



# GRACE GROUP LEADER GROWTH RESOURCES

**May 2, 2023 - SHEPHERDING - Part 3**

**READ (this article)**

**Teaching Like a Shepherd,** By Dwayne McCrary

John recorded a conversation between Jesus and some Pharisees who overheard Jesus talking to a formerly blind man who had been expelled because of his testimony about Jesus (see John 9). Jesus then taught about what it takes to be a good shepherd. In the middle of that teaching, Jesus stated, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father” (John 10:14-15a, CSB). His statement gives us a glimpse of what teaching like a shepherd involves.

The sheep know their shepherd. A group of sheep could be called by a variety of shepherds, and they would know which one to follow based on the call or voice of their shepherd. But this recognition went both ways. The shepherd also knows his sheep. This is required of a shepherd if he was going to serve his sheep well. For these two things to happen, they have to spend time together. We see this reality when the angel appeared to the shepherds the night of Jesus’s birth. They were in the fields at night with the sheep they were assigned to lead. You cannot spend the night in the field with a group of sheep and not get to know each other better! Let’s turn back a few pages to the life of Amos. He too was a shepherd. We are introduced to Amos in the first verse of his book as being a shepherd from Tekoa.

Some translations identify him as a sheep breeder instead because of the uniqueness of the Hebrew word used in the text. The only other place in the Old Testament we find this specific Hebrew word is 2 Kings 3:4. The king of Moab, Mesha, was identified with this same term. He supplied the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams which points to him being more than a simple shepherd. Later, we discover that Amos also worked with sycamore trees (Amos 7:14). The figs from these trees were used to feed livestock, like sheep, and were sometimes eaten by the poor. Of interest is that Tekoa was in the mountains and sycamore trees grew in lower elevations. Doing both jobs would have required Amos to travel and to have relationships with the wealthy and the poor as he went about his business.

Amos faced opposition from Amaziah the priest who was stationed in Bethel. Amaziah went as far as to tell Amos to return to his home, mind his own business,

and speak to the people at home. (See Amos 7:12.) Amos replied by refusing to be called a prophet. Instead, he pointed to his being a shepherd and keeper of sycamores. We are not told if these two men had met before, but we do know that one bred sheep while the other sacrificed sheep. Their jobs were connected at least by extension.

Amos addressed the wealthy, pointing to the oppression of the poor. In his work, he no doubt had relationships with people in both groups. He knew the people he addressed, and it appears they knew him as well.

If we are to teach like a shepherd, we need to know our sheep and they need to know us. To do so, we need to spend time with the people in our class or group. We may need to look for ways of starting a new group so we can get to know our sheep and they can get to know us. The larger the class or group, the less likely we will know the people in the group. To “know” means more than knowing their names. We need to know about their hurts and concerns so we can shepherd them better. They also need to know our hurts and concerns so they can trust us. This means we need to be more about leading a discussion in our class or group than about dispensing information. Discussion within the class or group will help us know them and them know us as well.

Questions to ponder:

1. Do you know your sheep?
2. Do you know what’s going on in their lives, their hurts, their celebrations?
3. Do they know you?

## **LISTEN OR WATCH THIS PODCAST**

**Groups Leadership Podcast: Lead Like a Shepherd** (35 minutes)

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/season-2-episode-2-lead-like-a-shepherd/id1603339306?i=1000597499140>

<https://youtu.be/2H8XsbUz2xY>

Questions to ponder:

1. Why is it important for group leaders to shepherd their group members?
2. How do our group leaders mimic what Jesus called his first disciples to do?
3. What comes to mind related to the podcast discussion on what the group leader/shepherd does vs. what you are currently doing in this area?