



worldoutreach
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

SERIES FIVE
MODULE ONE:
BIBLICAL ROLE OF
A SHEPHERD



Outline Session 1 - 2

1. Biblical work and role of a Shepherd in Scripture
2. Tasks as a Shepherd in the Church

SESSION ONE: BIBLICAL WORK AND ROLE OF A SHEPHERD IN SCRIPTURE

In both testaments, there are quite a few references to sheep and shepherds. This session does a quick survey.

OLD TESTAMENT

1. Sheep and shepherds in the Old Testament (OT)

Often, God's people are metaphorically symbolised as 'sheep' (see Psalm 100:3).

Sheep

Sheep in the OT are portrayed as helpless, dependent animals:

- Sheep tend to go stray (Isaiah 53:6)
- They need to be led (Numbers 27:17)
- They require guidance to places where they can pasture and rest (Psalm 23)
Therefore, they require a shepherd.

Shepherds

Some leaders in the OT were sometimes called shepherds appointed by the Lord to provide for the spiritual or material needs of the people (see Psalm 77:20; 78:71; Numbers 27:16-17). In other places, the Lord strongly condemned the self-seeking leaders of Israel who didn't care for his people as he wanted them cared for (Jeremiah 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:2-10).

2. Lord as a Shepherd.

God has revealed himself as a Shepherd (Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:12). He is the perfect Shepherd, exemplifying and illustrating to shepherds throughout all ages the proper actions and attitudes towards God's people.

Israel's most famous poet, David, opened his best-known Psalm (23) with the statement: '*The Lord is my Shepherd*' (Psalm 23:1). In the Hebrew, this opening phrase says, 'JEHOVAH-RAAH' meaning "The Lord my Shepherd". The Hebrew word 'raah' means 'to feed' or 'to pasture', and spoke of one who herds, pastures and tends for a flock.

As Israel's Shepherd, he promised to watch over, care for and lead his flock, his people. When Israel was in trouble or in need of guidance, they could call upon him (Psalm 80:1).

Two passages that really conveys God's shepherd heart for his people are Ezekiel 34:15-16 & Jeremiah 23:1-13. This foreshadowed the coming of Messiah, the true shepherd.

NEW TESTAMENT

3. Jesus - Our Shepherd

Jesus is the incarnate and perfect representation of Jehovah-Raah.

John 10 develops his identification as a shepherd most clearly:

- He came and proclaimed, *“I am the good Shepherd”* (John 10:11)
- Jesus himself is the gate as well as the Shepherd (John 10:9)
- Through his vicarious suffering and death, he lay down his life for the sheep (John 10:11)
- To his sheep, he gives life to the full, abundant life (John 10:10)

Jesus is described as a shepherd in three ways:

- Good Shepherd (John 10:14)
- Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20)
- Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4)

Peter refers to Jesus as the **“CHIEF-shepherd”** (1 Peter 5:4) meaning that there are others, of which he is the Chief. Ministry leaders are UNDER-shepherds of the Chief-Shepherd. Jesus is the appointer of shepherds, as it says in Eph 4:11.

4. Ministry leaders as shepherds

So, one of the principal tasks we have as ministry leaders is that of a shepherd. We are not just called to lead people, but to love and care for them.

There is a specific responsibility upon us, as shepherds, for the oversight, care and nurture of both individuals and the corporate life of the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).

SESSION TWO: TASKS OF A SHEPHERD IN THE CHURCH

In this session, we're asking the question, what tasks are involved in being a shepherd of the church of God?

1. Knowing the sheep

See John 10:3-4; 14-15.

This speaks of shepherds building relationship with the sheep, or, in our terms, ministry leaders getting to know the people they're taking care of. The application: get to know them and let them get to know you.

2. Feeding

See John 21:15-17, note v. 15 "*Feed my LAMBS*" and v. 17 "*Feed my sheep*".

Two types of "sheep" are listed as needing feeding: the very young ("lambs"), picturing new converts and the biologically young, and the fully grown sheep.

'Feeding' does not mean every leader has to have a teaching gift or the gift of a teacher, but have a degree of competence in sharing the Word of God with others, whether in a formal environment or, more often, one-on-one.

The application: Ministry leaders must provide teaching or instruction that helps people to grow in their knowledge of the word of God and in how to live.

3. Caring

(John 21:16) "*Take care of my sheep.*"

It is God's flock, but he has entrusted them to our care. God is trusting us to take care of them (see 1 Peter 5:2).

Here are some practical ways in which we show care:

- Comforting people
- Expressing concern
- Encouraging and affirming them
- Speaking life into them
- Being there for them
- Listening
- Taking initiative to visit or contact
- Providing an appropriate gesture
- Showing them that we love them

The application: Shepherds take proactive care of their sheep!

4. Protecting

See Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2.

Shepherds must have the quality of watchfulness and being protective. Because sheep are defenseless against predators and hazards, shepherds have a responsibility to protect them.

Some of the dangers may be false teachers, false prophets, divisive people, dissension or satanic attack.

The application: Protect them, warn them and vigilantly watch over them.

5. Guiding

Sheep have no sense of direction and tend to go astray, therefore shepherds must therefore guide them.

In John 10, Jesus spoke of how a true shepherd '*...leads them out*' (v. 3), '*...walks ahead of them...*' (v. 4), to '*...find good pastures*' (9) thus giving '*...them a rich and satisfying life*' (10).

How do we guide them?

- A. By our own example (1 Peter 5:3)
- B. By leading them to safe pastures (John 10:9)
- C. By providing clear God-given vision

The application: provide direction for them.

6. Healing Physician

Sheep have many and varying conditions, all of which require a shepherd to treat them. Like real sheep, the people we lead will have issues also that require healing, like spiritual, emotional, relational, family or marital wounds.

Part of our role as shepherds is to be a physician and minister to their wounds (Isaiah 61:1) by:

- Tending to their wounds
- Taking time to listen
- Ministering the word of God to them
- Providing godly counsel and wisdom
- Helping them recover
- Praying over and for them

The application: Lovingly, patiently and wisely help people to recover from their wounds.

7. Sacrificing

A final aspect of shepherding is that of sacrificing (John 10:11,15). The hallmark of a true shepherd is **SACRIFICE** ("*lays down his life*").

REFERENCES IN THIS MODULE:

Lawrence Richards, **EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF BIBLE WORDS**, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985.