



Shepherding in the kingdom

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Contents

Introduction	6
Chapter 01	13
The Sheep	13
Chapter 02	20
The shepherd	20
Chapter 03	42
Understanding shepherding – David the shepherd king	42
Chapter 04	55
Prophets – Pastures, sheep, and shepherds – the background	55
Chapter 05	60
The promised land - A physical pasture or symbol of much more.	60
Chapter 06	74
Sheep – Why sheep?.....	74
Chapter 07	84
Shepherds of the Kingdom	84
Chapter 08	95
Kingdom and Mission – Revealing the plan.....	95
Chapter 09	99
Kingdom and Mission (A new vision).....	99
Chapter 10	117
The Good Shepherd	117
Chapter 11	138

Feeding the Sheep	138
Chapter 12	152
The First Shepherds - a key example	152
Chapter 13	163
Living out the instructions	163
Question 01.....	174
What is the difference between evangelism and mission?.....	174
Question 02.....	180
What is the whole gospel? Part 1 The content.....	180
Question 3 - The whole gospel –	185
Part 2 What does it mean to share the good news?	185
Question 4 – How does the Lord’s prayer relate to carrying out God’s mission?	194
Question 5 – What can we learn from Timothy and Titus about being a shepherd?	200
Question 6 - What can we learn from John about continuing the process of mission?.....	206
Appendix 1 – Sheep, shepherd, and pasture in the Letters.	212
Appendix 2 – Terms and references related to teaching – 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus	214
Appendix 3 – Scripture guide to key words to proclaiming the gospel.....	216

Introduction

A friend of mine suggested that there was a need for training that would help pastors understand their role in promoting and carrying out the mission of bringing the gospel to people of every tribe and nation as declared in both Matthew 28 and Mark 16. As we talked we began to identify a variety of topics and areas where there was a need for clear teaching for both the church (to carry out God's mandate of mission) and the pastor (in helping the church to do so.)

Once I got home and received my friend's notes I began to think about this issue. The question that kept coming up was this: why do so many pastors have such difficulty in first seeing the importance of the mission and then teaching, training and getting their flock involved in the work?

I use the word 'flock' intentionally. Much of our teaching on what it means to be a pastor is derived from various passages that describe the pastor as a shepherd who must care for the sheep under his care, his flock. There are passages describing a bad shepherd and the damage they do to the flock of sheep they are responsible for (Jeremiah 24, Ezekiel 34). In these passages the sheep are the people of Israel who are desperately in need of proper care and of protection from themselves and the attacks of their enemies. In John 10 Jesus uses this same context of sheep, flock and shepherd to describe the difference between himself and those who want to attack and destroy the sheep.

A second passage used to describe the work of a pastor is found in John 21. This is Jesus' conversation with Peter. Three times Jesus queries Peter about his love and loyalty. Three times Peter replies that he loves Jesus. And three times Jesus' response is about demonstrating this love by caring for (first) the lambs and then the sheep. Pastors refer to these passages as the foundation of the work they have been given, to take care of the sheep, to care for their flock.

This care is based on the concept that sheep are unable to feed, take care of, and protect themselves. We are all like sheep who have gone astray (Romans 3:23). We need help in finding food, water and rest (Psalm 23). We are easily led astray and become lost and are helpless (Matthew 9:36 and others). It is the primary, though not the only, focus of many of the books on pastoral care. The sheep need a pastor whose task is to provide protection and provision.

Paul takes another approach to the topic of being a pastor by looking at the qualifications of a pastor. His focus is on what a pastor needs to be in order for the sheep to follow him in confidence. The list of qualifications is found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Again the emphasis is on qualities that will make it possible for this person to care for others.

In our training programs we prepare our curriculums based on these concepts and the various aspects of the life of the church - evangelism, ministry, missions, worship and so on. As I reflect on my time of training (forty years ago) I do not remember any of those classes being linked to the idea of pastoring. If they were, they focused on bringing more sheep into the flock. There was very little about discipleship and

missional living (the latest catch phrase about building a community of believers). There have been some changes in curriculum focus since then. Yet even with those shifts and more classes about discipleship, the focus is still on gathering the sheep. Even those that give evidence that God has selected them to become pastors don't learn about training the sheep. They learn about evangelism and seeking out lost sheep in order to form another fold or church. But when there is a break in the pattern great things begin to happen. Books like *Evangelism Explosion* and *Every Member Evangelism* turned the focus from gathering to sending. In spite of this, the church has been losing ground. Instead of going out, we are doing better at gathering in. We now have megachurches and mega ministries. Looks like a lot of gathering with very little sending. For me the question is, how many local ministries have suffered from this gathering mentality?

I feel there is an error in here somewhere. So I decided to do a bit more review of the terms pastor, sheep, and those related to caring for the sheep. This resulted in some interesting pieces of information about how Jesus treated his sheep and the view he had of them.

Jesus tells the disciples that he is sending them out like sheep among wolves. But as they go they should be wise as serpents (Matthew 10:16). Just before this he tells his group of sheep to go out and gather other lost sheep (Matthew 10:6). He did this on at least three occasions as recorded in the gospels. In John 10 Jesus talks about other sheep that must be brought in. This work was not something he would actually do but others would do in his name.

The most interesting passage about sheep is the one about the judgment in Matthew 25. Here we see the Son of Man (the Good Shepherd) separating the sheep from the goats. What is significant is deciding who is a sheep and who is a goat. Goats are those who do nothing and live the way they choose. Sheep are those who care about others and take care of others. They are the ones who feed, clothe and care for those in need. Dare we go one step farther and define the sheep as those who share the gospel with those who are lost?

Yes, the sheep know the shepherd's voice. Yes, they follow the shepherd where he leads them. Yes, they depend on the shepherd for their provisions, but not in the same sense as real sheep. If they did why would Jesus be willing to send them out as sheep among wolves and talk about being wise and careful?

Jesus was the pastor of the 12 and at other times of a larger group called the 70. He also cared for a larger group of people that traveled with him and his disciples and helped provide and care for them as they ministered in Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Sometimes the group was small and other times it was larger. But always there was the idea that they were being prepared, not to stay in the fold, but to go out into a dangerous world to find more lost sheep. They could do this knowing he was always close, always available when needed, but they also knew the work was theirs to do.

The difference between the goats and the sheep was not about needing a shepherd or submitting to the care of the Good Shepherd. It was about behaving in the same way as the Good Shepherd and going out to find the others who

were lost, about doing the work of the Good Shepherd wherever they were and to whomever they encountered.

Jesus' focus was not on gathering more sheep or building a bigger sheepfold but on teaching and equipping the sheep to follow his example and go out into the world. It was evident in his prayer in John 17 that he was preparing them to go out and duplicate this process. We see this in Peter. Peter is called to care for the lambs and then twice to care for the sheep. What is interesting are the two words used in this passage. The first is to pasture or provide food for them. Lambs need a great deal of care if they are to mature and be strong. The second word is used in relation to sheep and is used two times. The focus of this word for caring relates to the ideas of tending or watching over the sheep. As lambs there is greater need to keep them under close supervision. As sheep, there is less need for direct care but more need for watching and guiding.

As far as we know, Peter never settled down as a pastor of a local body of believers. For a while he taught in Jerusalem, then he was sent to Samaria, next he was in Joppa and other places. He could easily have been the leader in Jerusalem but this was passed to others. Paul was the same way. He started a work and then handed it over to others. This pattern was repeated over and over. He started a work, prepared the sheep to do the work and to be the pastors and then he moved on.

Being a pastor in this structure is not about gathering and protecting a flock of sheep. It is about gathering sheep and empowering them to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care

for the sick, and proclaim the good news to those imprisoned by sin.

I have for years only viewed sheep as stupid animals, easily led astray, always acting in ways that place them at risk. There is good reason for this, for sheep are just that. But in the church that analogy should not be held too tightly. New believers may start out as foolish sheep but that is as far as the analogy goes. With the right care, teaching and encouragement every sheep should become a pastor and receive the training to repeat the process. This is the heart of what Paul was telling Timothy in 1Timothy 2:2. If you are doing your job right, then you will find people you can teach who will be able to find their own flock and repeat the process.

If we want to be obedient, truly obedient to God's mission, then we need pastors who understand how to release their sheep - even more, empower their flock to carry out the mission. It is hard to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers if no one is being trained to do the work needed to complete the harvest.

We need sheep who are capable of carrying out the mission. For this to be possible we need pastors who are teaching their sheep to become pastors; pastors willing to go out and find the other lost sheep wherever they may be and then repeat the process. This is what the New Testament church was doing and the reason the church expanded so rapidly. We can see this in what happened after Stephen's death, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went (Acts 8:4)." Philip, the layman chosen to wait on

tables, started the work in Samaria. Others went to Phoenicia. One group traveled to Antioch and started an innovative work with the Gentiles. The scattered sheep started their own sheepfolds.

There have always been those who have followed this path. But we need more of them. We need a whole new generation of pastors willing to teach their sheep how to be pastors.

Chapter 01

The Sheep

In the beginning
there were no sheep,
then there was a shepherd,
then he sacrificed a sheep
and so there were sheep
and there were shepherds.

In order to talk about being a pastor and the significance of the use of the terms sheep and shepherd and the related concept of shepherding or pasturing animals, we need to first look at the history of these terms and how we came to relate these terms to leaders and those being led.

The first reference to either is found in Genesis 3. Here we learn that Abel was a shepherd and that he took the best of his firstborn sheep and he selected the best portion of the lamb and sacrificed it to God. We are told that God was pleased with what Abel did.

First let us look at the place and function of sheep within the context of the Pentateuch. Sheep were an important indicator of wealth and power. The size of one's herds and the number of servants employed to care for them was important. The ability to give sheep as a gift was a further measure of one's power and was used to acquire property and even a wife

(Pharaoh and Abraham: Genesis 12:14-16) and was a means of establishing and also validating treaty relations between key leaders (Abimelech and Abraham: Genesis 21:22-32). God included in his covenant with Abraham the sacrifice of a male sheep (Genesis 15:9). Such gifts were also used to appease and restore relations (Jacob and Esau: Genesis 32:17-21). Sheep often became a key aspect in the establishment of land rights and the control of wells and territory (Isaac and the wells: Genesis 26:19-22).

For some, the abundance of animals was a sign of God's blessing. This was the belief of Job's friends. The loss of his sheep and other herds was, to them, a judgment of God because they suspected sin in the life of Job. Jacob believed that his herds were provided by God (Genesis 31:42). This concept was part of God's warning about obedience and disobedience (Deuteronomy 28). If the people were obedient their flocks would increase (Deuteronomy 7:13).

Sheep were a key source of food, both their milk and their meat, in providing for the needs of the community. They were also a source of materials needed for clothing and other products for protection and warmth. The sheep were sheared annually for this purpose and the wool was then processed for personal use and traded to provide access to other resources.

To this end it was important to provide for the care and safety of the sheep. Carelessness meant risking one's status, health and safety. These issues caused Abraham and Lot to separate in order to provide for their herds (Genesis 13:5-9). It was a focal point in the relationship between Jacob and

Laban (Genesis 30:27-36). As a result of this, Jacob gained greater status and wealth because of his efforts in caring for the sheep. The need for water and pasture was a cause of strain between Isaac and the other residents of Canaan until finally a well was dug without conflict and Isaac felt secure in the land promised to him and his father (Genesis 26:19-22).

The other key function of sheep was they were animals used for the various sacrifices that would become part of the temple ritual. As mentioned above, the first time a sheep was sacrificed was by Abel. The second instance of the use of sheep for sacrifice was when Abraham commented that God would provide the lamb for the sacrifice as he took Isaac to the mountain to be sacrificed (Genesis 22:9). There would be no further mention of such action until the commencement of the Passover. At that time every family or small group was to select a lamb without fault, to sacrifice. The sacrifice was to provide blood to mark the doorposts and lintel as a symbol of obedience and the meat was to be eaten as a reminder of what was being provided for them through this sacrifice.

After Genesis, the majority of the references to sheep in the Pentateuch are related to the various sacrifices and the selection of a sheep (most often a male) for those sacrifices. It was the most common sacrificial option offered. For those who didn't have a sheep or couldn't afford one there was the possibility of using turtledoves or even a grain offering for some of the sacrifices. Also, there were a few cases when a sheep was not allowed and only a male bullock was acceptable.

There was one specific type of sacrifice that was required of every family and of every owner of cows and donkeys. It was called the lamb of redemption (Exodus 13:11-16). According to the law that was given to Moses all firstborn male children, male cows, donkeys and sheep belonged to the Lord. To redeem a firstborn child, cow or donkey, a sheep was to be offered in its place. If not, the firstborn male cow or donkey was to be killed by breaking its neck. Only a firstborn male sheep or goat could not be redeemed. This was to be a constant reminder that the people of Israel and all they possessed had been redeemed from slavery in Egypt. The first time the sacrifice of redemption was enacted, related to the selection of the tribe of Levi as redemption for all of the firstborn males saved in the first Passover (Numbers 3:40-48). They were chosen to be sanctified to the service of God in place of those saved from death. They would have no land but would be supported by the tithes and offerings of the other tribes. After that, all firstborn male child of each family (including the tribe of Levi) was to be redeemed with the sacrifice of a sheep.

