

Leading by Faith

Session #8: Cultivating a Shepherd's Heart

Welcome – Welcome back!

- We are in the third quarter of this course, the second session.
- We kicked off after half time with Believing in the Church.

The church is people, organization and gathering.

- That gathering started, not in Acts, but with Abraham when God called him.
- By that call, his coming near in the manger, and by becoming a curse for us on the Cross, God has reversed the flow of humanity from scattering to gathering.

We live in the time of the GATHERING.

- Church is the weekly gathering of the people who belong to God.
- It is the manifestation in our world of that activity of God of reversing the flow of humanity...bringing people from being in Adam to being in Christ.

And this gathering on Sunday mornings that we rightly call church, is his chief end in this time period between Christ's ascension and return.

- So, it should be prioritized in our life, through timely attendance, service, invitation, giving, preparing our hearts, go to church on vacation, etc.
- God believes in what he is doing in the church!

We should believe in it too.

- The more we love Jesus, the more we should love his church because he loves the church.
- And our assignment was to demonstrate our belief in the church by recruiting one person to take this course next year. There are currently X registrations. We got to get recruiting people!

Discussion – What was your most impactful take away from the 7th session? Why?

- Each person 60 seconds or less!
- Most common one from your table.

6:15 PM – Tonight's topic is Cultivating a Shepherd's Heart.

- Now, only a few of you in here are pastors, but shepherding is a little taste of pastoring.
- It is doing very PT some of what a pastor does 24/7.

And every leader must do some shepherding.

- You are not going to be a good leader for Jesus, unless you are a good shepherd.
- How do you cultivate a shepherd's heart? Well, by first looking to the Good Shepherd Jesus.
- Let's start with him and then move onto the Apostles in general, and then Paul & Peter.

John 10:1-18 is about how Jesus pastors us as his people, and

- therefore, serves as both a motivation and a guide for us as we seek to be faithful in leading his church.
- Most Bibles title this section “I am the Good Shepherd.”

What a marvelous passage of Scripture. Much could be said about it. For you today, 7 observations come to my mind about cultivating a shepherd’s heart.

Jesus is the good shepherd of us.

- How do we follow in his footsteps? 7 observations. First,

1. Good shepherds follow Jesus. They joyfully receive the good shepherding of the Lord. Look at John 10:9:

⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

John 10:9 (ESV)

This is the most obvious way to be a good shepherd.

- Follow the best shepherd of all, Jesus.
- But I have found that people can get off track and prioritize other things. Strange but true.

Your greatest need as a leader is your personal time with Jesus.

- The greatest gift you can give yourself, your family, and your church is to passionately pursue the Lord.
- You must sustain a vibrant relationship with God.

You won't be able to offer ministry to others, unless you welcome his ministry every day, even moment by moment. To be good ministry shepherds, we must follow Jesus the most. That's #1. #2...

2. Good shepherds know and are known by people. They pursue relationships with church members and share their own lives with them. Look at John 10:14:

¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

John 10:14 (ESV)

That is really a remarkable statement, isn't it? We know him.

- We sinners know the Holy One.
- We little finite creatures made from the dust know the infinite, eternal uncreated one.
- Me and you, are in relationship with God.

That's an overwhelming truth. And some of its application is to motivate us as ministry leaders.

- There will be times when you get burned out of trying to know people.
- There will be days when you are exhausted from the relationships in church.
- There will be seasons when you want to check out.
- And, unfortunately, sometimes that will be because the people God gave you to lead will hurt you. Sheep bite.

Especially on those days, remember that Jesus was determined for us to know him, and humans nailed him to the cross for that.

- Be motivated by our Lord to be transparent and vulnerable with others. To be genuinely interested in others.
- Water your soul in the joys and sorrows of the people of Living Faith.

Be like Jesus. Get to know people and let people know you. #2.
#3.

