Shepherding 101

Good morning, everyone and Happy Sabbath! In my Friday night studies, the role of a shepherd seemed to be a reoccurring thought. *We're all* heading for such a role in the future in some form or another and we all share the title to some extent here and now among God's family. So, what is and how can one "shepherd?" There's more to it than throwing a bale of hay over a fence or walking around with a staff. **Psalm 23:1-6**- "The LORD is my *Shepherd*; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He *leads* me beside the still waters. He *restores* my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, 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 for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely *goodness and mercy* shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall *dwell in the house of the LORD forever."* This scripture always illustrated (at least to me) the perfect role of God's Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

What is a Shepherd?

The term shepherd as defined from the On-line Dictionary is:

1. One who herds, guards, and tends sheep.

2. One who ***cares for and guides a group of people, as a minister or teacher***.

A pretty clear and straight forward definition. A **shepherd** or **sheepherder** is a person who *tends*, *herds*, *feeds*, or *guards* flocks of sheep. *Shepherd* derives from Old English *sceaphierde (*sceap *'sheep'* + hierde *'herder').* Shepherding is one of the world's oldest occupations, and existing in agricultural communities around the world and an important part of pastoralist animal husbandry.

Because of the vastness of the profession, numerous religions and cultures have symbolic or figurative references to the shepherd profession. Jesus referred to Himself as "The Good Shepherd."

John 10:11- 15- "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. But the one who is a hireling, and who is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees. And the wolf seizes the sheep and scatters them. Now the hireling flees because he is a hireling and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and I know those who are Mine, and am known of those who are Mine. Just as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

As we are to grow in the image and likeness of our Savior Jesus Christ, we to should emulate the role of shepherd as He did among His flock. Granted we all have different parts within the Body of Christ but caring for each other will

increase the unity and love of the brethren. Bearing fruits of the Spirit will be the results. With every right, godly, selfless act, we promote unity in the church and unity with each other. This is a complete biblical attitude because when we act in accordance with the mind of Christ, we draw closer to God.

Leading and Restoring

When we edify each other, we demonstrate the love of God in us for our family. When we speak words of encouragement and share joy, we cannot help but to improve our relationship with God and with those around us. It is just one of the side benefits of doing righteousness, that we grow closer to one another when we act with that outward godly love toward them. It just automatically happens. Goodness unites people. Our facial expressions should reflect the joy we have been given. Cookie told me after she was baptized a couple of weeks ago, "I'm so thankful to have been chosen." What a precious statement! This joy alone should have us all doing backflips, that would be a sight indeed. Being called and set apart to be chosen for God's purpose and adoption into His family, what a tremendous gift! Being a sad sack or looking "constipated" all the time will not yield the same results. The joy of the Lord is our strength!

Colossians 3:12-15- "Put on then, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, deep inner affections, kindness, humility, meekness *and* longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so also you *should forgive.* And above all these things *put on* love, which is *the* bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you were called into one body, and be thankful."

Romans 14:17-19- "For the kingdom of God is not a *matter* of eating and drinking; rather, *it is* righteousness and peace and joy in *the* Holy Spirit. Because the one who serves Christ in these things *is* well pleasing to God and acceptable among men. So then, we should pursue the things of peace and the things that edify one another."

1 Corinthians 14:12- "In the same way, since you are desirous of spiritual gifts, seek *them* that you may abound for the edification of the church."

Ephesians 4:12-16- "For the perfecting of the saints, for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the body of Christ; Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ; So that we no longer be children, tossed and

carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error; But holding the truth in love, may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, *even* Christ. From Whom all the body, fitly framed and compacted together by *that which* every joint supplies, according to *its* inner working in *the* measure of each individual part, is making the increase of the body unto *the* edifying of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:29- "Do not let any corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but that which is good and needful for edification that it may give grace to those who hear."

1 Thessalonians 5:11-14- "Therefore, encourage one another, and edify one another, even as you are already doing. Now we beseech you, brethren, to acknowledge those who are laboring among you, and are overseeing you, and are instructing you in *the* Lord, And to greatly respect them in love for the sake of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. Now we encourage you, brethren, *to* admonish those who are irresponsible, console the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient toward everyone."

1 Timothy 1:4-5- "Nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which lead to empty speculations rather than to edification from God, which *is* in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and genuine faith;"

Throughout these scriptures, Paul calls upon us to treat each other with mercy, with kindness, with meekness and humility. Getting our way or always being right isn't God's Way. Developing that personal relationship with God the Father will enlighten us to growth in the likeness of His Son. Keeping others ahead of ourselves will produce the oneness in God's flock. We are human and we make mistakes. The Apostle Paul says we need to be forbearing with each other. We will stumble sometimes I'm sure, we all do. While we shouldn't be offended, offenses will occur. When and if they do, forgive them. When someone is down, pick them up. It isn't about you, remember who is greatest among you?

Romans 12:3-5- "For I say through the grace that was given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think with sound-mindedness, as God has divided to each one a measure of faith. For even as we have many members in one body, but all members do not have the same function; Likewise, we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another."

These scriptures are vital for becoming a good shepherd. You'll never get sheep in a flock much less have any of them follow if you fail in these areas. The humble and contrite spirit God desires in us must be visible to those around us. Pride and contentions are not God's Way of unification. Periodic self-checks to see where we're at with respect to bearing fruit is a great way to stay in line. We must not act out of the flesh and remember, we're "last in line." We could end up having the door shut in our face.