Sheep, as with all animals, were included in those things that needed to be tithed. As a result one could feel that a shepherd was in a sense doubly tithed. Each shepherd was expected to tithe from the increase of his flock. Besides this, all firstborn belonged to the Lord and they were also used to provide for the redemption of all other firstborn. Taking good care of one's sheep was critical; not only to provide for the shepherd but also for the people who had no sheep of their own, such as the farmers who needed to redeem their firstborn son and the firstborn of key animals. Other laborers in the fields who

had no sheep also needed to redeem their firstborn child and have a sheep for key sacrifices each year.

The only other mention of sheep in these books relates to restitution. Sheep were often used when there were fines to be paid for theft and damages.

As you can see, sheep played an important role in three key areas, as food, as a source of wool, and as a key source of animals for the sacrifices required of the people. Because of this, a great deal of energy was given to the care of this animal. Not to do so would mean placing one's family at risk of hunger, the lack of protection from the elements, and not being able to make the proper sacrifices when needed. To make sure the sheep had what they needed required a knowledge of the sheep and their needs, the land needed for pasturing them, and being able to protect them from disease, attack and theft.

This also meant that the life of a shepherd was one of movement. Sheep, especially large herds of sheep, need large areas of pasture for them to have sufficient food. There is constant movement in search of water and of pasture. Joseph was sent to find his brothers who had moved the sheep to another region in search of food. When he arrived, he discovered they had had to move again (Genesis 37:14-18). While it was possible for the masters, such as Abraham and Jacob, to remain somewhat settled, there was the constant movement of the sheep in order to have access to the pasture needed (Genesis 13:1-5). As mentioned previously, this need was the basis of the separation of Abraham and Lot.

Water was also a significant aspect of the care of sheep. Several of the stories of this time center around water. Abraham's servant waited at a well (spring: Genesis 24:1) using it as the place to find the future wife of Isaac. Isaac was forced to dig several wells before finding a place without conflict. Jacob uncovered the well for his future wife (Genesis 29:9-11). Moses protected his future wife and her sisters from the attack of other shepherds when they came to water the sheep (Exodus 2:15).

We learn more about the care of sheep from Jacob's life as he earned the dowry for his two wives and later built his own herds. During his encounter with his brother-in-law, Laban, he described his life as a shepherd. He suffered from severe weather, he often went sleepless, he dealt with attacks by wild animals and thieves. He was constantly watching to know when the animals were in heat (fertile) to be sure they mated with the strong and healthy and then watchful to be sure the birthing process went well. When there was a loss, he bore the loss personally (Genesis 31:36-42).

That the life of a shepherd was, in fact, a dangerous one is clear from the story of Joseph. His brothers sold him into slavery. To cover this fact they concocted a story about Joseph being killed by a wild beast (Genesis 37:31-33). His father did not even question this because he knew that caring for sheep and traveling from place to place could be dangerous. There was always the risk of attack by bears or lions. Yet sheep were considered valuable and essential, so much so that such risk was acceptable.

Sheep were essential. This fact defined the life of a shepherd. The sheep played a key role in the very existence of the people and in the case of Israel, in their life, culture and worship as the people of God. As we move forward in this material to look at the role of the shepherd we will quickly see how the commitment of the shepherd to his sheep becomes a key example of God's care for his people and what he expects of those chosen to lead.

One more fact of interest. In all of this: there is little description of the nature of sheep. It is not until in Numbers 27, when God confirms that Moses will not lead the people into the Promised Land, that we get any description of their behavior. Here Moses requests that God choose a leader to replace him so the sheep will not be like those that have no shepherd. This implies that when sheep do not have a shepherd they are in danger. There is no description of the nature of that behavior and why it puts them at risk. Yet it is clear there will be problems, more so than when they do have a shepherd.

We can infer that sheep are not good at finding water and they need help in finding pasture and not destroying it. We can infer that they are somewhat defenseless when attacked by wild animals and cannot defend themselves from being stolen. We can also infer that they are somewhat dumb when it comes to mating and other areas of care. One wonders what would happen if there was no one who could shear them and relieve them of the weight of their wool.

One might also wonder why sheep were so high on the list of approved animals for sacrifices. While there were other

animals - cows, goats and turtledoves - none fulfilled as many roles as a sheep. Between sacrifices, redemption of others, the debt of the firstborn, and the tithe, there was a great need for sheep as part of the religious practices required of the people of Israel. Actually there was no reason given why sheep were given this place of dominance; why an animal, so challenging to care for, had such an important role in the life of the people of Israel. But this place of importance further emphasized the critical need to understand and care for sheep. This reality would not change until the arrival of the Lamb of God.

Chapter 02

The shepherd

Then comes the shepherd leading

Then he is following

Here are the sheep

Over there are the sheep

In the end he leads and they follow

Are the sheep or the shepherd in control?

As in the first chapter we will restrict our discussion about the shepherd to the Pentateuch and the books of History. In

these books we find several interesting passages about shepherding, the lives of several key persons and a group of people who are described as shepherds. Or, in the case of a couple, how they were shepherded. It is interesting to note is that quickly we move from talking about shepherding sheep to shepherding people. Also, the differences between the normal plan of shepherding or pasturing sheep and the same concept in relation to people.

To begin this process I would like to present a number of key passages and some thoughts about those passages. At times there will be repetition of ideas because of what is being presented. This is intentional on my part.

The first two passages are found in Genesis 48 and 49. They are part of Israel’s blessing on his sons. The selected passages relate to Joseph and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

Gen 48:15-16	Gen 49:22-26
<p>"May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, 16 the Angel who has delivered me from all harm — may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my father’s Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly upon the earth."</p>	<p>22 "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall 23 With bitterness archers attacked them; they shot at him with hostility. 24 But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel. 25 because of your father's God because of the Almighty, who blesses the heavens above with blessings of the heavens and the earth with blessings of the deep that lies below."</p>

	blessings of the breast and womb 26 Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancients, than the bounty of the age-old. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph on the brow of the prince among his brothers.
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Let us start with the second passage in Genesis 49. Here Israel describes God as the Shepherd of Israel. This shepherd is the Almighty One that gives confidence to those under his care. This confidence is based on a knowledge of blessings; not just any blessings, but those that are greater than the bounty to be found in the wealth and strength of the mountains. This is because they come from the greatness of who God is and the depth of his relationship with us. The Shepherd and all that comes with having God as our Shepherd are a result of a specific relationship that existed between Joseph's father and God.

This blessing has an interesting result in the life of being a shepherd. First, the person is productive. He/she are not dependent in the normal sense of a sheep being dependent on the shepherd for food and water. The description is of a fruitful vine that has been planted well. This vine receives its being from the shepherd but then produces fruit for continued life. This vine is located in a secure place. It is behind a wall and protected from attack.

This leads to the second result of the blessing. The sheep is capable of protecting itself from attack. It is both dependent yet capable of independent action. There is a foundation of confidence and strength that is based on a knowledge of the

presence and activity of the Shepherd. This sheep is not a dumb and foolish creature who has no idea of the danger that lies ahead or no idea of how to protect itself. First, it knows that there is a preferred place to be that will provide the best protection from attack and maintain access to key resources. Second, it has learned how to protect itself. It has watched, listened, and learned what is needed to provide for its own security. Further, there is the knowledge that this strength and capacity is made possible by a profound awareness of the presence of the Shepherd and that these skills are a benefit of having God as the Shepherd, the rock (the protector – TEV). He can stand firm, confident, and unwavering as long as the sheep remains in the presence of the Shepherd, standing on that rock.

None of this fits my concept of the normal activity of sheep and how a shepherd generally carries out his task. Sheep just act, just wander, and just get lost, unless they have a shepherd. Shepherds lead and guide the sheep. They find water, they find pasture and they watch out for them always. Not so here. In this case the Shepherd has somehow changed the relationship and the behavior of the sheep. The sheep, in this case, are the recipients of so much more than just food, water, and protection. They are the recipients of key blessings and a key relationship that is the source of these blessings. As a result they can become so much more than the standard of common sheep. They grow and learn and choose. They become capable of so much. And the Shepherd helps them do much more than eat, drink, live, and die. They can understand the possibilities of knowing the Shepherd, of

being a blessing to others and of standing firm in the knowledge they have gained.

Now we need to go back to the first passage in Genesis 48 and consider how such a description of the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep is possible.

Before Israel gets to the blessings of the twelve tribes he first has a special word and blessing for Joseph. Here Israel makes two comments that may help us understand how the comments in Genesis 49 were possible. First he talks about how God has been his shepherd all of his life until this day. Then he talks about the Angel who has delivered him from all harm.

Now if we take a quick look at Jacob's life we will find that he did a horrible job of following anyone. From the beginning, he lived according to his name; he was a usurper and a trickster. He used any means available to advance himself and his position. He tricked his brother out of his birthright. With the help of his mother, he stole both the blessing of the firstborn and the inheritance that belonged to his brother. Then he used a desire of his father (that his children not find wives from the local inhabitants) to make a convenient escape from his brother's wrath and flee to Paddan Aram.

The next 20 years would also be years of being tricked, lied to and deceived. But Israel would be on the receiving end. There would be troubled relations with his father-in-law and family feuding and jealousy among his two wives and two concubines would be the norm (amplified version of what

the jealousy and manipulation of relations that happened with his brother, father and mother).

During this time God spoke to him on four occasions. First was the vision of the stairway to heaven (Genesis 28:12). Second was the vision of Laban about God's protection (Genesis 31:24). Third was the night he wrestled with the angel of the Lord (Genesis 32:24ff). And there was a fourth vision about sheep and reproduction. This is when he was working to build a herd for himself. God gave him information that he could use to do this (Genesis 31:11-12).

It doesn't end here, for there were many more situations and challenges for him to face. He will show favoritism to one son that caused a chain reaction of events; none of which suggested a positive outcome, except that God was at work carrying out a greater plan. This sheep (Jacob) has been one incredibly difficult sheep. Stubborn, unrepentant, inflexible, always getting into more and bigger trouble. Then it began to repeat itself in the lives of his sons. Two of them arranged for the slaughter of an entire group as revenge for the rape of their sister. Another committed the horrible sin of sleeping with his father's concubine.

Jacob finally returned to where he had the first vision, a place where he made a promise so many years before, to the God of his father. He had promised that if God brought him back safely then he would make God his God and he would tithe of all that God gave him. He kept his word. He had the family get rid of all their foreign gods and it says the 'terror of God fell on the people' (Genesis 35:5). God came to him, gave him a new name and told him to be

fruitful and so become a nation, no, a community of nations (Genesis 35:9-11).

This event did not bring an end to the struggles and problems. Jacob, now Israel, continued to have problems. Ten of his sons grabbed a brother and sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:28). Only one is concerned about what this means. Then the great famine came. Another son was taken prisoner when sent to buy food (Genesis 42:18). He had to risk losing the youngest, the other favorite son, in order to get more food and avoid starvation. All the lies, all the tricks, all the attempts to cheat or control his life were played back in the lives of his family.

Yet, in the end he made one comment to sum up everything and we find it here in Genesis 48:15. 'The God who has been my shepherd, the angel who has protected me.' Israel looked back and he saw so much clearer how his path had been guided and guarded. Guarded, because he foolishly thought he knew what was best and how to be in control of his own fate. Guided, because he could see, finally, how each time he acted there was clearly someone guiding the direction of his path. He stole the blessing but could only flee in one direction. He thought he had earned one wife but ended up with four who became the progenitors of the twelve tribes. He gave preferential treatment to one child and lost him only to find that God used that situation to bring them to safety years later. Step by step his life was guided and protected, but not blocked.

Real sheep have no decision-making skills or rights. They can only go where the shepherd permits. No shepherd in his

right mind would simply follow a sheep and let it go wherever it wants. He would force it back to the place chosen by the shepherd. However, in these two passages we are being exposed to very different concept of shepherding from what we would expect. Here, the shepherd seems to be following the sheep and only protecting and providing when absolutely necessary. In this case, it is not about controlling and keeping the sheep together. It is about helping the sheep learn and grow and develop a relationship of trust and confidence in the shepherd. But this relationship allows for personal choices, growth and informed action, of learning we can depend on the Shepherd and how to live accordingly.

