or a church depend on everyone doing what they do best and enjoy the most. The sad statistic that 10 percent of the members give 90 percent of the money and 48 percent, on any given Sunday, give nothing is also reflective of membership involvement. Studies indicate that 15 percent of the members do the work in a typical church and 85 percent either watch or do not have a clue what is being done. No company would survive with such percentage of non-producing workmen—even workmen that require the attention of the working number, distracting them from accomplishing the purposes of the company. What can shepherds do?

- ▶ Begin a teaching program on stewardship and member value to the good health and prosperity of the flock.
- ▶ Measure the gifts God has assigned to each member. Each member will likely have three primary, three

secondary, and three tertiary gifts. While learning to use all of their gifts effectively, members will do their best service gaining the skills in the primary gifted areas. One can go to www.teamministry.com and take a personalized test completely free. There will be an immediate scoring and a printout providing explanation of the primary gifts.

- ▶ Conduct classes of members having common gifts to develop the skills to be at their best in ministries.
- ▶ Plan ministries around the giftedness of the members with a trained leader in each area (evangelism, mercy showing, service, administration, teaching, and other areas of giftedness).
- ▶ Plan the congregational budget around the areas of gifted ministries, being sure to fund each one adequately.

It must be remembered that the possession of a ministry gift is an assignment from the Lord in the Kingdom enterprise. A member must not just do things that have to be done or that a leader thinks he ought to do. While encouraged, mentored, and guided by leaders, members must serve in the areas assigned to them by God. No leader has either the right or the authority to insist on members serving where the Lord has not assigned them. A leader cannot in good faith or with wisdom assign a member to a ministry until he knows what God has determined to be the area of service.

- **Loving the Saints.**

Jesus made fraternal love the benchmark of faithfulness in the Family of God (cf. John 13:34). Paul scoffed at the value of serving without love (cf. 1 Corinthian 13:1ff). John made brotherly love a confirming condition of loving God (cf. 1 John 4:7–12; 19–21). Peter made brotherly love an integral part of spiritual formation (cf. 2 Peter 1:5–9). Placing anything over loving brethren marks any person as unfaithful at the most crucial point of the faith. Loving a

large budget, a robust church program, a pulsating mission enterprise, impeccable doctrinal positions, or an imposing church facility at the expense of neglecting, offending, or diminished the value of any member betrays a serious breach of faith. What can shepherds do?

- ▶ Model in every circumstance a genuine and constant love for the very least and the least deserving member.
- ▶ Learn the name of every member possible, especially the little ones in the family.
- ▶ Purposefully recognize the achievements of members as an act of wanting the best in their lives (*agape* love).
- ▶ Kindly but decisively admonish a brother who imposes a hurtful burden on any member.
- ▶ Make sure that the pulpit and classes and small groups keep a steady and consistent emphasis on loving each other.
- ▶ Build the concept of loving the brethren into the purpose statement of the church or into her goals as a greatly desired outcome. One church has the goal, “Becoming a family of loving believers.”
- ▶ Make the fellowship so rich with understanding, caring, and affection that losing fraternal love through church discipline becomes a strong deterrent to members to falling into sin.

Not to diminish the importance of doctrinal purity, winning souls to Jesus, serving others, and offering acceptable worship to God, yet, with Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, faithfulness begins and ends with loving the brethren.

- **Supporting the Leaders.**

The Scriptures are quite clear that faithfulness is measured by the considerate support given to appointed leaders by the members. Hebrew Christians were told to focus, not on the incidental details of a leader’s life, but on the overall results of his life (cf. Hebrews 13:7). That is, to focus on

what he has done best in the things that are most important and not focusing on passing issues. They were told to look to their leaders with an intent to believe in and to see the value of their leaders. They were urged to make the pathway of leaders as free of obstacles as possible, remembering what leaders are devoted to accomplishing for each member, how hard they work, and what heavy accountability they face as shepherds of souls (cf. Hebrews 13:17). Christians in Thessalonica were told to build positive relations with their leaders who worked hard in caring for and admonishing them. They were urged to acknowledge their diligent work and to hold them in the highest regard with love because of the value of their work (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13). How can shepherds help members to be faithful in their relationships with leaders?