3. Good shepherds care for people. They pursue relationships with church members and share their own lives with them. Look at John 10:12-13:

¹²He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

John 10:12-13 (ESV)

Don't do what you do at church because you have to do it.

- Do it because God has called you to do it.
- And do it with care in your heart for people.
- Be there for people when they need you.
- Being a good church leader means caring for people. #3.

4th ...

4. Good shepherds sacrifice for their people. Being a leader in ministry costs something. There are things to give up. Look at John 10:11:

¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:11 (ESV)

Jesus gave up his very life, and for sinners.

- It doesn't get any more sacrificial than that.
- And while there are a lot of rewards for ministry leadership in this life and the next, there are sacrifices to be made. Small and large.

Expect to be stretched in many ways when you lead.

- Expect even to suffer for the good of God's people.
- If you aren't giving up something, you probably aren't serving well as a leader.
- Be like Jesus. Sacrifice for people. #4. #5.

5. Good shepherds minister God's word to their people.

They study, obey, and share the Bible with others. Look at John 10:5:

⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

John 10:5 (ESV)

As followers of Jesus, we know his voice.

- He is not a stranger to us.
- His voice is right here in the Bible. It's his Word.

As church leaders who follow his lead, we have a voice in the lives of our people too. They should know our voice physically speaking.

- What we sound like when we speak and when we pray.
- They should hear from us. But we don't merely share our own voice with them.

Our voice is based on his voice.

- Everything people need for life and godliness is in the Bible. It is what you have to give people.
- Be careful not to think that you have something else to give them. Say what God says.

We don't have to be amazing Bible teachers. Simply be in it every day.

- Nourish yourself with it. Feed on it.
- Then, share with others what has nourished you.

Be a conduit of God's voice for others.

- Don't just encounter people and have them encounter you.
- Facilitate encounters with the Lord.

Being a good shepherd involves ministering God's word to people, not merely your own words. #5. #6

6. Good shepherds lead their people. They are out front. You cannot take people where you haven't gone. Look at John 10:3-4:

³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

John 10:3-4 (ESV)

The Son of God became a human being and has led us in every way. And he wants church leaders to lead similarly, as an example, and as someone who brings others along.

Church leaders must lead in virtue.

- If we aren't growing in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, wisdom, zeal, humility, hope, and faithfulness,
- why would we think the people following us would become more like Jesus.

Being a leader in ministry also means that we lead in the study of God's word.

- In prayer.
- In faith.
- In commitment to the church.
- In vision.

We go first, really, genuinely, and then and only then, do we invite people to follow our lead. Be like Jesus. Lead as the Lord did. #6. #7, and lastly,

7. Good shepherds seek to bring in new people. They do the work of evangelism and invitation. Look at John 10:16:

¹⁶And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

John 10:16 (ESV)

Jesus said he must bring new people in. Must. He felt compelled to go out in order to bring in.

We must follow him in that. We don't have to be prolific evangelists with incredible gifts in that regard.

- But we must have a burden for those who don't know Jesus.
- For those in our neighborhood, in our city, and around the world.

And we initiate with others to invite them to Christ and his church, even when it's uncomfortable to do so.

How can we be a good shepherd?

- Jesus is our guide and our motivator...7 observations...
- Follow the Lord. Know and be known. Care. Sacrifice.
- Share the Word. Lead. And bring others into the church.

Keep these things as your focus.

- It is the most important priority in order to fulfill your mission.
- Do them first, and your ministry will indeed flourish.

Discussion – Which one have you been doing well at? And which one do you want to improve at? Why?

6:40 PM – Jesus is the best motivation and example, but the Apostles provide help to us as well.

- The Apostles had a unique role in the church. Their names are on the foundation of the New Jerusalem!
- Our names won't be there. And yet, they were shepherds too, like us in that way. Here are two observations about them in general:

1. Good shepherds resolve conflict. They address disagreements directly and seek solutions that honor God and build unity. They listen carefully to all sides and guide people toward reconciliation and peace. Look at Acts 6:1:

¹Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

Acts 6:1 (ESV)

11

There was a real problem in the early church.