The next passage about shepherding and God is found in Numbers:

Numbers 27:15-17 15 Moses said to the Lord, 16 "May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community 17 to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

We need a little background before we explore the meaning of this passage. The people of Israel have spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. The reason is found in Numbers 14:33 where they are condemned to a life of suffering as shepherds for their failure to obey God and enter Canaan as directed, one year for every day the spies explored the land. Here the life of a shepherd carries a very negative

connotation. It is a life of suffering and struggle, because of the dangers of lack of food, lack of water, and the potential of being attacked by enemies. Struggle, because it would not be easy to wander knowing that it was their fault. They had refused the direction of the leader selected by God and had even threatened his life. They had repeatedly complained and whined about how difficult the trip was, and that was before it became more difficult. Each day, each judgment, each move would only add to the struggle and the realization that they had no one to blame but themselves.

But flip the coin over and we have another shepherd to look at – Moses. Forty years he would lead them. He would teach them the word of God. He would help them understand the promises they had been given. He would be called on to save them from God’s wrath on many occasions (Numbers 11:2; 14:11-22; 16:22; 21:5-10). However, during this time Moses lost control and disobeyed a direct command from God. For this he would not be allowed to enter Canaan. As they neared Canaan again Moses spoke to God and was reminded that he would not be allowed to enter the land. It was at this point that Moses pleaded that God select someone to take his place and be a shepherd to the people.

The question to ask is, what was the intent of Moses in this request and what was his the idea of a shepherd? He focused on what could happen when sheep are left without a shepherd. In the Israelites case, what was the greater danger - that of surviving the wilderness or of defying God? What is the true work of the shepherd in this case?

It is clear that Moses had been leading the people. But in what way had he been leading them? He did not have to find pasture for them, God provided manna every day and meat on various occasions. He did not have to worry about water. On several occasions God had acted to provide water. The people had also been told they would be the ones living as shepherds (Numbers 14:33), so can we infer that Moses was not the one who had to deal with this? Also, they only moved when the pillar of smoke or fire moved. So in a real way God was choosing the when and where of their campsites and access to what was needed.

When it came to the safety of the people again we see that Moses did little in this area. He sat on a hill with his hands held up until the people won the battle (Exodus 17:10-12) (needed help from two men because he tired before the battle is won.) (Actually Joshua had more responsibility in this area than Moses.) The most common area of providing protection was that of protecting the people from God's judgment and wrath. As mentioned above, Moses was often called on to act on behalf of the people in protecting them or reducing the impact of God's righteous anger. (An example would be making the bronze serpent for the people to look on and live (Numbers 21:9).

The real work of Moses' leadership was in another area; that of helping the people understand and obey the word of God. He received God's word and then taught the people how to live by the truth received. Moses was constantly entering the tabernacle and speaking with God and then communicating what he had learned with the people. When the task became too great he asked God for help and 70 were selected to help

him in teaching the people (Numbers 11:16). So the greatest task Moses had, was helping the sheep to understand and be able to live by the word of God. Those who learned it well are protected by it and receive God's blessing for their obedience to the truth. They were able to walk securely before God.

Without a shepherd's help the sheep will always be in danger of self-destruction. But if they have a shepherd who is willing to hear the word of the Lord and teach them, then they will learn how to live. They will learn how to rejoice in God's presence and not fear him. They will receive the blessings of obedience. Without this guidance they will quickly scatter, and without direction they will be lost.

Consider the first words of God to Joshua in Joshua 1:8

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

The basis of success for Joshua was not in finding food, water or providing protection. It was in making sure he understood and obeyed God's word. As he did so he would lead the people. And that is what Joshua did. At the end of his life he reaffirmed this in his declaration that no matter what anyone else decided he and his family would serve God (Joshua 24:15). It is interesting to note that most of Joshua's career was focused on leading the sheep into battle, not away from danger. This is not the typical role of shepherd as commonly defined.

So Moses' concern was that there be someone to be sure the people clearly understood God's word. Someone who would help the people to obey that word. Someone whose life was completely committed to God and would not stray. Someone God would speak to and who would boldly proclaim those words to all and then show them what to do. The greatest danger was not in the world around them. Nor was that where the people could find the greatest blessing and security. The greatest danger was in not hearing and obeying the word of God. So Moses cries for a shepherd, one committed to seeking out God, listening to God and guiding the people in how to live their lives according to God's word. In this case the shepherd's responsibility was not in making the sheep move but in helping them to understand how to move and why it was important to follow God's directions.

The next time we see information related to shepherding is a set of references about David, his selection by God and by the people as shepherd and ruler.

2 Sam 5:1-2

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"

2 Sam 7:7

Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"'

Let's look at each one separately.

David was anointed by Samuel to replace Saul as King. This was not the first time that Samuel had performed this action. He had also anointed Saul as king. But there was a significant difference between the two. The first was in response to the cry of the people to have a king like the nations around them. A king who would lead them. Samuel took this personally, but God saw it more clearly. The people were rejecting God as king and wanted a person who they could see and touch. They wanted a king, a physical human like the kings of the nations around them. God agreed to give them what they wanted and included a stern warning of what that would mean.

1 Sam 8:11-18

"This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take

your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the Lord will not answer you in that day."

This description of a king is nothing like the description of a shepherd. There is no responsibility to care for the needs of those he rules. Instead he will use them to provide everything. They will provide the soldiers for their own defense and they will provide for their own food and needs. Besides all of that, they will also be expected to provide for all of the needs of the king and those needs will exceed that of any one of them. Plus they will pay a tithe to the temple and a tithe to the king. He will require their best food, children, and more. There is nothing here about what the king will provide for them, other than maybe lead them (1 Samuel 8). As a result they got Saul. He was a man of stature (taller than everyone else), he was a man of boldness (but often foolish), and he could be decisive when needed (but often made the wrong decision and then tried to blame others

[1 Samuel 15:15]). Definitely not a shepherd just a selfish boss.

That brings us back to the passage. Here, in 2 Samuel 5, the people are talking with David. They still want a king but have learned a lesson along the way. They previously told Samuel what they wanted and they got what they asked for - a person based on their standards and their ideas of leadership. Now Saul is gone and it is time to decide who will be king. The leaders believe that God has chosen David to feed them (the term 'feed' is the word that is also translated as, to shepherd. To bring the sheep to a place of benefit and resources.) This reality and the evidence of his leadership in battle and actions on other cases results in their decision to proclaim David as their ruler.

I need to be clear about something at this point. In God's words to Samuel and Samuel's words and actions when anointing David, it is never stated that God had called David to shepherd the people. What is stated is that God has selected him to lead the people.

It is David's history and actions that revealed to the people the difference between a leader, as defined by the world's concepts, and a leader, defined by God's standards. An example might be useful at this point. One of the stories about David during his exile will help us see the difference. David and his group have left to attack the enemy. When they returned they discovered that another group had come and attacked their home base. In the process they took captive all of their families and property. Many of David's group were injured or too tired to pursue the thieves. David

took those who were able and recovered all that was taken and more. When they returned the victors decided that no one who stayed behind deserved a part in the booty. They only deserved the return of what was lost. David denied this decision and declared that all deserved a share. He was thinking of the care and needs of everyone in the group (1 Samuel 30). He even sent some of the plunder to the leaders of Judah as a present.

It is likely that this was not a new stance or unusual on the part of David. He had two opportunities to kill Saul and chose not to, preferring to wait on God's timing. This action of honor and respect earned him the allegiance of Saul's followers when it was time to select the new king.

David was not always perfect yet he was humble and ready to admit his errors. He was not demanding nor selfish. As a result people willingly gave to provide for his needs. David provided for their care and protection and hoped the people would respond. On one occasion a man, Nabal, missed the point, and refused to give David anything. But his wife, Abigail, saw his error and quickly responded with gifts and food for David. In the end God responded and Nabal died for his foolish behavior and failure to care for those who had cared for him (1 Samuel 25).

David was often seen as willing to take the risks needed to protect and provide for the people. While at first Saul appeared to take the lead, it was not long before we see him avoiding such activity. He refused to kill the enemy king (1 Samuel 15:9), refused to confront the people over their failure to obey God's direct command about destroying

everything of the enemy (1 Samuel 15:15) , and when Goliath appeared Saul cowered in his tent. David, though, accepted the challenge as a good shepherd would and confronted the enemy, not in his own strength, but as the one appointed by God and in God's name (1 Samuel 17). Quickly he was the one chosen to lead the army while Saul lingered at the rear. David took an oath of friendship to the son of Saul and fulfilled that oath as soon as it was feasible (1 Samuel 20:16; 2 Samuel 9:7).

Was David perfect? No. He made his mistakes, but unlike Saul, when confronted, confessed and accepted the punishment given by God. On one occasion his sin results in death to the people he is called to lead (1 Chronicles 21). This caused deep anguish in the heart of David and he cried to God to punish him and not those he had been called to lead. It was not their fault, he made the decision. His pleas were heard and the site of the sacrifice later became the site of the future temple.

Again we are looking at a description of a shepherd that does not quite fit our standard view of caring for sheep. This shepherd was a warrior and instead of finding places of safety, he led his people to attack the enemy. The sheep were not helpless; they just needed a leader to show them who to attack, and how to do so successfully. David learned much about this from his time as a fugitive. He did not go into hiding and do nothing. He was always secretly attacking the enemy while trying to avoid a confrontation with Saul (1 Samuel 27:6-9).

There was very little in David's life that represented the normal activity of a shepherd. What was part of his life was living a life as an example to those he had been called to feed (to shepherd). David wrote Psalm after Psalm helping them understand who was truly able to provide their needs, the one who had faithfully cared for and led David, the Lord God of Israel. His goal was to feed them the true food, a relationship based on faith in God. His goal was to lead them to the source of life, obeying God's words because they are true and reveal God's love for them. His goal was to show them where true security lies, following God wherever he leads them. When we are in that place, there is no enemy strong enough to defeat us. Our only true enemy is ourselves. That was a lesson David learned and proclaimed.

When the people chose David as their ruler, it was because they saw his shepherd's heart; his desire to care for them above all else and to do so in obedience to God. They knew he would not abuse them. They knew he would not misuse his position. They knew that their relation to God was central to his thoughts and his life. He would be their shepherd and they would be free to serve God and the one chosen by God. David's goal was to make sure they had what they needed (something promised by God when the people obeyed God and served him first) that would make it possible for them to provide for his needs.

Now we are ready to look at the second passage. David wanted to build a permanent place of worship to honor God. God's response included a comment about shepherds. David was not the first that God had called to shepherd this people. Others had been commanded to shepherd the Israelites. We

have discussed two of those called before him, Moses and Joshua. There is also one other group that could be included in this group of rulers commanded to shepherd the people, the judges.

The judges represent a fascinating study in contrasts. From the faithful, obedient Othniel, to the selfish and disobedient Samson. From a person who really didn't understand what God wanted, Jephthah, to the man who spoke God's words, Samuel. Some of them are unknown to us, Tola, Jair and 3 others. There was also a woman, Deborah, who guided the people. Most of them had to deal with the people's great failure in obeying and serving only God. They frequently led the people into battle against their enemies. Often the victory was decisive and led to a long period of peace. Yet each time the people repeated their errors and behaved as Moses had predicted, acting like sheep without a shepherd.

So what did God mean by the statement that he had called other rulers to shepherd the people? What was different or the same about what they are expected to do?

In each case the goal was to maintain peace. But it was not necessarily peace with the enemies around them. The enemies were only permitted to attack and oppress the people of Israel because of their failure to serve only God and obey the law given to them through Moses. So the work of these shepherds was to be sure the people were taught the law and guided in how to keep the focus of their worship on the one true God. This action was what maintained the peace, not the battle won. Actually, except for the time of Samson, there was usually only a very short period of

conflict mentioned. After a judge led the people in the key battle it was generally followed by a time of peace.

The peace usually lasted for the lifetime of the judge and instead of remembering their history they returned to worshipping other idols and the cycle was repeated. In times of oppression, the people cried out to God (they always managed to remember that the true God was more powerful than any enemy), and God provided them a key leader, a judge, to lead them to victory over the enemy and reestablish their relationship with God.

The judges chosen were not perfect and in the case of Gideon, who actually opened the door for the people to return to worshipping idols, when he created an ephod. It became an object of worship and a snare to Gideon and his family. Here we have the possible basis for defining the wicked or unfaithful shepherd of the prophets as found in Jeremiah 32 and Ezekiel 34. This idea will be covered more fully when we look at the prophets and their use of the words sheep and shepherd.

The focal point then of these shepherds was to help the people to do what was necessary for them to provide for themselves, and live securely in the land. The shepherd's work was not leading them to a place where they could be fed and watered; they were already in the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. It was not about providing a safe environment for those they were leading. On the contrary, it may have included leading the people into battle, but this was not about the shepherd defeating the enemy but providing the inspiration and direction necessary

for the people to defeat the enemy. Their shepherding involved helping them to walk faithfully before God and keep the law they had been given. This involved teaching them the law, leading them in their worship, helping them resolve conflicts based on the guidance of the law, and occasionally leading them into battle (only four of the judges actually do this). [While Samson was involved in more fighting, he was always fighting the battles alone. Also he never established a true period of peace, just short periods of respite. No real victory was in sight until the time of Samuel and it finally arrived with David.]