- ▶ Though member submission is commanded by God, leaders need to make membership faithfulness be a joy in supporting the leadership. All decisions will not be understood or agreed upon by every member, but the consistent wisdom and care of the leaders in making and communicating decisions are decisively important.
- ▶ Though authority has been vested in leaders to lead (cf. Hebrews 13:17), seeking input from members can be done wisely. Giving members a sense of being valued, with their ideas being considered, can be a profitable practice. There is a great deal of experience and wisdom that has been gained by a body of believers. The Apostles practiced member participation in the selection of servants in Acts 6.
- ▶ Good communication concerning upcoming decisions prepare a membership to pray and consider the ways God can lead the church forward.
- ▶ Providing a means by which members can give their ideas, both shows openness and availability and valuing members. Most members want only to be heard, to be valued. A “comment box,” open forums, church

meetings, appointed times to visit with the shepherds, regular surveys, or visiting among the members could be among the means that an approachable leadership can provide.

- ▶ Being approachable in attitude, open to inquiry, and patient and loving in response go a long way in helping the members to faithfully support their leaders.

A basic need is to educate the members on their biblical role as relates to working with leaders. It is not a one-way street. Leaders must be mature men of God and wise in their leadership. Members must know that they are not being faithful neither to the letter or with the spirit of the faith when they are not being supportive of appointed leaders. Especially does this unfaithfulness become egregious when the opposition is in an area of personal preference or opinion — which is about 90 percent of the cases of opposition.

- **Building a Strong Home Life.**

Coming to the assembly of the saints dressed nicely and carrying a Bible while arguing all the way and being in conflict at home is not living faithfully. Faithfulness is keeping the early promises of married love. What can shepherds teach that will ensure faithfulness in home commitments?

- ▶ Help members keep the promise to honor God in the marriage by building on the foundations in Genesis 1–2 (honoring diversity, mutuality, unity, and longevity).
- ▶ Help men keep the promise to follow the pattern of marital commitment of God toward Israel in Hosea 2:19–20.
- ▶ Help men keep the promise to love one's wife as Christ loved the church in Ephesians 5:25–33 (loving without reservation, more than life itself) — giving masculine affection to their life mate.

- ▶ Help men keep the promise to live with a wife with knowledge, with sensitivity, and in honoring equality as in 1 Peter 3:7.
- ▶ Help women know how to submit (to voluntarily organize their lives in regard to their husbands, the appointed head of the family) and to applaud and support their husbands — giving feminine acceptance to their life mate.

In addition to marital harmony and fulfillment, one must be taught to be faithful in parental commitments:

- ▶ Teaching children effectively to honor God, obey His statutes, and to honor parents as in Deuteronomy 6:1–10.
- ▶ Giving children all they need at every level of their development as directed in Proverbs 22:6 (Ages 1–5: Attitudes; Ages 6–10: Values; Ages 11–15: Models; Ages 16–20: Experimentation).
- ▶ Molding children after the model of Jesus in Luke 2:52 (submissive to authority, physical, education, spiritual, and social).
- ▶ Building a right relationship with children as in Ephesians 6:1–4 (honoring parents, seeing the value of counsel, being reasonable, and giving well balanced instruction: verbal and experiential).

Faithfulness at home impacts all other aspects of a person's faithfulness in spiritual commitments. Peter cites how husbands are hindered in their prayer life because of neglect of their wives (cf. 1 Peter 3:7). History is full of great men who were greatly grieved or were distracted in their leadership and faithfulness in difficulties with their children (examples: Adam, Abraham, Aaron, Eli, David).

- **Being Balanced in Biblical Understanding.**
How faithful one is to his spiritual commitments is influenced by how well he knows the Scriptures and how

well he mines the truths from the Scriptures. Knowing the truth is the beginning of faith and faithfulness (cf. John 8:32; Romans 10:17). Being effective in service is in direct proportion to how one handles the Word (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16–17). Knowing what to do, coupled with doing what one knows, is the path to faithfulness (cf. James 1:25). What does a shepherd look for in helping members to be faithful in their biblical understanding?

- ▶ A faithful member knows how to rightly handle the Scriptures (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16), making every effort to understand what was originally intended in the text and to learn how to correctly apply the truth to modern situations.
- ▶ A faithful member knows how to weigh what is essential for salvation and fruitful living and to know what is helpful but not intended to be reproducible.
- ▶ A faithful member knows how to distinguish between what is temporal, tied only to culture, and what is applicable for all time and normative for all people.
- ▶ A faithful member knows how to draw from the deep wells of mercy and justice, law and grace, and face all circumstances with a balanced, compatible, and timely application.
- ▶ A faithful member will be very careful not to impose his hermeneutical interpretations on others so as to threaten the fraternal unity that prevails or to exalt himself as the law giver to others.