- Sometimes problems are fake or trivial. You can ignore those.
- This one was real. And it was along ethnic lines, but the core issue was neglect of needs.

The Apostles listened, recognized it and solved it. Good shepherds do that.

- They see problems not as threats, but as opportunities for God to work.
- They don't create more conflict. They reduce it. 2nd:

2. Good shepherds empower others to lead. They share responsibility of the shepherding the church. They delegate authority. Look at Acts 6:3:

³Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.

Acts 6:3 (ESV)

Good shepherds do not try to do everything themselves.

- They equip and release others-people of character and spiritual maturity-to serve and lead.
- This not only meets needs but grows new leaders in the church. And the result in Acts 6 is that the church continued to grow.
- You may be a new leader here, but we want you to already be thinking about raising up other leaders as you lead.

That's 2 from the Apostles in general, and here are 5 more from the Apostle Paul particularly.

3. Good shepherds value faithfulness. They may value other things, but simply doing what we need to do every day and doing that for the rest of our life is most important when it comes to church leadership.

²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 20:24 (ESV)

Paul didn't think his life was valuable unless he finished what God told him to do.

- If he didn't finish, he wasn't successful. That's how good shepherds measure success. Not by worldly metrics but by faithfulness to God's purposes.
- Their highest aim isn't safety or popularity but completing the work God has given them. That's #3. 4th...

4. Good shepherds protect people from false teaching.

They remain alert to threats against the church, both external and internal. Not heresy hunters and overanalyzing everyone's words, and assuming what is in people's minds. But genuinely aware of the destruction that false teaching causes and protecting people from it. Look at Acts 20:29-31:

²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Acts 20:29-31 (ESV)

Paul protected the Ephesian church with tears.

- He was earnest and vigilant. We must be too.
- We must recognize false teaching, address divisive behavior, and guide the church through pressures that threaten to compromise biblical truth.

Shepherds are a helpful illustration. Protection doesn't mean isolation-it means equipping believers to stand firm in truth.

- A shepherd doesn't simply gather the sheep in a pen and lock the gate.
- He actively watches for predators, inspects the sheep for signs of illness, and guides them away from dangerous terrain.
- Similarly, good leaders actively monitor influences affecting people God has entrusted to them and respond appropriately. That's #4. Fifth...

5. Good shepherds maintain financial integrity. They keep their house in order when it comes to money. Look at Acts 20:33-35:

³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Acts 20:33-35 (ESV)

Good shepherds demonstrate contentment, generosity, and transparency in financial matters. That's #5. #6:

6. Good shepherds depend on God's grace. They don't believe they deserve to be given the responsibility they have given by God to minister to others.

³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Acts 20:32 (ESV)

Despite your efforts, you cannot transform hearts or guarantee spiritual growth.

- We all depend entirely on God's grace working through his Word.
- This perspective keeps us from both pride in success and despair in difficulty.

The power is in the Gospel, not the messengers.

- We are jars of clay. Ordinary Tupperware.
- The value is what we share, not who we are.
- We didn't earn the right to be leaders at LFCC. God has called us and given us this ministry as an undeserved gift. Lastly on this section.

7. Good shepherds love people. They have heartfelt devotion to their well-being. They personally, joyfully and willfully sacrifice, serve and suffer for God's best for the people.

³⁶And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Acts 20:36-38 (ESV)

That scene is like a family farewell. Paul was leaving and never coming back. He was going to die.

- They hugged. They kissed him. They all wept together. That's love.
- You may not love people that well or deeply, but there has to be some love in what you are doing, or you shouldn't be doing it.
- Okay, same drill for the discussion.

Discussion – Which one have you been doing well at? And which one do you want to improve at? Why?