Bottom line - the work of the judges was to guide the people to obedience to God. This was where they would find the protection and safety they needed which allowed them to produce what was needed to sustain their life.

As you can see being a shepherd in God's service can be quite different. It is not about finding or providing for the daily needs of the people. It is not about standing before the enemy and protecting them from attack. A shepherd of God has a very different responsibility. The shepherd stands before God to receive God's words and direction. This can be via the spoken word, a vision, or study of the written word of God. The task is then to help the people understand how to serve God, and in this serving, be able to live and prosper as the sheep of God. Being a shepherd of God may mean leading the people into battle against the enemy. It is definitely not about finding safe places to hide or escape the dangers around them. It is about facing the threats and dealing with them with the strength of God. The shepherd called by God understands this.

His real task is standing before God on behalf of the people and then revealing God's word to them. His real task is teaching them how to live by this word and so find all that is needed to prosper before God. From Moses to Samuel to David, this is the life and work of the shepherd. It is not about gathering to protect, it is about teaching to live. In Jacob we see this worked out on a personal level. God does not provide for Jacob's needs (although he does give him guidance in how to do so). He does protect him at times. But what really happened was a process of learning how to live in obedience to God.

Whether God acts as our shepherd, or chooses others to do so, the goal is the same, to develop sheep that know how to live in this world and serve God. They are responsible to care for themselves, deal with the enemy, and listen obediently to God's direction. In this way they will have what they need, be safe wherever they are, and know God.

Chapter 03

Understanding shepherding – David the shepherd king

When one thinks of the topic of being a shepherd, their thoughts eventually arrive at the most famous of the Psalms, number 23, also known as the Shepherd's Psalm. Many studies have been written, sermons preached, and people comforted by this psalm. And rightfully so. It contains a depth of insight into the relationship between God and his people, a leader (pastor) and his flock, and much more.

Yet, in reviewing the life of David, the Psalms he wrote, and the Hebrew terms used, there are some interesting points to consider. With this in mind, let us begin a study of the author, the psalm and the concepts presented.

First, we need to understand a few of the terms being used. The key term is found in the first verse of Psalm 23. It is the word shepherd. What is quite interesting is that though it is often translated, in most texts, as a noun, in Hebrew the word being used is actually a verb. A strict translation would be the 'Lord is the one who pastures me' (the one who shepherds me).

The second term is the idea of lying down. This word generally carries the meaning of resting from exertion (TWOT) or a time of recuperation that is only possible when there is a place of peace. A more literal translation might read 'the Lord brings me to a peaceful place where I can lie

down' (for livestock this is a green pasture). If you ever visit a farm you will notice that the cattle or livestock that are satisfied will find a green place undisturbed by the activities of others to lie down.

The third term is that of leading. It contains the idea of bringing a person to a place of safety, a place of still waters. Again, it is about making it possible for the one being led to find rest and restoration. It is a known fact, that when animals are nervous or uncertain they will refuse to eat and drink until they feel they are safe. Parents of the young will lead them away from danger and will not even bring them out of safety to eat or drink unless there is clearly no threat.

These terms are further highlighted by the next lines. The first of these refers to passing through dark places and dark times. What is interesting is that the shepherd is not there; in his place are his rod and staff. These are symbols of the care, teaching, and protection of the shepherd. So where is the shepherd and why has he allowed his sheep to travel (not wander or err in the choice of direction) in such dangerous places?

The second is the fact that the shepherd chooses a very dangerous place to prepare food for the sheep; in the very presence of the enemies. This could also be translated to mean he makes it possible for a meal to be prepared in the presence of one's enemies. Though there are threats all around, there is a place where the sheep can find sustenance and enjoy it in peace. The question is why prepare food in such a place? Why do this when there is a visible threat?

Finally, there is the idea that goodness and mercy will follow me. However, the Hebrew term suggests something much more than just following after the sheep. It is more like goodness and mercy are in pursuit of them. From a human point of view, it would make more sense to say that I will pursue goodness and mercy. But, the Hebrew translation implies that, as I am on my journey, the goodness and mercy of my Lord will search me out to follow my path and not leave me alone.

So here we have the Lord bringing me to a place where I can be cared for, can find rest and be strengthened so that I can travel down difficult trails and not be afraid when my enemies are near. Because of this I will not be stressed by their presence and I am guaranteed that I will be accompanied by the goodness and mercy of my Lord in all my activities. This passage seems to be more about the provisions available for me as I journey on the road before me and less about being brought to a unique place to find food and safety. It speaks to what will make it possible for me to live in the world and not about a place to run to when life is difficult. In other words, the pasture is brought to me and not me to the pasture.

Before we continue, it will be helpful to review some information about the history and writing of David, to see what he experienced, and how he wrote about those experiences in the Psalms.

We will start with the life and history of David.

Youth – As a youth David was assigned to care for the sheep of his father. During that time he learned many lessons about

the needs of the sheep and how to provide for them and protect them (by killing a lion and a bear). He also learned the importance of faithfully carrying out his duties day after day. He learned the importance of facing the threats and dealing with them directly (David killed Goliath because he knew it needed to be done, God would provide the resources, and he could face the threat and defeat it.) His life was not about seeking a place of safety but facing the threats and dealing with them, trusting in his God and provider.

Young Leader – David was enlisted quickly into the king’s army and earned a name for himself as a fearless warrior. He was not afraid of the dark and dangerous places. But neither was he a foolish person. When David was sent on a task designed to end his life (Saul sends him after 100 foreskins) he carried out the task and returned safely. His boldness, courage and commitment won the hearts of many and he was quickly promoted. Yet, he also understood the importance of relationships and loyalty. Again, David’s life was not based on seeking safety, but facing the dangers in the awareness that there were resources available to deal with any threat.

Fugitive – For years David fled from one isolated place and threat to another because Saul wanted him dead. Twice David could have killed Saul but he chose to trust in God’s timing. Once he faked insanity to escape an enemy and finally settled in the enemy’s territory to find respite from Saul’s relentless pursuit (he could do this because the rulers of his enemies believed he was attacking Saul and so let him stay. In reality David was attacking his enemies and left no one alive to report his activity). David was on the run and it was during this time, as a fugitive, that many commentators

believe he wrote Psalm 23. There was no safe place for David and yet he talks about being brought to a place of pasturing and rest, of how God's mercy pursued him and he ate in peace in the presence of his enemies.

Early years as king – This was a time of division and civil war. David had gained a place of authority over Judah but for seven years dealt with the threat of attack from the other 10 tribes and a member of Saul's family. This and the ongoing threat of the Philistines and other enemies meant he must walk carefully.

United Kingdom – With the unification of the kingdom one would think that life would become a little more peaceful. This was not to be. David was a warrior king and his people were being threatened. So unlike the shepherd who would lead people to safety, he led his people to war. Year after year, they attacked and won. Year by year, the kingdom grew and became more secure. But not without cost. David sinned with Bathsheba. Then he had to deal with the rape of one daughter by her half-brother. Then, he faced the attempt of Absalom to overthrow him.

Final years – More frustration. David's census was a serious error and instead of keeping the people safe he put them at risk. More intrigue. Another son tried to proclaim himself king without consulting his father. This yielded division and uncertainty which was not settled until Solomon was officially crowned king.

The one thing that David really wanted to do was build the temple. But he was not permitted to do so. The reason, he was not a man of peace. He was a man of war. David had to

be satisfied with getting everything ready for this great project. He organized the work, designed the building and gathered the resources and supplies that would be needed.

David had been called to shepherd the people of God but in no way did his life reflect the normal life of a shepherd. Instead he led them in perilous times. He taught them to trust God and the leader chosen by God. When he made mistakes he submitted to God and to the process of being restored, or of being returned back to where he must be in order to lead. The one result was that at the end of all this turmoil, fighting, and struggle the country arrived at a time of peace. The borders were secure, the enemies were under control, and the people had what they needed to be at rest and without the stress of fear. They had walked through the dark path, eaten many a meal in the sight of their enemies and learned what it meant to have God pursuing his plan for them until they could dwell in God's presence.

Now that we have looked at the history, we need to look at some of the Psalms of David. Again their content is not as one would expect. The image of shepherd does not hold a place of prominence in the Psalms of David. Rather, there is another concept that is much more evident and fits very well with what was said about Psalm 23 at the beginning of this section.

In this light, we will discover that the words *shepherd*, *sheep*, and *pasture* only appear in 4 of the 76 Psalms attributed to David and only twelve other times in the rest of the Psalms. Here are the ones from David:

Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd (The Lord, the one who pastures me - author's translation)

Psalm 28:9 Be their shepherd and carry them forever (be the one who pastures them - Orthodox Jewish Bible)

Psalm 37:3 Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture (be pastured securely - Orthodox Jewish Bible)

Psalm 65:13 Pastures will be filled with an abundance of sheep (the meadows are clothed with sheep - Orthodox Jewish Bible)

This is not what you would expect from one who is identified as the person called to shepherd the people of God. Many of the other Psalm references do not even relate to the idea of caring for the sheep. Three of them relate to being prepared for slaughter or being food for death (Ps 44:11, 22; 49:14). One talks about how we often behave like sheep (Psalm 119:176). Five more are more historical in nature and relate to God's care of the people of Israel in the past (Psalms 77:20; 78:52, 71, 72; 80:1). There are four that do deal with the idea of pasturing the people and are written by Asaph (or someone using a phrase from Asaph), a person who knew where David began and his history (Psalms 74:1; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3). He uses the phrase 'the sheep of his/your pasture.' We will come back to these references later.

What we do find in David's Psalms, however, is that he draws more from military concepts in describing his relationship to God, his responsibilities, and how he lives. Here is a sample of the ideas that reflect this reality:

Refuge – A place to hide or retreat to, a stronghold. Of the 44 times this word is used in the Psalms, 30 times it is used by David.

Fortress – A stronghold to defend against the enemy or use as a base of attack against the enemy. Of the 17 times this word is used in the Psalms, 9 times it is used by David

Shield – A piece of armor used to protect the soldier when in the field of combat. This word appears 19 times in the Psalms, 11 of which are in the Psalms of David.

Rock – A secure location for defense and from which to attack the enemy. This word appears 28 times of which 15 appear in the Psalms of David.

Another interesting aspect of the Psalms of David is his desire to consciously call on God for help and direction. This is in stark contrast to sheep who simply bleat because they are afraid. David is actively involved in a relationship and wanting the guidance and leading of the Lord. Here are some examples of David's desire:

My cry – This phrase or idea usually involves a very clear and specific reason for his cry, as well as, a clearly thought out answer that is desired. This idea is

used 42 times of which 26 appear in the Psalms of David.

Seek – This word is used as a description of what the author is doing and as an instruction of what others should do. The idea is to seek the Lord. It is used 39 times. David uses it 24 times. Of these, 6 times it is used in reference to others who are seeking to destroy him. The other 18 relate to seeking God.

Rescue – There are two concepts here. First, it was a cry to be rescued from one's enemies and those who hated David. Second, there is the idea that there exists the need to be rescued, which is often not the result of foolish action but due to circumstances beyond their control. Of the 22 times this word is used 13 of them are by David.

Deliver – This word is used in the same way as the word rescue. It also includes references to a sure hope that God will deliver those in need. 14 of the 24 times it is used appear in the Psalms of David.

This study of the Psalms provides us with very different images of David. Some relate to the needs and life of a warrior, a soldier who needed to know where he could go for refuge and what was available for his protection when he was at war. The others painted a picture of one who was in desperate need and was seeking a way out or pleading with the one who could get him out of a difficult place. In most of these, is there the suggestion that the situations were not the result of foolish behavior (there are two that could be considered foolish, the sin of David with Bathsheba and the

death of his son, and the census that caused the death of many people). In general they dealt with situations that David encountered while being a faithful servant and king; situations that he did not create or set in motion.

Yet, in almost every one of these times of crying out, David finished his Psalm with a word of victory and faith in God. He received the peace, rest and release of stress that he needed to continue. And the places where he received such pasturing? A cave, an encounter behind a rock, a gift of food from a woman, an unexpected victory, unexpected help from a friend and on the list could go. His pasturing was never in the same place and in the same way. The location was constantly changing, but the results were always the same.

This brings us back to the other four uses of the key terms of shepherd and sheep. Two of the references are clearly tied to Asaph. The others have no author listed but sound much like what Asaph wrote. This suggests that we need to take a brief look at the life of Asaph. Various dictionaries suggest that Asaph was a young man when David became king and that early on he was assigned to lead the music in the tabernacle. His instrument was the cymbals. He must have been highly talented for as soon as the tabernacle was moved to Jerusalem he was placed in charge of the music and worship. He serves through the entire reign of David and well into that of Solomon. He saw the changes that occurred from the time of war to the time of peace.

