

Lesson 1

The Function of a Pastor

Introduction

John 21:15-17

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

The learning points from this passage are numerous:

1. Jesus was reinstating Peter, who had denied him. It doesn't matter where you have come from. Jesus still wants to use you. Don't disqualify yourself by condemnation.
2. Jesus used the shepherd analogy which is used as a metaphor in scriptures over 500 times.
3. Jesus describes the flock at two levels, lambs and sheep. The call is to shepherd His flock from the baby Christians to the mature. They all need some form of shepherding.
4. It's important to recognize that the flock belongs to Jesus.
5. It's clear that Jesus sees our functioning faithfully as his under shepherds as a sign of our love for Him.
6. His primary concern for the flock was that they be fed.

*"You must decide whether or not you will design your life after the pattern of Jesus or design your life around the best thinking the world has to offer."*C.Gene Wilkes

I. What is a Pastor?

My definition of a pastor is,

An under-shepherd of Jesus Christ wholly committed to faithfully watch over and nurture God's flock.

1 Peter 5:2

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;

We see from this passage that Peter obeyed Jesus' request and exhorted others to be pastors after God's own heart.

Pastors must do so willingly, with pure motives and from a servant heart.

II. What are some characteristics of sheep?

- A. Sheep were very useful and families from the Middle East depended on them.
 1. They ate sheep's meat.

2. They used the sheep's skin for tent making.
3. They used sheep for sacrifices.
4. They used the wool for clothing.
5. They got milk and cheese from sheep.

The learning point here is that pastors today will be more effective when they fully realise the significance and potential usefulness of the flock.

- B. Sheep were a sign of family honour and social position.
- C. Sheep naturally gather around food, protection, affection, touch and voice.
- D. Sheep often think the grass is greener in other pastures.
- E. Sheep tend to wander.

III. What are the marks of a true shepherd?

Outlined below are 7 characteristics of true shepherds.

A. True Shepherds watch over the flock.

Hebrews 13:17 (NLT)

¹⁷Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

Shepherds would use their rod to ward off enemies. They would look out for impending danger.

Matthew 7:15

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

1. Watching involves proactively dealing with enemies of the flock
 - Watching out for wrong attitudes
 - Watching out for deception
 - Watching out for familiarity
 - Watching out for complacency
 - Watching out for greed

Remember that there are many gates into a church. The gate of bookshops, the gate of music, the gate of television. It's important to train the flock to guard what enters their hearts.

2. Watching also involves looking out for testimonies.
3. Watching involves spotting talent and growth.
4. Watching involves prayer for protection as you sense impending danger.
5. Watching involves prophetic declaration of God's purposes that you see.

Shepherds are responsible for the sheep's routine vaccinations and any emergency situations that occur. As a shepherd of God's flock are you giving the flock immune boosters so that they can stand when they go out amongst wolves? Shepherds would protect sheep from poisonous plants and predators. Are you watching them and aware of potential poison? Some sheep are

aware of what they can eat and what they cannot eat. Others are still lambs and unaware. We need to watch.

B. True shepherds lay down their lives for the flock.

John 10:17-18

17The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Shepherds would let their sheep go into their pen or enclosure and then literally lie over the opening to protect them. They literally became the door. Any intruder would literally have to go through the shepherd to get to the sheep. Often shepherds would be found wounded or even killed after the sheep are scattered. The shepherd would literally have laid down his life for them.

Is there a group of people you have come to care about so much that you would lay down your life for them?

What does laying down your life look like?

Do you care about the flock more than your own ego?

Are you serving people to help them accomplish their dreams OR are you using people to help you accomplish your dreams?

C. True shepherds know their flock and are known by them.

John 10:1-4,14

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” 6Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.14“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

You get to know the flock by spending time with them. Remember that Jesus left heaven to come to earth, just like shepherds spend so much time with the sheep that they end up smelling like them.

Jesus is interested in the individual sheep.

Luke 15:1-7

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” 3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he

joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

True shepherds know how to deal with the wandering sheep. Sometimes this involved using the blunt end of the staff to jab the sheep in the ribs and nudge it back in the direction of the flock. The rod was used more in defence and as we know from Ps 23 both the rod and staff had a comforting effect. When have you used the rod to stand up in defence and protection of your flock?

1 Timothy 6:10

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Do you know what causes wandering in your region, your church and amongst your flock?

Visiting the flock

1. Routine Visits - These are useful and they ensure that you don't end up spending years without visiting them.
2. Surprise Visits – for these try to make them short and take a gift with you.
3. Crisis Visits– Be careful that you don't only socialize with the flock when they are in trouble. They might start thinking you see them as no more than a problem to solve.

D. True shepherds lead the flock into life

John 10:7-10

7Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

1. This requires bravery and courage.
2. Pastors must learn to lead.
3. This is not legalism but fullness in Christ
4. Thieves and robbers take and destroy. Jesus gives.

Does the flock trust you?

Does the flock know and recognize your voice?

E. True shepherds reach out to "outsider" sheep.

John 10:16

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

There are sheep that are wandering or backslidden that need to be brought into the pen.

Note here that as under-shepherds we are called to help the flock hear Jesus voice.

F. True shepherds know which flock are under their stewardship.

John 10:11-13

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

When you are a steward you look after something because you care about it and will have to give an account.

This is why church membership is important.

Pastors need to know which is their flock, and which is under the care of another.

G. True Shepherds are involved in the birthing and nurturing of sheep.

Who have you birthed in the spirit? If you are barren, pray that God shows you why? Barren women in the natural will get examined and go for various tests. In the same way if you are spiritually barren ask God to reveal to you the cause. Don't go by your natural explanation. As the great church leader from Cameroon, ZT Fommum said, "You might describe your situation as a headache when in actual fact you have cancer."

Shepherds in ancient times would watch as lambs were born. Often they would use their staff to allocate the lambs to the correct ewe. Very often pastoral ministry involves facilitating pastoral care via various leaders in a local church. Often the voice of the shepherd was the first sound a lamb would hear after birth.

Nurturing of sheep involves

1. Watering – removing the stone and gaining access to the well or water-hole.
2. Grooming and Shearing – this is like the pruning for our character and growth.
3. Feeding – nourishing them with the Word.