7 PM – Jesus is our best help to cultivate a shepherd’s heart. The Apostles in general and Paul in particular are helpful too. To conclude our evening, let’s look at the words of Jesus for Pastor Peter and then some of Peter’s words too. First...

- 1. Good shepherds prioritize new & young Christians.** They recognize the importance of discipleship for spiritual infants. They prioritize ministry to them. John 21:15:

¹⁵**He said to him, “Feed my lambs.”**

John 21:15 (ESV)

The word “lambs” refers to the youngest and most vulnerable members of the flock.

- Good shepherds pay special attention to nurturing new believers.
- Feeding the lambs means teaching the basics of the gospel, patiently answering questions, and providing a safe environment for growth.
- It requires gentleness and attentiveness, recognizing that young believers need encouragement and protection.

I think Jesus said this to Peter first because there is a comfort level to focus only on the mature. Obviously, we should shepherd mature people, but we **MUST** shepherd the immature towards maturity. That’s #1. #2...

2. Good shepherds guide God’s people. They don’t just teach concepts. They walk with people through life and give them direction. Look at John 21:16:

¹⁶He said to him, “Tend my sheep.”

John 21:16 (ESV)

The word “tend” means to shepherd, to guide.

- Good shepherds are present in the lives of people.
- They listen to their struggles, celebrate their victories, and walk with them through valleys.

Shepherding involves protecting the flock from spiritual danger, correcting gently when someone strays, and fostering unity.

- They visit the sick, counsel the troubled, and pray for their people.
- That’s #2. Third...

3. Good shepherds nourish God’s people. I touched on this with other passages, but there is an emphasis here I think is important. Look at John 21:17:

¹⁷Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

John 21:17 (ESV)

The repetition of this here and elsewhere underscores the importance of spiritual nourishment for all believers. Good shepherds love the Bible and share it with others.

They don't rely on clichés or personal opinions, but point people to Christ, the Bread of Life. That's #3. 4th...

4. Good shepherds serve because they love Jesus the most.

There are many good motives for serving in ministry, but the most important and highest motivation must be because you love Jesus more than anybody else. Look at John 21:15:

¹⁵When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”

John 21:15 (ESV)

Three times Jesus repeated this question three times, mirroring Peter's denial, not to shame him but to restore him.

- This is foundational for us too because we will fail.
- Ministry that is not rooted in a deep, personal love for Jesus will eventually become hollow.

His love for us and our love for him as a response fuel our perseverance through hardship, patience in conflict, and humility in success.

- At the end of the day, if I have nothing else left to give, I stay in ministry because God has called me and I love him the most.
- That's not true of just pastors, that's true of lay leaders like you. Serve because you love him the most. 5th:

5. Good shepherds are examples of humility. They demonstrate modesty in their actions and attitudes. They show selflessness and put others before themselves. 1

Peter 5:2,3:

²shepherd the flock of God that is among you...being examples to the flock.

1 Peter 5:2, 3 (ESV)

Peter's appeal was for the leaders to take action.

- Shepherd the flock, care for the church members, love them, lead them, teach them, watch out for them, oversee them, discipline them if necessary.
- He urged action, but primarily the action is that of being an example and being an example in terms of humility.

In other words, if you are a leader, we ought to be able to look at your life and see a person who approaches others from a less than you are posture.

- You live out what it means to have an accurate and proper perspective about yourself...to not think more highly of yourself than you ought.
- You are a picture of humility, an example for us.

Peter also served as an example.

- Of course, we can't see him or know him personally but realize many of his readers couldn't either.
- They probably got to know him like we do, through the Scriptures.

He appealed to the leaders among the people as a fellow leader.

- It is not clear if Peter was an actual elder in a local church. Maybe, he was in Jerusalem.
- What is significant is that he uses that term instead of the extremely honorable title of Apostle.

Think about it. In all of human history, God, only gave out 12. Peter was one of them, probably the lead.