I remember an old movie, "Oh, God!" with George Burns and John Denver. Denver was told by God (George Burns) to go and see this big TV evangelist with answers to a test they'd given him. The TV preacher was so puffed up on himself, he stopped his mega-sermon revival to let the crowd know that, "God sent him tooo meee!" Only to have John Denver tell him that God sent him to tell him what he was doing was wrong and he should quit preaching and go sell shoes. As far fetched as this movie was, how many professed "preachers" should be selling shoes?

Matthew 7:21-23- "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but the one who *is* doing the will of My Father, Who *is* in heaven.

Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?' And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.'"

When we walk in the Spirit, and follow the example set by Jesus Christ, we can expect Him to lead and guide us in ministering to one another. Growing together in His Word and Spirit tightens the flock and aids in keeping the sheep within the fold close together. Feeding His flock among us **(1 Peter 5:2)**.

Most of all we need to grow and we need to act in love for one another. And the reason he gives us this instruction is because love is the glue that binds us together as one. Just think of the opposite and you can see how true that is. If you're not acting in love, you are acting out of the flesh. And as soon as you start acting that way, it will become divisive and drive people away. Nobody wants to be around people like that. There's a neat t-shirt that I've seen that says, "Mean People Suck!" Quite true. I've known relatives that were referred to as "Black Holes" as they sucked the light out of a room when they came in. Perpetual killjoys. Anyone would withdraw from such persons. But when the same type of people are showing love and joy for you and others, we are drawn to them. We immediately begin to form a oneness within whatever group there happens to be.

When we openly display this love in a genuine way, we begin to grow together and begin to adhere to one another because of the mutual love we are showing for one another. The Peace of God will rest on His flock. It will rest on us and in us and among us.

James 3:17-18- "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and without hypocrisy. Now *the* fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace."

God's Word assures us that if we live up to His calling by living in complete obedience to His instructions in putting on the new man and loving our brethren, we will not just grow in godly character, we will also begin to produce unity. The oneness that Jesus Christ wants to see in His flock.

Protecting the Sheep

Part of the shepherd's job is to protect the flock from predators, in our case, Satan and his minions. We are to look out for one another.

Ecclesiastes 4:10-11- "For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, for he does not have another to help him.

Again, if two lie *together*, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm *alone*?" Safety in numbers!

1 Peter 5:4-9- "And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you shall receive an unfading, eternal crown of glory. In the same manner, *you* younger men be subject to *the* older men; and all *of* you be subject to one another, being clothed with humility because God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble. Be humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in due time; Casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you. Be sober! Be vigilant! *For your adversary the devil is prowling about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour*. Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing *that* the same afflictions are being fulfilled among your brethren who are in *the* world." If we're not careful a sheep can wander and become vulnerable. We must stay armed with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God **(Ephesians 6:17)**. Lions in the wild will all too often, seek out the week or stragglers who wander away.

As a shepherd we too must be so cautious as to not fall prey to the enemy's infiltration and deceptions.

Matthew 26:31- “Then Jesus said to them, “All of you shall be offended in Me during this night; for it is written, ‘I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.’”

If we are not walking in proper alignment with the Will of God, we open the gate to the enemy to attack the flock. There will be harsh consequences as well for those who so choose to step into the shepherd’s role.

Jeremiah 23:1-4- “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture,” says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, God of Israel, against the shepherds who feed My people, “You have scattered My flock, and have driven them away, and have not taken care of them. Behold, I will bring upon you the evil of your doings,” says the LORD. “But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and will bring them again to their fold. And they shall be fruitful and multiply. And I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them. And they shall fear no more, nor be afraid; nor shall they lack *anything*,” says the LORD.”

Ezekiel 34:2- “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds, “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?”

Ezekiel 34:4-5- "You have not made the weak strong, nor have you healed the sick, nor have you bound up the broken. You have not brought again those that were driven away, nor have you sought that which was lost; but you have ruled them with force and with cruelty. And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd. And they became food to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered."

Zechariah 11:17- "***Woe to the worthless shepherd*** who abandons the flock! The sword *shall be* on his arm and on his right eye; his arm *shall be* completely dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened."

As with any role or part we are given in God's Family, we must be performing to His expectations and in His way. What *we think* something should be is irrelevant. Remember Moses striking the rock **(Numbers 20:11)**? Uzzah **(2 Samuel 6:6-7)**?

Comfort from the Shepherd

We have the peace and comfort of knowing that we belong to the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. When we live obedient lives according to God's Way, He claims us as His Own.

Psalm 100:3- "Know that the LORD, He is God. He has made us, and we are His; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."

John 10:2-5- “But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he brings the sheep out, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger for they will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

John 10:14-16- “I am the good Shepherd, and I know those who are Mine, and am known of those who are Mine. Just as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring those also, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.”

John 10:27-30- “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; and no one shall take them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one has the power to seize them from My Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

We know that tend means “to care for” and maintain. Feeding God’s flock is done through the sharing of His Word. We herd and protect His flock by leading by example, edifying the brethren and a solid prayer life.

In being a shepherd, we have the example of Jesus Christ to follow. Doing what He always did. Always acting in love as he did. Always acting in humility as He did. Always being worthy of our calling as He was, fulfilling the will of God The Father. He set the example of how we should be with one another. Someday we may be entrusted with a flock we could not presently understand. However, we have the rest of our lives to prepare us to fulfill this or whatever role God has in store for us. We are truly blessed! Amen!

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