More faithful members have been discouraged over an ineffective handling of the Scriptures than most other problems in the church. The knowledge and practice of a biblical hermeneutic, leading to well balanced exegesis and application of truth, will help maintain the unity in Christ as much as any other condition among believers.

- **Moral in Life and Values.**

What people see in the lives of fellow-saints and especially in spiritual leaders usually speaks more loudly than all sermons and claims (cf. 2 Peter 2:11–12). Regardless of how much and how well one knows the truth, the practice of the truth has greater impact on most people. Knowing the walk, talking the walk, and walking the walk are the basic minimums of faithfulness. How does a shepherd keep vigilance in helping members be moral and have strong, ethical values?

- ▶ The pulpit must be a beacon of light in commending virtue and exposing the deeds of darkness. Members can become lax in their own defenses when they become too accustomed to the darkness around them.
- ▶ The beauty of Jesus must be held high before all members, all of the time.
- ▶ Vigilance must be exercised to detect the beginnings of immoral tendencies. It may be seen in attendance patterns, slipping toward the periphery in ministries, getting increasingly involved with community events, with work schedules, or colleagues.
- ▶ Spending personal time with members offers opportunity for them to share problems and ask for help.
- ▶ Make sure that all shepherds are approachable, seen as caring and concerned, and ready to spring to the side of a member slipping away.
- ▶ Attention and budget must be present to give assistance to those in the throes of immoral failures — counseling assistance, relocation expenses, or material help.
- ▶ Loving but decisive discipline must be exercised before the flock so the dangers and consequences of immorality can be emphasized.

Open, immoral collapses are preceded by indulging in thoughts and practices that lead to a fall. Helping people to think like Jesus, feel like Jesus, and act like Jesus is the

best prevention against the invasion of immorality (cf. Philippians 4:8). It will always be true that “. . . as he thinks in his heart, so is he . . .” (Proverbs 23:7, NKJV). Jesus well pinpointed the genesis of sexual immorality (cf. Matthew 5:27–28).

- **Generosity in Giving and Serving.**

Faithfulness has much to do with what spirit and with what intensity of giving and serving characterizes one’s life. Being a “camp follower” is not faithfulness. Being a “dead sea” of receiving but not giving is not faithfulness. Being a field, ever receiving the rain but never producing a crop is not faithfulness (cf. Hebrews 6:7–8). Being a gifted servant but never discovering, developing, or employing the gifts falls short of faithfulness. A principle of Scripture is “. . . everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded . . .” (Luke 12:48). What can a shepherd do to help a member be a faithful and giving servant?

- ▶ Be certain to teach stewardship of one’s possessions and the responsibility of each member to give as they have been prospered (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1). Shepherds bear some of the responsibility if only 10 percent of the members give 90 percent of the Sunday contribution, leaving 48 percent giving nothing and 42 percent being less responsible than they should be in their giving from their prosperity.
- ▶ Be certain that every member knows his/her Kingdom assignment according to the giftedness given by the Spirit and has the opportunity to develop the ministry gifts and employ them in the growth of the church.
- ▶ Plan church programs that give real encouragement and value to generous, even sacrificial giving. Members are not inspired to give when there does not seem to be worthwhile challenges in soul saving, helping the needy, or promoting meaningful growth.

- ▶ Communicate openly, regularly, and purposefully how given monies have been used and with what results.
- ▶ Commend often the generosity and sacrificial giving of the members.
- ▶ Be a model of giving and serving with a joyful heart and generous spirit.

A leadership that is reluctant to challenge members to invest themselves in the enterprise of the church has not understood Romans 12:1 that calls on members to offer themselves (that is all that they are, all that they possess and all that they can do) as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

- **Being a Responsible Citizen.**

Being citizens of another country and being subject to a higher authority only enhance a Christian's responsible citizenship in the lands in which he lives. Giving unto Caesar the things that are his, obeying the laws of appointed authorities, and doing good to all men are aspects of God's expectations of faithful servants. Faithfulness requires God's servants to pay taxes, observe just laws, and to honor lawful leaders in an orderly society. How difficult it must have been for Christians to honor the Roman leaders of the Empire, few of them demonstrating any of the honorable virtues of a righteous leader (cf. 1 Peter 2:15–17; Romans 13:1–7). How does a shepherd help members be faithful citizens even in difficult circumstances?

