

Preaching the Gospel

A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.

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Shepherding and Mentoring

Shepherding

I am reading an interesting book which emphasizes that elders must be shepherds. In order to get the full meaning of this New Testament word, one must understand what a shepherd was in the Bible lands.

First of all, his was a lifetime job. The real shepherd was not a short-term employee. Jesus says of Himself, *“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.”* (John 10:11-12)

Second, the shepherd lived with the sheep. Even at night, after he led them safely into the fold, he slept across the entrance to the fold to keep them safe. This is what Jesus meant when He said, *“I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”* (John 10:9)

Third, he led the sheep; he did not drive them. The sheep learned his voice and would follow him, and him only. *“The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”* (John 10:3)

Fourth, he risked his life in order to save the sheep. *“The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”* (John 10:11)

Therefore, when the Holy Spirit calls elders “shepherds” (1 Peter 5:2), there is a great deal of meaning in the word. Elders cannot do that work simply by making decisions. The only way they can be shepherds is to be with the “sheep,” lovingly caring for them. In order to do this work, they often must assign the deacons to take on some of the tasks they have been doing. Elders must BE with the brethren where the brethren live.

However, elders are not the only ones who are to do the work of shepherding. Galatians 6:1 says, *“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.”* This is the work of a shepherd, and it is to be done by all the spiritual ones—whether men or women. Certainly it is the work of the preacher to be close to the members, to understand their problems, and to help them as much as possible.

Remember that another figure of speech describing Christians is “family”. When this word is considered together with the word “shepherd”, we see a close relationship of caring.

Mentoring

A mentor is “somebody, usually older and more experienced, who advises and guides a younger, less experienced person.” To mentor is “to act as a mentor to somebody, especially a junior colleague”. (Encarta Dictionary)

This is a work Peter gives to elders when he writes: *“but proving to be examples to the flock.”* (1 Peter 5:3) But we know that this is a work of all Christians, especially those who have grown in the faith.

When a preacher takes a young man “under his wing” and instructs him in how to live and preach, he is doing a great work. This is what Jesus did with His apostles. It is what Paul did with Timothy. Older women are to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-5). Such teaching cannot be done simply by teaching in a class. It requires close contact and demonstration. Older women need to be mentors.

Protecting the Flock

I have not finished reading the book, but so far I have not seen emphasis put on the important work of protecting the flock against wolves. This was an important work of the shepherd, and it is an important work of the elders, the preacher, and all other spiritual Christians.

When Paul spoke to the elders of the church in Ephesus he said, *“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”* (Acts 20:28-31)

Elders, preachers, and other faithful men and women will teach on divorce, institutionalism, sexual immorality, denominationalism, immodest dress, evolution, and every other thing which threatens the faith or life of Christians. They will stand against error, even withdrawing from *“those who cause dissension and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned.”* (Romans 16:17) We need bold teaching against all kinds of error—always! This is an essential part of shepherding!

This magazine is devoted to helping “preachers and those who want to preach.” Preaching is much more than preparing and delivering sermons. Preachers must preach with their lives, and they must live close to the people they preach to. We are here to save souls, and that means toil and tears as we work to help individuals. It is the greatest work in the world, but it carries with it a fearsome responsibility. Let us pray to God that we may be the shepherds and mentors God wants us to be.

[The Introduction—Again](#)

Recently an experienced preacher was asked to give the one thing which is most often a fault in sermons which he has heard others preach. He answered, "It is the lack of a good introduction. In fact, many sermons have no introduction at all. The preacher launches into his subject without preparing the audience."

In the book of Acts Luke gives summaries of several sermons. Remember that these are probably very brief condensations, yet he notes the introduction to each. "*Men of Judea, and all you who are in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.*" (Acts 2:14-16) "*Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus.*" (Acts 3:12-13) "*Hear me, brethren and fathers: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran . . .*" (Acts 7:2) "*I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.*" (Acts 10:34) "*Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt . . .*" (Acts 13:16) "*Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.*" (Acts 15:13-14) "*Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.*" (Acts 17:22-23) "*Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you . . . I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel . . .*" (Acts 22:3) "*Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense, since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.*" (Acts 24:10-11) "*Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to make his defense: In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today. . .*" (Acts 26:1-2)

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Each preacher addressed his audience in a respectful way which brought attention to his subject. To Jews, the preacher talked about their scriptures and their heritage through Abraham. To the Gentiles, Paul started with their worship of the unknown god, and then turned to an explanation of the true God. To judges, Paul started with a respectful salutation, then turned to the evidence which they knew was true. From those beginnings, each preacher went on to preach Christ. But each beginning was suited to getting the sympathetic attention of the audience, even though many, if not most, in the audience were against the speaker.

You have selected the subject with care. You know this is a needed subject. How can you prepare the audience to listen carefully and sympathetically to what you have to say? That is what you want to accomplish in your introduction.

This can be done by using a story or some other illustration. Perhaps it is a story in the newspaper, or something which has happened in your life. If this will focus the attention and

interest of the audience on your subject, then it is good to use it. (Never use a story just because you want to tell a good story!) If possible, use verses of scripture on which to base your sermon. Read them and explain them carefully. Use your introduction to focus the interest of your audience on the subject you will explore.

Work hard on your introduction.

Another Email Publication—Keith Sharp emails a monthly publication called *Meditate on These Things*. It is packed with very useful material. He replies to questions, writes on certain subjects, and has study outlines. He will send it to you free. Request it from ksharp@twcnny.rr.com.

PERSONAL: Helen and I have been in the United States since May 6 where I am bringing a report of our work in South Africa and Nigeria to a number of churches. God is blessing us with good health and a wonderful welcome wherever we go. We are also visiting with our children and grandchildren, and that is a great blessing. If the Lord continues to bless us, we will be back in South Africa on August 1. We are already beginning to be homesick for our brethren there. Please continue to keep us in your prayers.

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