

Grace Group Leader Growth Resources

June 29, 2023 - SHEPHERDING - Part 6

READ (this summation of the chapter)

The Shepherd Leader by Timothy Z. Witmer

Chapter 8 - Shepherds Protect the Sheep

Sheep are vulnerable

- Sheep have teeth on only one jaw, the worst pain they can inflict on an adversary is a good pinch. Sheep also are prone to attacks from predators and they can easily wander into danger. Therefore, they are in need of a shepherd to protect them.
- Jesus compares his followers to sheep, and like sheep we are also vulnerable to wandering and predators.
- In western culture our predators can look more like false teachers, destructive cultural messages and distorted truths. These can cause us to wander into rationalizing sin, materialism and disbelief in inerrancy of the bible. Therefore, we are in need of Jesus and the protection of His undershepherds.

The Good Shepherd, Undershepherds and The Hired Hand

- The Lord is **the** source of unshakeable security and protection of his flock.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. John 10:11,14-15

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:1-4

- Biblically the title of Undershepherd in the church is reserved for Elders in the church. But the acts of Undershepherding can fall on both men and women who are involved in the care and the feeding of the flock. These people are in position to have more intimate knowledge of the flock in different capacities such as Lay Counselors and Small Group Leaders.
- Undershepherds are called upon to protect themselves and the sheep

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you

overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God,^[a] which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Acts 20:28-29

But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear - 1 Samuel 17:34-37

- The Hired Hand is not committed to the well-being of the sheep.

A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don’t belong to him and he isn’t their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he’s working only for the money and doesn’t really care about the sheep.

A Shepherd's Tools

- Shepherds usually carried a rod and a staff to protect the flock. A **Rod** was used to retrieve wandering sheep and a **Staff** was used to beat off predators. Sometimes they had a **Fence** to keep predators out and the sheep from wandering altogether.
- Today our tools to protect the sheep include public warnings and instruction from the pulpit against cultural “wolves” such as materialism, destructive values and false teachings. Intimate knowledge of our flock allows us to warn our sheep privately and instruct them to keep them from wandering and falling into active sin.
- *“The discovery of a stray sheep is not a matter of complacency but for decisive action.”*
Read Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-2, James 5:19-20

Questions to ponder:

1. Do you see yourself as an undershepherd or a hired hand? Why or Why not?
2. What areas of protecting the sheep do you see yourself doing well?
3. Are you in a position to “notice” when sheep begin to stray from the worship and fellowship of the flock? What can you do to improve?
4. Where can you improve on protecting the sheep in the flock you undershepherd?
5. Read Ezekiel 34:1-6. Do you notice yourself falling into any of these? What measures can you take to prevent falling into these?

Check out this Podcast

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/episode-27-developing-a-shepherding-strategy-part-6/id1633749061?i=1000598198545>