- Yet, when he addressed these elders in local churches in Asia Minor, he used their title.
- He said, "I am just like you guys." He dealt with the churches from a less than he was posture. What a great example of humility.

And of course, he pointed to the greatest example of humility ever...Christ.

- Notice, Peter wrote that he was a witness to Christ's sufferings.
- It makes total sense that he chose to emphasize that part of Christ's life out here.

I mean, surely, Christ's birth was humble. The King of Kings born in a barn, laid in a horse trough.

- Surely, Christ's life was humble. The Creator of the universe working as a carpenter in Nazareth.
- But, the last twelve hours of his life demonstrated His humility most profoundly.

The perfect Son of God whipped, beaten, and crucified as a criminal. What an example of receiving less than he deserved.

Since God opposes the proud, let's be humble.

- He organized his church, his community of people, with the idea that leaders would be full of humility.
- That's

6. Good shepherds know the enemies of humility. Wise leaders recognize the dangers that threaten a modest spirit, such as arrogance and self-importance. They understand how pride, rivalry, and spiritual opposition undermine a gentle and lowly heart. 1 Peter 5:2,3:

²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³not domineering over those in your charge,

1 Peter 5:2-3 (ESV)

Pastor Peter urged the leaders to shepherd because they want to do it, not because they have to do it.

- I think an application here is that they shouldn't serve out of duty because duty can be an enemy of humility.
- If a person performs their duty, if they do what they are required to do, if they fulfill responsibilities to which they are obligated, they have reason to be proud, don't they?

“There was a standard. I met it. I was up to the challenge. I got what it takes. I completed the task.” See, how that can facilitate pride. Duty can be an enemy of humility.

Similarly, Peter urged the leaders to shepherd because they are eager to serve, not because they are looking to profit from their efforts.

- Though he mentions money, certainly the application can be prestige or honor or thanks.
- His point is don't be motivated to serve to get something back. Why?

Greed is also an enemy of humility.

- If a person does something not simply for the sake of Christ, but eager for something in return, then gets it, they have a reason to be proud, don't they?
- “There was a job. I did it. I got paid. I was worthy of that wage. In fact, I deserve more.” Greed is an enemy of humility.

Lastly, here, Peter urged the leaders to shepherd primarily as examples, not as dictators, because authority can be an enemy of humility.

- The position of elder has God-given authority.
- Members are called to submit to their leadership.

If a person seeks the office of elder for power and prestige, then gets it, they have a reason to be proud, don't they?

“They picked me to hold this office. I am in charge. I must be a pretty important person. I deserve to be able to tell people what do around here.” Authority can be an enemy of humility.

Since God opposes the proud, let’s be humble by fighting the enemies of humility which lurk right next door, even in our own hearts. Greed. Duty. Authority.

Humility has its examples and its enemies. It also has its rewards. Lastly, #7:

7. Good shepherds serve for God’s rewards. Faithful shepherds dedicate themselves, anticipating blessings from above. Devoted leaders work diligently, trusting in heavenly recognition. 1 Peter 5:4:

⁴And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

1 Peter 5:4 (ESV)

Peter stated that those leaders who serve their congregations in the manner that he described (willingly, as good examples, without an unhealthy interest in money) will be rewarded with a crown of glory.

- This will happen when Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd comes again.
- In other words, the pronoun “you” is not you the reader but refers back to the leaders.

Since God opposes the proud, let's be humbly motivated by the reward that Christ himself will give to us.

- There are rewards here, but looking for rewards for this work here will create pride in our hearts.
- And as wonderful as the rewards in this life are for following Christ, the millisecond we step into eternity is really almost indescribable.

Discussion – Which one have you been doing well at? And which one do you want to improve at? Why?

Assignment:

- Do last session's assignment if you haven't yet.
- And add to that by doing a proactive shepherding text or phone call or appointment. The more personal the better.
- Who in your church world here, needs to hear from you? Especially a word of encouragement.
- Let's pray.