As Asaph wrote these two psalms (and maybe the other two as well) he reflected on what he had seen and the call long ago for David to be the shepherd of the people. Four times

we read this phrase, “the sheep of your/his pasture.” This is about the identity of a specific group of people based on their relationship to the one who acted as their shepherd. Usually when reflecting on the meaning of the word ‘pasture’ one usually thinks of the promised land as being the pasture. Yet, rather than a physical location could it not be more about a relationship that allows the sheep to be anywhere doing anything and receive pasturing? To be the ones who have access to the peace, rest, and sustenance that are only available when we are the sheep of his pasture?

Asaph was looking back, reflecting on the present and considering the future. He saw that it didn’t matter where David was or what was happening, he always had access to this special pasture. He saw that the pasture was not about location but about relationship. On the run, in a cave, struggling with sin, crying out in repentance, David always had access to the pasture. And wherever he led the people, in exile, in battle, in peace, he taught the people that it was their relationship to God and not the land that was the true pasture.

Now let’s go back to Psalm 23. Let’s imagine that David is trying to explain how he can be at peace in such difficult times, how he can be patient and wait for God to make him king, how he can live in exile and not be stressed out. It may sound something like this...

“My fellow soldiers, let me explain something to you. No matter where I am, I have someone to turn to. He is my God and in him there is always a quiet place for me to go to and rest. It is like that green valley we rested in last week. I can

lie down and not worry, God is watching over me. In the midst of the battle I can be at peace. I am where God wants me to be and so the turmoil that you might experience in your stomach doesn't exist in me. My soul is still because he is with me. Yes, like you, the road looks horrible ahead of us. But I have learned some valuable lessons about God. Not matter where I am, he has already gone before me. There are no surprises with him and so I can go forward without fear. Yes there is incredible uncertainty ahead. Will we be attacked by our friends, or by our foes, or is there some unseen disaster just ahead? It doesn't matter. God has already supplied everything I will ever need and even more. And when I am feeling weak, tired, and things seem hopeless, he will always have what I need so that I will feel his presence and know he is with me. In God I have more than I could ever hope for. And I have the guarantee that I will dwell with him forever when I leave this place. I am being pastured and will always have access to the pasture that is my God."

Shepherd, what is your duty? Is it to bring people into the fold to pasture them? Or is it your job to show them how to enter into the world and be pastured no matter where they are or what they may be doing?

The Lord is the one who pastures me. He always has a green place for me; always can still the storm around me. The promises and words of God will always be true and make it possible to go through the darkest and most dangerous places. Then, others who don't know God can see how he cares for me and wants to care for them. There is nowhere I can go that God has not already been and his grace and

mercy cannot find me to bring to me all the blessings of his presence. I already am dwelling in his presence, in his pasture, and one day I will stand before him and receive his pasturing for eternity.

Are we teaching others how to live like this? Or are we just gathering foolish sheep who are only good for the slaughter?

Chapter 04

Prophets – Pastures, sheep, and shepherds – the background

As the kings began to fail in their leadership responsibilities the prophets became more prominent. They would warn the people about the what would happen because of their sin, especially the sin of idol worship. One of the most common forms used to share the warnings was a description of how it would impact the land. The shepherds were also evaluated and descriptions were given about the different types of shepherds, good, bad and indifferent. The messages were, at times, fierce, at others times plaintive. But almost always a ray of hope was present; something to provide a point of reference, a guiding light when the darkness of judgment had passed. Almost always. But there were some notable exceptions that meant no future, no hope, a finality with no restoration.

It is hard, from this vantage point, to see what can be learned about shepherding, the nature of the pasture, and what must happen to protect and preserve the sheep. But there are profound insights to be gained.

The challenge before us is to understand how the prophets used the terms we have been studying. What does it mean to shepherd a people when the world is falling apart, when so many refuse to follow the word of God? What does it mean to pasture them when all the land is in ruin? Who are the sheep and what responsibility do they have in all that is

happening? Most of the prophets' words are of judgment and warning. Their words reveal the errors in the thinking of the leaders (shepherds) and the people (sheep), and their false hope that being the people chosen by God was enough to protect them.

In order to better understand the messages of the prophets we need to do a quick review of the history of the kings. What we will quickly see is a pattern of evaluation. This evaluation has two sources and both begin after the reign of Solomon and the division of Israel into two kingdoms.

For the kingdoms of the north, the evaluation is based on the wickedness and idolatry that Jeroboam teaches to the people of the 10 tribes of the north, which is usually referred to as Israel. The judgment takes this form or something similar to "he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of Jeroboam and his sin...(1Kings 15:34). In 2 Kings 17:22 this judgment is applied to all Israelites, "they persisted in the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them." As a result of their sin they were rejected and thrust from God's presence (2 Kings 17:20). The final judgment was permanent exile.

Only one priest was allowed to return. (If others from the northern tribes did return there is no reference to this in the history.) This was because Assyria had resettled the land with people from other conquered lands. But, because these foreigners did not worship the Lord they were in constant danger from lions (2 Kings 17:26) and so a priest was sent back to teach those resettled in the land how to worship the Lord. It is hard to imagine what that teaching was since the

people of Israel had been exiled for their failure to worship God and for their worship of false gods and the two golden calves. Whatever the teaching was, it was sufficient to allow the strangers to live peacefully in the land.

The books of the prophets that deal mainly with the kingdom of Israel are Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, and Nahum. They help us see how much God was trying to woo the people back and why the final judgment would be so severe. While Jonah is related to this same period his message was for Nineveh. The response to his message only brought a time of reprieve to Israel; not because of what Israel did, but because of what God did to give them more time to respond.

While it is not evident from the order of scriptures, the change from the oral prophets to the written books of the prophets occurs shortly after the lives of Elijah and Elisha. They were key shepherds during this time, working tirelessly to restore a recalcitrant flock. A few responded but not enough to avoid judgment and exile.

So now we move to the two tribes of the south, which are generally referred to as the kingdom of Judah. In the case of Judah, the judgment basically takes this form; each king is judged by how well he compares to David. For those who served like David they received an evaluation like this, "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David (2 Kings 22:2)." Or like this, "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord but not as his father David had done (2 Kings 14:3)". For those who did not serve in the manner of David it took this form, "he did evil in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kings 21:22)." The worst

would be to have ones sin compared to that of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:20). In fact 2 Kings 24:32 declares the Author's belief that it was the sins of Manasseh that became the deciding point in God's decision to finally carry out the judgment against Judah.

Some of the kings of Judah lived and died with no evaluation, meaning that they were not worthy of being compared to David. A few were removed from power by God, either by sickness (Jotham), or political rivalry (Athaliah kills her own son). There really were only two judgments; they were or were not like David.

Judah heard from many of the prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (from exile), Joel, Zechariah, Micah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk. It is not clear why so many more prophets were sent to Judah. Maybe because there appeared to be a better chance of saving them? Many of the kings truly sought to follow God and encouraged the people to do the same. Most of them began their ministry after Israel had been exiled, only Isaiah and Micah witnessed the end of Israel.

There is one more group of prophets. At the time of their ministry both kingdoms had been destroyed. They served the remnant who had returned as promised by God. They are Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. For them nothing is the way it was. They are not in control of the land. The kings are gone. The priesthood and temple cult are greatly reduced in comparison to the past. They struggle to survive and to understand what God has for them in the future.

This is a general review of the context in which the prophets wrote. Their use of the terms "sheep, pasture, and shepherd"

form only a part of the warning and judgment they were called to proclaim. But their use of these terms and the context in which they used them will provide us with greater insight into the behavior of sheep, what is involved in pasturing them, and give us critical information about how to be a good shepherd.

Chapter 05

The promised land - A physical pasture or symbol of much more.

A key aspect of the work of a shepherd relates to providing a place of repose, restoration, and nurturing. Two concepts are used heavily in scripture to describe this place. The one term comes from context of caring for sheep, that of a pasture. The second is the phrase, promised land. Both imply the ideas of security, resources, and fulfillment. Man has always been seeking such a place. The first such place was the garden of Eden; a perfect place where everything necessary to life was provided and God was always present. We lost this as a result of sin and ever since then, have been looking for something that would replace it and provide the same context and benefits. In this chapter we will look at these concepts and how they were used by the prophets.

The challenge before us is to understand how this term, “the promised land,” and the related concept of land is being used. This brings up another question. What does it mean to pasture the people when all the land is in ruin or when they are exiled and no longer physically living in the promised land? Most of the prophet’s words are of judgment and warning. Their words that reveal the failures of the leaders, the errors in their thinking, and their false hope that being the people chosen by God and who live in the land promised to them by God was enough to protect them and guarantee the benefits they believed stemmed from these ideas.

Living in Eden

I want to start by challenging a basic assumption. We assume that the garden of Eden was a unique place on the earth. If I understand the text correctly it was, in fact, more of a zoological garden; unique in the sense that plants and animals from all over the earth were placed there for man to enjoy. We also assume that outside of the garden things were different, but it may not have been that different. At this point in time, there was a general dew that provided the earth with moisture. There was no cycle of rain and weather as we know it today. The earth, in a sense, was a huge garden and functioning perfectly.

There were only a few things that Eden had that did not exist anywhere else in the world. A man, a woman, and two special trees. Also, unique to this place was a special presence of God. He came in some form, regularly, to communicate with Adam and Eve. His presence made the garden even more significant as one considers the aftermath of sin. After this point, and until the final judgment these four items - Adam, Eve, the tree of life, and God, will not exist jointly again. (While the tree of life is mentioned several times in Revelation [2:7; 22:2] there is no mention of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.)

Another misconception is that life was somehow simpler with less work or effort. Yet the scripture tells us that Adam and Eve were charged with the care of the garden. I cannot begin to guess what this meant but they had work to do. The difference that would come is that after the arrival of sin the work would no longer be pleasant and would require struggle

to accomplish. What was easily done in the garden to maintain it now took greater effort and care.

Finally, there is the idea that God separated himself from Adam and Eve after the great sin. It is clear that God was no longer as accessible to Adam and Eve as he was in the garden. However, the garden did not limit God's access and presence among them or to us. They did not have to return to the Garden in order to meet with God, nor do we. There is an old hymn based on this idea that somehow it is in the garden where we meet God; that we must be in a specific place in order to encounter God and his blessings. A few examples may be useful in rejecting this idea.

Abraham is busy with his daily routine when God shows up, shares a meal, and discusses the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18)

Jacob is fleeing for his life and is in an unknown place when God comes and sets him on a specific path (Genesis 28:10-18).

Moses finds himself wandering with his sheep and encounters God in the burning bush (Exodus 3).

Joshua has an encounter with God while the people are camped near the river Jordan (Joshua 1).

Samuel is a boy and God comes to his bedroom (1 Samuel 1:3-11).

Elijah finds God while hiding in a cave on a mountain (1 Kings 19:9-18). (True, the mountain has been used before for unique meetings with God, but this time it is a lonely man running away.)

Paul is called by God on the road to Damascus (Acts 1-19).

Over and over, key encounters with God do not take place in a garden or the temple or a church. We sometimes place restrictions on where we can meet with God. It is interesting to note that the ascetics (people who sought out lonely places to meditate) of the first centuries sought to avoid such places in their desire to encounter God. This is not to say that we should avoid the garden or temple or church when we desire to meet with God. There are also examples of special encounters that occurred in these places as well. The danger is when we begin to restrict the pasture, the place where we can meet God, to specific places.

As you can see I just did a significant substitution here. I used the word ‘pasture’ to represent any place where we meet God and so receive food for our soul. But can I make such a substitution? It is not hard to support such an idea when we look at the prophets whose ministry occurred far from the promised land but encountered God in powerful ways (Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah).

But let’s go back to the Garden of Eden. Truthfully, we cannot physically go back to that Garden. God made this absolutely certain and placed an angel at the entrance to prevent anyone from returning. At least not until after the final resurrection when all that is wrong and sinful has been removed from any possibility of entering again. Yet the idea of the garden, or a land where we can be blessed, is used on several occasions. For the people of Israel it was a keystone for their identity, the promised land. A land flowing with milk and honey, yielding peace and security for all who live there.

We are first made aware of this land in God's call to Abraham. It is part of the promises God made to Abraham. Abraham would receive land and, through his life, a blessing for all people would be made possible. But here is where things get complicated. A key aspect of this promised land will be the presence and blessing of God. This is linked to obedience to the word of God and to worshipping Him and Him alone. This is made very clear in the pronouncement of the blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28.

Abraham remained a wanderer in this land. The only piece of land he owned was the cave he bought to serve as a burial site for Sarah and later for others. Isaac struggled to find a place. Digging wells became the symbol of the problem. He dug several which were taken over by others until he found a space where they finally allowed him to settle. Jacob was forced to flee for personal reasons and when he finally returned he lived an unsettled life. On one occasion the behavior of two of his sons made him very concerned about whether they would survive until the next day (Simeon and Levi killed the male population of a community in revenge).