- ▶ Ethical issues like lying on income taxes, knowingly speeding, misrepresenting products, cheating customers in pricing schemes and false weights, and looking the other way in cases of fraud and abuse need to be clearly condemned.
- ▶ Dishonoring a government and refusing to comply to stated laws must be openly reprimanded. In a land of

law, believers must be model citizens in practice and in attitude.

- ▶ A balance of “God and Country” should be sought in the life of the believers. There is no virtue in a believer remaining aloof and indifferent to the country in which he lives, celebrating its history, its accomplishments, and its holidays.

If believers are to be salt in the society they must be active and involved in the communities surrounding them. It may not be the most important measure of their faithfulness but indifference to one’s citizenship responsibility limits his value in the land.

- **Living in the Hope of the Second Coming.**
A faithful member keeps his eyes of faith, if not literally, on the promised return of Jesus. Decisions are made, conduct is framed, and priorities are followed based on the intensity of one’s expectations of the second coming of Jesus (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11). Living with little to no thought that today Jesus could return leaves one to think more of secular and mundane matters. Knowing full well that any day is a good day for His return and desiring that He will come sooner than later places a different perspective on everything. How does a shepherd keep the members alert to the coming of Jesus?
 - ▶ Frequent sermons, continual singing, and public reading of second coming scriptures should be planned into the worship assemblies.
 - ▶ Talking about the second coming of Jesus with genuine faith and excitement keeps members growing in their expectations of His return.
 - ▶ Focus more on what He has promised He will do at the final advent than on what He will not do, as taught by premillennial advocates (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22–28).

- ▶ Pray often and clearly, “*Come, Lord Jesus*” and “*Come quickly*” (cf. Revelation 22:20).
- ▶ Urge members to live and plan in view of the second coming of Jesus (cf. 2 Peter 3:11–14).

Members must not lapse into the lethargy of those in the first century that grew weary in their waiting, even believing that Jesus was not coming at all (cf. 2 Peter 3:3–7).

Conclusion

Among the more troubling questions Jesus asked was “. . . *when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18:8). If believers in all ages will express their faithfulness in the ways suggested in this chapter there will be faith here to applaud the precious coming of the Son of Man. God has placed shepherds in the flock to help the sheep be faithful in all of their commitments.

The Shepherd's Joy

Too often the stories of leadership are full of talk of blasted dreams, heartless rejection, hurtful, angry opposition, backbiting slander, ungrateful returns, forgotten commitments, sloppy, incompetent efforts, and absence of praise and encouragement. Jesus experienced them all, culminating with the ultimate dread of Calvary and apparent failure to win but a few. His sadness fills the questions, “*Where are the other nine?*” and “*When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 17:17, 18:8). No shepherd will serve without seeing some sheep be ravaged, some become sick and die, and some stray and be lost. Every shepherd will face danger, fatigue, and heartbreak in guarding the endangered fold, but there is a brightness that drives all shadows away.

Promised Joy

Jesus urged the apostolic shepherds to look through their tears and sorrows to certain joy. In John 15:11, He said: “*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*” And later in John 16:20–24, He said:

“I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

The writer of Hebrews said:

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17).

And finally, Peter wrote: “*And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away*” (1 Peter 5:4). Read Acts and the Epistles and note the songs of joy of those who worked with God.

Accomplished Joy of Shepherds

- **3 John 3–4:**

It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.
— an elder’s rejoicing!

- **Hebrews 12:2:**

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. — the power of joy!

- **Revelation 4:4, 10–11:**

Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. The twenty-four elders [perhaps representing all of God's faithful leaders across the history of redemption, are seen in the privileged circle around the enthroned God. They are joyfully worshiping him] fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

*"You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being."*

**And that will be glory —
joy triumphing over all sorrow!**

APPENDIX

Select Shepherd Scripture Readings

The Shepherd God **Psalms 23** **A psalm of David**

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever (NIV).*

Isaiah 40:11

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lamb in his arms and carries them close to his heart; He gently leads those that have young.

Ezekiel 34:1–10:

The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them’” (NIV).

God Laments Over the Shepherds of His Flock

Jeremiah 23:1–4:

“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: “Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done,” declares the LORD. “I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing.” declares the LORD (NIV).

Ezekiel 34:11–16:

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down,” declares the

Sovereign LORD. “I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice” (NIV).

The Shepherds of the New Testament **Acts 20:28–29:**

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood — I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.

Ephesians 4:11–13:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so the body of Christ may be built up until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

1 Peter 5:1–4:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

The Pastoral Prayer of the Shepherd of Shepherds

John 17:1–26:

... “*Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your work. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them,*

for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

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