So far the land doesn't seem to be very appealing. Abraham and others always seemed one step from being forced to leave. Early on, what appeared to be the best part of the land (Sodom and Gomorrah) was destroyed in an act of judgment. But we do need to remember that Abraham chose not to go there and instead let Lot have it. Yet how does one willingly give up what looks like the best piece of land and choose the more difficult land to live on? I don't ever recall that question being answered. It is never clear if that land was to be part of what was promised. In the future the people from

that area would be a constant source of conflict and stress. (Edom and Moab)

Then came the great famine and the only way to survive was to move. The people of Israel (Jacob's family – 70 people) were forced to leave and move to Egypt because of the famine. Where they settled in Egypt was actually a better piece of real estate than what they had left behind. They also were able to live in peace for several hundred years which allowed the people to multiply and develop. This was all part of the plan to prepare them to return and take possession of the promised land. They would suffer, struggle, and wander before they ever reached that place and then they would have to fight for years, maybe as many as 20, to gain a reasonable, but not total control of that land.

We do need to be aware that this piece of territory is part of what is called the fertile crescent. It is productive. At least the northern part. Group after group moved into the area. Nation after nation fought for control of this land; Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persian and then others came.

The land was productive and the neighbors knew it. The judges recount the stories of the neighbors raiding and controlling the area. They let the Israelites work and then came and stole the harvest. So consistent was this pattern that people went to extraordinary means to protect their harvest (Gideon threshing in the winepress.) The cycles became predictable. The Israelites abused their relation to God and lost the benefits of the promised land; they cried to God, and the land was restored to them. This continued until the arrival of Samuel, Saul, and David.

There was no true enjoyment of the land until the end of David's life and the life of Solomon, and only for a short time, maybe 50 years. Then it all began to fall apart again. There was another round of uncertain times with high points during the reigns of kings Asa, Uzziah, Josiah, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah. This did not mean there was peace. Almost every king had to deal with some attempt of rebellion, or conquest, which usually ended in the loss of some of the land. Only during the reign of Uzziah was some of the land recovered, but only some.

In the end, both Israel and Judah were conquered and taken into captivity. The land was now the territory of others. Various kingdoms would fight for control of the area. This continued until the time of the Maccabees who, for a short time, reestablished the kingdom. But only for a short while and only a portion of the original promised land. It was also a time of little peace and almost constant warfare to protect what had been gained, and subdue internal conflict. Due to the internal strife and a serious division of leadership, the Romans came and brought an end to their brief attempt to reestablish the kingdom. In the end Rome would completely devastate the land in 70 AD. Except for a brief period during the crusades, (establishment of the crusader kingdom) it would remain in the hands of others until the latter half of the 20th century.

Not a very appealing picture of the promised land and its history. The land flowing with milk and honey, the land where God would provide peace and security has actually seen very little of those over the millennia. Even when good kings sought to bring the people back to God there always

seemed to be strife and an air of doom; at least as related to living in the land and enjoying a rich and bountiful pasture.

Early on, the prophets seemed to use the land in a unique way. It became a descriptive way of defining the state of the relation of the people with God. The prophets warned about the devastation of the pasture, or land, as evidence of God's displeasure. When God was displeased, then an enemy came and destroyed the land. When He was pleased, then the land was restored and produced great bounty and blessing.

It may be useful to draw some examples from some of the prophets.

Destruction of pasture representing God's judgment

Jeremiah 25:36 – for the Lord is destroying their pasture

Joel 1:19 – for fire has devoured all the open pastures – (result of the day of the Lord)

This is amplified by the direct judgment or destruction of the land

Isaiah 10:23 – The Lord, the Lord Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land.

Isaiah 13:9 – *See the day of the Lord is coming – a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger – to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.*

Jeremiah 6:8 – *I will turn away from you and make your land desolate so no one can live in it. (Jer 7:34)*

Jeremiah 9:12-13 – (contains the explanation for this destruction)
Because they have forsaken my law which I have set before them; they have not obeyed me or followed my law.

These represent just a sample of the judgment of the prophets. Almost all of the books of the prophets contain such judgments against the land; and because of this the land will not be able to function as a pasture, in the normal sense of the word, for the people. If anyone does benefit from it, it will be the jackals (Jer 49:33; Lam 5:18) and wild animals (Isa 32:14). In a few occasions the judgment is that the land or pasture will only be fit for sheep and other animals (Isa 27:10, 32:14; Eze 25:5). Similar judgments are pronounced against Edom (Isa 34:9, Jer 49:20) and Assyria (Zep 2:14).

It becomes clear very quickly that the state of the land often reflects the state of the relationship of the people to God. This is revealed in the statements of what will happen when the people turn back to God. The best example of this concept is found in Ezekiel 34:14 where God promises that

the people will enjoy a good pasture. In Isaiah 14:30 it states that even the poor will find pasture. After the time of judgment has passed, God will restore them and they will find pasture (Zep 2:7). The land will become productive again (Isa 30:23; 35:1; 44:3; 49:8; Eze 36:34) and the people will be restored to the land (Eze 20:42). It is possible to see this pattern in many of the prophets and their words to the people of Israel and Judah. These examples should be sufficient to understand how the land and its function as pasture reflects the state of the people's relationship to God. When they were obedient the land provided what they needed, a pasture. When they were disobedient the land was impacted at various levels and became unusable as a pasture in the way they expected it to.

An interesting side point is that there are several ways to make land unusable as pasture. The obvious is to destroy it. Burn it, poison it (in some cases a conquering army would salt the land to make it unproductive), or plant weeds (to prevent proper cultivation or spreading seeds of useless plants) (We have experienced this with a plant called the sensitive mamusa in Sierra Leone. Once spread to a field it is almost impossible to remove and strangles out any other plant. Animals will not eat it because of its thorns). Another way to ruin pasture is to let sheep feed on it in an uncontrolled manner. Sheep will eat in one spot until nothing is left of the plant and then will eat the roots. Only then will they move on. Once this happens it is very difficult for the pasture to recover and be useful because other plants will take over, plants that are generally not edible or of little value.

As the discussion about pasture develops in the prophets a subtle change begins to develop. The prophets began to talk about receiving blessings even when they are no longer resident in the promised land. It is a key point in a message that Jeremiah is told to send to those in exile in Babylon (Jer 29:4-9). They are to seek peace and prosperity for the place where they are residing and in doing so, they will receive the same in their lives. They are to live as if they will not return to the land.

Other scriptures appear that begin to reveal that the true pasture of the people is not to be based on their location but on their relationship to God. This is already becoming clear in the declarations about the pasture and the land. When the people are obedient and truly serve God, then all goes well. When they disobeyed God, served other gods, or did what they wanted then their relationship to God suffered and the land was impacted negatively. This is not about the level of productivity of the land but by about the way it is treated, abused and finally affected by the invasions that inevitably came as a result of the loss of God's presence and protection. The land simply reflects a deeper truth.

This deeper truth is the idea that the true pasture is one's relationship to God. What is happening to the land represents the state of their relation with God. The state of this relationship is reflected in the condition of the land. There are a number of scriptures that open the door to this understanding:

Jer 23:1 – “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my

pasture.” They are being judged because they have driven them from God (vs 2). These shepherds did not drive them from the land. They drove them from God and then the judgment came.

Jer 50:7 – “Whoever found them devoured them; their enemies said, ‘we are not guilty, for they sinned against the Lord, their true pasture, the Lord, the hope of their Fathers.’” This passage is clear that the true pasture is not a physical location but a relationship. You can have the best of everything and still have nothing.

Isa 44:3-5 “I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. One will say, ‘I belong to the Lord ’; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, ‘The Lord ’s,’” What is interesting in this passage is the mixture of metaphors. First those related to land or pasture and finishing with those related to relation. In the end the people do not talk about belonging to a land or a place but about their relationship to the Lord.

Jer 3:19 – “How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation. I thought you would call me Father and not turn away from following me.” Here again we see that the real issue is not a physical place but a relationship. How many think that bounty and a good location represent good pasture when really the focus is on a relationship, a special relationship with God as Father. A concept that is developed more fully in the teaching of Jesus. The pasture is the place where this relationship is developed.

Let us go back to the passage in Jeremiah 50. In verses 4-5 we learn that a time will come when the people of Israel will go in search of the Lord their God. They will seek out Zion and turn their faces to it. The will come and bind themselves to the Lord. They will make a covenant, not with the land, but the Lord. Could we expand on this concept to include other nations? Most certainly. Over and over the call to other peoples, people who have no ties to the land or any claim to the land, is to come and taste of the Lord and learn the truth. The call to find their pasture, their place of repose, security, and nurturing in God.

This call becomes a central point in Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God and his statement that he has other sheep to seek out and that his kingdom is not one based on land and earthly structures. It is a spiritual kingdom. We will look at this topic more fully later in this book. Still at this point we

can begin to see how possessing the land and benefiting from it could be seen as the evidence of God's presence and blessing. This confusion was part of what made it difficult for the people to understand that the coming of the Messiah might not have anything to do with restoring the kingdom of Israel to its former glory. A wonderful place to live physically which in reality had little to do with the real goal of establishing a totally different concept of life and blessing. A kingdom not based on physical location but on a relationship with God that could provide everything anyone really needed no matter where they were.

So how does all of this relate to the sheep? Who are the sheep and what responsibility and culpability do they have in all that is happening? These and other questions will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Chapter 06

Sheep – Why sheep?

Now that we have a better picture of why the term ‘pasture’ was used and the transition has been made from a physical location to a spiritual relationship, it is time to consider the sheep, the ones who dwell in the land and have the connection with God. The term ‘sheep’ appears frequently in scripture. It is used in the context of a possession; to evaluate the wealth and status of an individual. It is used as a key object in the rituals of sacrifice and represents the payment of debt for sin. But it is also used in describing the behavior and attitude of humans.

We behave and act like sheep. We are easily scattered. We have a tendency to wander. We are an easy target, easy prey, which means we are seriously limited in our ability to protect ourselves. We are gullible, easily fooled, ready to follow anyone as long as we get what we need. We are confused and often blindly walk into our own destruction. We have little awareness of the damage our actions can cause and do not think much farther than the current moment. And because we are better at following than leading, we will follow others even when they lead us into danger. Here are a few Scriptures that support this:

Isaiah 53:6 - *All we like sheep have gone astray.* (We wander and become an example to others of this poor behavior.) This passage is also the

basis for Paul's discussion in Romans 3:10-19 and the declaration of judgment found in Ro 3:23 and 6:23. All have sinned, and all get the same wages.

Isaiah 53:7 – *Led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearer is silent* – (This description is applied to Jesus' actions during his trial and crucifixion, yet represents the submissive behavior of sheep)

Jeremiah 50:6 – *My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray and caused them to wander...* (We are gullible and can be misled easily, like sheep.)

Ezekiel 34:6 – *My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered...* (Sheep without direction quickly become lost and scattered.)

Ezekiel 34:18 – *Is it not enough for you to feed on good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet?* (This reveals how little awareness sheep have of the impact of their actions on their own lives and on those around them.)

Ezekiel 34:21 – *They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them. (Sheep are susceptible to attack, abuse, and danger because of their nature.)*

Zechariah 10:2 – *The idols speak deceit, diviners see visions; they tell dreams that are false, they give comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd. (Sheep are not very discerning and will tolerate even a bad situation as long as they have what they need physically.)*

These and other passages suggest that sheep desperately need someone to guide them in finding what they need and to stay out of danger. Left to themselves they tend to wander and get themselves into trouble. Their care and protection require a significant investment of time and energy if they are to be kept from being attacked, safe from danger, and properly cared for. As we study human nature we can see how well the behavior of sheep describes the behavior and attitudes of man. The danger is in carrying this comparison too far. In the prophets we see, in bold and clear statements, the comparison of the behavior and attitude of sheep to how man behaves, and how we are different as well. The key difference being man's ability to choose and his propensity to choose badly.

The prophets also compared the treatment of the people of Israel as the flock of God to how sheep were treated and used. Sheep provide valuable resources to their owner. They were a source of prestige and power for those who built up the number they possessed. They were a source of food which meant sheep were treated as a means of sustenance for the future. They were also a resource because the wool was used to produce clothing. Properly cared for, a flock will continually provide these resources. Improperly cared for and the flock would be ruined or weakened. This is also a picture of how the people of Israel were being treated.

Many comments of the prophets refer to what happens to the sheep when there is no concern for the future of the flock and for those who would benefit from them. They are treated as objects for satisfying the needs of a few whose only concern is for the moment and there is no interest in taking responsibility for what may happen because the focus is only in this moment. Here are a couple of examples:

Isa 22:13 – But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine; ‘Let us eat and drink,’ you say, ‘for tomorrow we die!’

Eze 34:3 – You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock.

Mic 3:1-3 – Then I said, “Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel. Should you not know justice, you who hate good and love evil; who tear the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones; who eat my people’s flesh, strip off their skin and break their bones in pieces; who chop them up like meat for the pan, like flesh for the pot?”

It is clear that the presence of a shepherd and the character of that shepherd can have a direct impact on what happens to the sheep. If one is not careful it would be easy to believe, from these passages and others, that the problem lies not with the people (sheep) but with the leadership (shepherd). While it is true that the leaders, or shepherds, have a significant role, it is also clear that the sheep are also responsible. Here is where the comparison of us to sheep ends. Sheep do not choose their shepherd. They cannot rise up and oppose a bad shepherd. They cannot choose to flee a bad shepherd in search of a better one.

But we do have this capacity. While we may act like dumb sheep our behavior will not be excused based on this apparent similarity. To better understand this, let’s look at Isa 53:6 as a starting place. “We all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.” This passage begins by comparing us to sheep but quickly shifts to a statement of responsibility. In fact, not only have we chosen to go astray but we are influencing others to do the same.

The concept here is that we, as sheep, have a choice. And further, we, like sheep, tend to make the wrong choice.

What is interesting is that even when there is a shepherd present, the sheep will still wander off. Again we tend to behave in this same manner. Many a parent has been unable to explain why their child chose a path that led to drugs or violent behavior when it was clearly opposite to the life and choices of the parent. How many teachers have seen a good student change performance with no apparent explanation? A good worker becomes a thief, and so on? Many would say that we can always find an explanation, perhaps a series of events or situations that became the focal point for that decision, but that simply reveals a decision was made to follow the wrong path, follow the wrong person, or simply follow their own desires. The truth is we can find just as many stories where people, in difficult situations, chose to make the right choice, even if it placed them in risk.

It is always easier to make wise choices when there is a good shepherd nearby to help and guide us, but that does not mean there won't be disobedience or sinful behavior on the part of the sheep, just as having a poor role model or bad shepherd does not excuse those bad choices. In Isaiah 5:17 we find the following statement, "they (the sheep) will graze as if in their own pasture." This passage is talking about those in exile; those who had been judged but made the decision to not think about where they were but to behave correctly. They chose to do so because they had learned what the justice and righteousness of God meant (vs 16).

There is one other setting where decisions will be made and excuses given. What happens when there is no shepherd or the shepherd has run away and abandoned the sheep? In this setting sheep just wander off. They will follow each other or follow no one. The whole focus will be on finding food, finding what they need, without concern for the danger. As a result they can easily be misled and scattered (Ez 34:5). They are also more susceptible to deception (Ez 34:5; Jer 50:6) and to attack by wild animals (Isa 5:29; Jer 5:6).

But God does not allow this as an excuse for their behavior. Over and over again it is made clear that the judgment that is coming is based on the choice that the sheep are making. They are judged for their involvement in idol worship and disobedience of the law and disrespect for God. Isaiah served under a good king and yet received warnings of judgment to preach to the people.

Isa 5:11-13 Woe to those who rise early in the morning, to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night, till they are inflamed with wine. They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord, no respect for the work of his hands. 13 Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding;

Jer 31:30 – Everyone will die for his own sin

In Ezekiel we find this concept taken one more step. God used him to make sure the people understood why they were being judged. But the central point is not what the watchman says or does. With or without the watchman and his message they have been judged. And the judgment for each person was based on their decision, their choice to obey or disobey. (Eze 3:18-9; 33). The point of sending a watchman is to make this very clear and to help them realize that they are not being punished for the failure of a shepherd or for a lack of information. They are being judged because they have sinned.

We can find such passages in all of the prophets. All of them declare the same truth, that judgment is based on the behavior of each person. If it were solely the fault of the leaders or bad shepherds then only they would be sent into exile or punished. Manasseh was sent into exile and according to tradition, repented while in prison and was released. Two of the last three kings of Judah were sent into exile but that was not enough of a warning to cause Zechariah, the last king before the destruction of Judah, to listen to Jeremiah and others. Nor did the people get the message and change their behavior. Both the king and the people were judged and punished. But not all were killed. Some were spared and allowed to remain in the land or were taken into exile.

This, then, opens the door to redefining the meaning of the term sheep. Based on the passages in the prophets it is easy to see that the sheep represent the people of Israel. At first it almost appears that they are like a flock of sheep completely subject to and dependent on a shepherd; a flock that cannot

be held responsible for their actions. But as we have seen, we cannot allow the representation to go to that extreme.

There is one more issue to be dealt with. Often when we use the terms 'sheep' and 'flock' we see everyone as being the same. Having the same rights, the same access to resources, and behaving in the same way. But this is far from true. Ask any person who cares for animals and they will tell you that animals have personalities. Some are more docile and others more belligerent. Some are weaker and others stronger. Even in scripture we see this truth. Some have become fat and oppress those who are not as strong, they trample the pasture without regard for others and dirty the water (Ez 34:17-22).

In the judgment this will be a factor in separating the sheep into those who are obedient, those who are disobedient, and how they have treated others (Ez 20:37-38). (A concept later used by Jesus in describing the judgment in Matthew 25.) The judgment of the disobedient is harsh. They are assigned to be slaughtered (Jer 12:1-3). God will judge all of the sheep and he will purge, separate out those who revolt and rebel (Eze 20:17). God clearly knows that we behave like sheep but this will not be allowed as an excuse to avoid judgment. All we like sheep, but without any excuse, have chosen to go astray. And we will be judged accordingly.

At the other end of the judgment spectrum are those who will be cared for and given access to the richness of the pasture of God (Jer 23:3). They will come back to God - their true pasture. They will be gathered like a flock and they will be pastured, cared for (Mi 2:12). Again this concept appears in almost all of the prophets; there exists the call to

come back, to be restored. The image is of a good shepherd searching for his sheep, no matter where they are.

This search will be expanded to not just the lost sheep of Israel but to all the lost sheep of every tribe and nation. This teaching of the prophets will become the foundation for the search for sheep ‘not of this flock’ (Jesus declaration in John 10:16). And this also fulfills the plan that God has always had in finding all lost sheep. From Abraham’s promise of being a blessing to all mankind (Ge 12:3), to Solomon’s prayer that God will hear all who come to the temple (1 Ki 8:41-43), on to the promise that even eunuchs of foreign lands will be accepted by God (Is 56:4-7). A teaching is repeated over and over in the Psalms and verified in Isaiah 49:6.

Before we leave this topic of judgment of the sheep it will be good to review the basis of the judgment being pronounced. As you read through the prophets this becomes clear and focused. The sheep are not judged based on their heritage or lineage as descendants of Abraham. They are judged on the basis of their acceptance of God or on their rejection of God to follow false gods, false truth, and sin.

So the term ‘sheep’ is used to describe our behavior but not our level of responsibility. Unlike sheep we must make the decision about what we do. We are the ones who must choose what path we will follow. We must decide how we will respond to those who lead us.

Chapter 07

Shepherds of the Kingdom

The shepherds. A group of people who are responsible to care for sheep. To do this they have to understand the nature of sheep, the needs of sheep, and the dangers that affect sheep. As we study the role of shepherd in Biblical times we will become aware of two extremes . At one extreme was the owner of many flocks, a person of great wealth and influence, who used the sheep for his personal benefit; yet at another extreme was a worker who spent his life with the animals, smelled like them, and was dominated by their needs. The owner of a small flock knew the importance of being a good shepherd, an attitude often forgotten by those who became rich through their flocks.

To begin let us do a quick review of the nature and needs of sheep. Sheep are foolish animals. When there is danger they are easily confused and can run the wrong way. They do not do well at being directed from behind, they need to be led. They are a finicky creature in many ways, unable to rest if they sense something is not right, unable to drink if the water is the least bit disturbed or dirty, unable to eat for the same reasons. Yet at the same time they are destructive of the land where they eat and drink, with little or no concept of how to find and care for pasture or water. They are quick to wander off and unlikely to come when called. If injured they don't know how to care for themselves or each other. These and many similar ideas make it a great challenge to be a shepherd. Oh yes and one more critical item. You can never,

ever, leave them alone. If they are not wandering off, they are attracting wild animals because they are an easy prey. And since they are a great supply of meat and other resources, and represent wealth, they also attract thieves.

Besides all of this they really cannot do anything to help the shepherd in carrying out the tasks involved in their care. If anything, their nature only makes it more complicated - except for one thing. They know their shepherd's voice and they will come to him, or at least cry, to let him know where they are. They are, in many ways, like little children, who never grow up, never learn to care for themselves, never can help in their own care, and will always be a burden to the shepherd.

This is not a pleasant image of the work of a shepherd and the animal he is to care for. But it is this term that is used to describe those who are called, commanded, even invited, to care for the sheep. In the context of the Scripture the role of 'shepherd of the people' was one of honor and responsibility. Those who correctly fulfilled the role were honored and those who didn't were judged for their mistreatment of the flock.

This is the context in which the prophets use the term 'shepherd' in relation to those called to take care of the people of God, the flock that is Israel. It is a role that David took seriously. He used it to paint a picture of how God cares for his people. This image could easily have been the basis used by the prophets to judge who was a good, bad, or useless shepherd.

Within the category of shepherd we find three groups of people who were expected to fulfill some, if not all, the responsibilities of a shepherd. The first group is obvious, the king. This was the description God used in defining David's responsibility as king, 'he is to be the shepherd of the people' (2 Sam 5:2). Only one other time in the books of history was the term used to refer to a king. Micaiah used term when he predicted the death of Ahab, who was king of Israel (2 Chr 18:16). In this case the people were be freed from a horrible shepherd and return to their homes in peace.

Clearly the king had the role of protecting the sheep and providing them a safe place to live, eat, and drink. And in the broader context, he also had the responsibility to lead them to God, as well as to be an example of what a good shepherd looked like. A good shepherd (king) brought blessing. A bad shepherd (king) brought destruction and oppression.

The prophets revealed what God expected them to be and why they were being judged:

Eze 34:2-4 they are only concerned about their personal needs and have no regard for the needs of those they have been called to lead.

Jer 12: 10 Instead of caring for the land and the people they have ruined God's vineyard (another term used when talking about the people as God's possession). Their behavior is so destructive that in the end the promised land will become a wasteland. The shepherds have ruined not only the pasture for

the sheep but the vineyard which would supply them food.

Jer 50:6 Instead of leading them to God they have misled them. Worse, they have caused them to wander and so placed them in danger of attack and death. (Zec 10:2)

There are only two instances of kings who were judged in a positive light in the prophets and they were not even kings of Israel or of Judah. The first Cyrus, the king of Persia, was called by God to be a shepherd of the people of Israel (Isa 44:28). He was the one who made it possible for the people to return from exile and the rebuilding of the temple. The second was an unknown king of Assyria. He responded to the message of Jonah and led his people in a time of fasting and repentance (Jonah 3:6-10).

The second group were the priests. They were expected to care for the sheep and to assist the people in presenting their sacrifices before God. They were also expected to teach the word to the people; a task we see organized by Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 17:7-9). Actually there is no direct reference describing the priests and Levites as shepherds, only that they were considered to be among those who lead the people. There were, on the other hand, numerous judgments against them for their failure to teach and lead the people in the worship of God and for bringing the worship and sacrifices of false gods into the temple itself (Ez 8; 22:26). They failed to honor God and lead the people in true worship (Mic 1:6-14).

The final group were the prophets. They clearly filled the role of a guide for the sheep and of instructors to all shepherds in how to fulfill their roles in caring for the sheep. Jeremiah described his role in this manner, as that of a shepherd, and that he had not fled from this responsibility, even when his life was threatened (Jer 17:16). Isaiah described the false prophets as watchmen who were blind, shepherds who lacked understanding and were only looking after themselves (Isa 56:10-11). Instead of helping the people to return to God they were encouraging to do whatever they want as if God's warnings meant nothing. According to Jeremiah they went so far as to no longer consult God and this was part of the reason for the flock being scattered (Jer 10:21). They were not even making the appearance of doing so, and so were depending on their own wisdom and insight. This fact brought them in conflict with Jeremiah. On one occasion God made a point of this truth and Hananiah (a false prophet) died for his behavior (Jer 28:12-17). This same judgment was carried out on all the false prophets who misled the sheep and caused them to stray from the truth.

Within these three groups existed different types of shepherds. There are basically four categories that we need to be aware of:

- Bad – These shepherds do a horrible job of caring for the sheep. They have no concern for the safety of the sheep. They have no interest in risking their lives to protect them. They have no desire to exert themselves in going after those that wander off. In fact they will even abandon the sheep when the work interferes

with other aspects of their lives (Ez 34:7-8; Jer 23:1-2; Jer 34:7-8; Jer 50:6).

- Useless or foolish – These shepherds don't know what they are doing. They lack understanding of what is needed to do the job which could easily put those in their care at risk (Is 56:11) They are not aware of what is happening around them. This means if there is danger or risk they don't see it. They don't know the signs that tell them when sheep are hurt or suffering, so they are senseless (Jer 10:21). The truth is, they are worthless. The sheep might be better off without them (Zec 11:16). Finally, because they have no idea what they are doing, they make poor decisions about everything and are called foolish (Zec 11:9), even as it relates to themselves and their personal needs.
- Selfish - This group may be the worst of all the shepherds. Their focus is completely on themselves and their needs. They may actually do the work of taking care of the sheep but, in reality, have no concern for the sheep. Their goal is to work only enough to maintain the flock so that they can benefit in every possible way from the sheep they care for. They will risk the sheep's well-being to satisfy short-term goals and desires with no concern for the long-term impact on the flock or themselves (Is 56:11; Jer 34:7-8; Jer 25:36; Ez 34:2ff, 10; Zec 11:5; Zec 11:16).

- Good - Mixed in among all of this is the description of the qualities and characteristics of a good shepherd. The best description of this is found in Ezekiel 34.
 - Selfless vs 3 – He sees that the needs of the sheep are more important than those of the shepherd. That, in fact, the fulfillment of his needs are linked to satisfying the needs of the flock.
 - Healing vs 4, 16 – He understands that the health of the flock is affected by the health of one sheep. The two are linked. He understands the importance of caring for the injured and sick and how this affects the strength and safety of the entire flock.
 - Wholeness vs 4-6 – He knows that the loss of a sheep impacts the emotional state of the flock. When a lamb wanders off the ewe is distracted. When a ewe wanders off the ram is distracted. They begin to bleat and the sound unnerves the whole flock. He knows that until he finds the missing sheep the flock will not feed well nor rest well.
 - Protection vs 8 – A lost sheep is at risk. The shepherd knows this but also knows that unless he finds that sheep it could also lead to a greater problem. It could attract predators and once they know where the flock is it will require more work to protect them. So he works hard to prevent them from wandering

because this is the best way to protect them and himself from the danger of predators.

- Recovery vs 11-13 – There are always events that can startle and scatter sheep, even when the shepherd is doing a good job. A lightning bolt, a sudden storm, and other such unexpected events may cause the flock to scatter. The good shepherd knows why this happens and knows where to look for the sheep when these events happen.
- Daily care vs 14 – He understands the importance of providing food, water and shelter for the flock. He knows how his ability to do so will help the flock and their ability to benefit from what is being provided. He also knows how to protect the land so that it will not be destroyed or abused in the process, thus guaranteeing future development and life of the flock.
- Balance vs 10, 16, 20 – He knows when to shear the sheep and how to watch over them when birthing season comes. He knows the cycles of life that affect them and how to deal with each. He knows how many sheep he can afford to sell or butcher without drastically affecting the overall state of the flock. He knows when a sheep is nearing the end of its life and what to do. He knows how to protect the sheep from each other.
- Ownership vs 30, 32 – The sheep know the shepherd. They follow him. He behaves in a

way that will maintain this knowledge and connection.

- Wisdom Jer 3:15 – A good shepherd is one who cares for and leads the flock based on his knowledge and wisdom, of the sheep, of the environment, and of himself. He understands his responsibility and how it affects his relationship to the sheep and to God. Because in the end the job he does is a reflection of his relationship to God who gave him the sheep.

A key aspect of this discussion of the good shepherd is the fact that God promised that a day would come when he would provide this kind of shepherd for those who belonged to his flock (Eze 34:25; Jer 23:4; Mic 5:4-5). And woven through all of this were the promises and descriptions of the one who would become the shepherd, sent by God, to fulfill all of the promises and become the perfect example for all of those called to be shepherds.

While the passages in the prophets tend to be focused on judging the shepherds because they have failed in their work, these same passages give us an incredible image of the role, responsibility, and work of a shepherd. David painted a picture in Psalms 23. Likewise, the prophets prepared a grand tapestry for us to examine as we study what it means to be a pastor (shepherd) in God's kingdom, caring for God's flock.

As we come to the end of this section there are a couple of facts that we need to keep in mind. One is the fact that all shepherds were, at one time in their lives, sheep. We all, at

one time, had someone, a shepherd, who was responsible for our care and development. Or, actually, a number of shepherds. Parents, siblings, friends, teachers, employers, and on the list could go. Some of them did excellent jobs of fulfilling their part as a shepherd, others struggled, and some even failed. Our current ability as shepherds has been profoundly impacted by the nature and quality of those who were our shepherds. This is something we will need to reflect on and build on (when the example was good) or overcome (if it was not). We are not responsible for how they did but we will be held accountable for what we do. That should be clearly evident from our study of the shepherd.

The other fact is that in the end, a shepherd of people does not have the same control over his flock as the shepherd of a flock of sheep. In the end, the individual has the right to choose. The good shepherd does everything possible to help the members of the flock have all the right care and teaching so that they will be capable of making wise and good choices. This does not mean that they will be perfect but, hopefully, honest and loving. However, no matter how good the shepherd is there will always be those sheep who wander. And, in reverse, there is no situation involving a bad shepherd where the person making a bad decision escapes their responsibility by using the excuse of being under the care and guidance of a bad shepherd. Again, this is clear from our studies on sheep and shepherd.

As we close, keep in mind even the best leader cannot protect everyone in their care. They cannot control completely every moment of their lives, every contact with

the world, every thought they will ever think. Sheep may choose to not listen.

So we, as shepherds, are still sheep. All around us are shepherds seeking to guide us. God wants us to follow the Good Shepherd which he is sending so we can find the good pasture which is God. In the past this was an earthly kingdom established in a specific land. With the coming of Jesus, all this changed. He redefined what it meant to be a sheep and a shepherd in the kingdom of God.

Chapter 08

Kingdom and Mission – Revealing the plan

The prophets opened the door to a new understanding of God’s plan. In their words and messages they laid the foundation for the fulfillment of a mission that God announced as early as the day Adam and Eve were evicted from the Garden. Step by step, information was added and a picture was painted of a kingdom that is very different from the kingdom that the chosen people were hoping for.

There would be a huge shift, at least from the perspective of the chosen people, of what this kingdom would look like and how it would redefine the terms we have been studying. The life and teachings of Jesus would clarify for all, chosen people and everyone else, that the pasture (or relationship with God) would take place within the context of this new structure. In Matthew it would be called the Kingdom of Heaven. Mark and Luke would refer to it as the Kingdom of God. These terms would be used to define the total scope of this new structure including all of heaven and earth.

When we come to the book of Acts and the letters of Paul, Peter, James, and John another term is added, “the church.” This is the visible expression of the kingdom on earth. The first stage of making this kingdom a reality is a key point in the Lord’s prayer. We are asked to pray that God would bring his kingdom to earth. Even more important to pray that his will would be experienced on earth in the same way as it

was in heaven. A key aspect of this is the ability of those who are citizens of this kingdom to have full access to God and experience this relationship (pasture) in a way that had not been possible. God, would dwell with us (Christ) and in us (Holy Spirit). The second step in the process would come with Jesus death and resurrection and the conquest of Satan, death and sin.

Because of this, a significant change happens to those who have the role of pastor. Likewise, the roles of kings and priests are no longer in the hands of man and their service is based on family line and hereditary rites. These two roles are combined and given to Jesus who became the eternal king of the line of David, both by heredity and by action. He is the only heir of David that truly can be honored as one who served like David and in the end replaced him as the supreme example of love and service to God. He became the last of the priests because he was the perfect sacrifice and the only one who could come into the actual presence of God to present the perfect sacrifice.

The role of prophet would continue, though the name would be changed to that of “pastor.” While there will still be those who are called prophets and will continue to declare the truth and proclaim the warnings and blessings of God to the people, the greater responsibility will fall to those called as pastors. They are assigned the task of caring for the people (sheep). Jesus was the perfect example of what it means to be a pastor in the kingdom and serve in the church. He revealed the role of the pastor in three levels; searching for the lost, caring of the flock, and preparing the flock to continue the process of seeking, caring and preparing.

John began the teaching that shifted the thinking of the people from setting up an earthly kingdom to revealing the true kingdom of God. The chosen people, an earthly kingdom, was never intended to be restricted to a specific group and place. A simple review of Scriptures makes this clear. One of the clearest was the promise given to Abraham that through this process all the nations would be blessed.

Jesus clarified the teaching of the kingdom and brought it into existence. He then handed over the keys of the kingdom to us to continue teaching the message (called the evangel or good news of the kingdom) until he returns to finish establishing this Kingdom forever which will be the new heaven and the earth, where there will be no more sin and all will have complete access to the presence of God. This is the final step in receiving all the benefits of the true pasture which is God. Jesus also taught others to continue the work he began of seeking out the lost sheep and bringing them into the fold (the church or kingdom). He used the concept of shepherding to reveal what it meant to do the work of the mission; a task that was assigned to everyone in general and to specific persons, who would later be called pastors, for specific tasks and groups.

It is good to keep this in mind. We are all responsible to pastor; to seek out the lost, to care for them, and to teach them to do the same. This is the cycle given to us in Matthew 28:18-20. But at the same time some are called to pastor specific groups of people. They accept the responsibility of directing this work of seeking out the lost, caring for them, and teaching them. And in so doing, the pastor helps

everyone to carry out their personal responsibility in the area of shepherding.

In the first part of the book we looked at the background of the terms pasture, pastor, and sheep. It is this foundation that will help us understand how the terms are used by the authors of the New Testament and help us understand the role of the pastor in relation to the mission of God and the establishment of His kingdom where all who come (sheep) can fully experience his presence and enjoy all the blessings that come from this relationship (pasture).

The first thing we need to do in this process is understand the teaching that Jesus gave us regarding the kingdom. This is a big topic and we will only focus on certain aspects of what it is and how it relates to our key terms. Then we will look at Jesus two discussions of shepherd, sheep, and pasture in the book of John. From there we will look at several topics related to missions, understanding what it is, and the responsibility of the pastor in carrying out the mission.

Chapter 09

Kingdom and Mission (A new vision)

We don't realize how big a shift had to be made in the thinking of the people of Israel. The words of the prophets taught about the changes that were coming in relation to the kingdom. But it would take more instruction for them to understand what actually needed to be done to make those changes. It would take the teaching and death of John the Baptist and Jesus before some of the people accepted the fulfillment of those prophecies. It would not be until after the resurrection of Jesus that the establishment of the Kingdom of God really began. The reality of this kingdom was revealed and lived out first in the life of Jesus and later experienced in the life and teaching of the church. It would surprise and bring joy to many, scare and confuse others, and create a deep-seated anger in those who did not want to change.

With this in mind let us begin a review of the time that led up to Jesus' arrival.

As we studied the prophets, we were made very aware that their focus was to lead the people back to God. They were there to help them understand who God is, their relationship to God, and what it meant to be part of the realm of God. In the prophets, we saw that this activity was focused on a specific place, which for the Jews, was called the promised land. As we delved deeper into how the terms were used we

began to see a shift in the context of the activity. The true pasture was not really the land, but rather, a relationship with God. Not all saw this as a real possibility or as something they desired. This fact made it difficult for the king and the people to hear and accept Jeremiah's message to surrender to the king of Babylon.

Over the next 400 years a few things became evident. The people learned their lesson and the error of following false gods. They never again fell into this trap or were judged for this sin. But they did continue to have problems with the meaning of the terms used by the prophets. They struggled with the idea that the promised land was not the true pasture. They struggled with the idea of a shepherd who was not a royal king like David.

During this time two important developments occurred. The group called the scribes, came into existence. Their role was to be sure the word of God was properly preserved and taught. The best example of a scribe was Ezra. The second was the foundation and development of the synagogue as a place to receive the teaching of Scripture and to worship God. Together the scribes and synagogue would provide continuity for the people and a foundation of training that Jesus would later use to teach the people. (We need to always keep in mind that the Bible of Jesus and the others was the Old Testament.)

Even though the people were scattered and only some returned to the promised land, there was a strong focus on the restoration of the kingdom and the promised land was the location for this to occur. A great deal of effort was

expended in rebuilding the temple and resettling the city of Jerusalem. From the histories found in Ezra and Nehemiah, it is clear that God was actively involved in this process. While the final form of the kingdom and its blessing would be different from what was in the mind of the Israelites, the location was still important to carrying out the plan. This focus on the land and reestablishment of the earthly kingdom of David resulted in the development of two streams of thought, neither of which had in view a spiritual kingdom.

The first thought was the continued belief that a day would come when the nation of Israel was reestablished by military action. As a result of this there was almost constant warfare in the land. From the days of the prophets until the time of Jesus, control of the land changed hands constantly, mainly between two kingdoms; the Seleucid in the north (Syria) and the Ptolemaic in the south (Egypt). A time came when these two were so weak from fighting each other that the family of the Maccabees was able to incite a revolt that allowed Israel to exist as a nation for about 100 years. However, infighting and jealousy erupted and the nation was once again lost and subjugated by Rome. It gained a little more life as an independent state under King Herod the Great, but only because Rome allowed it. With his death the promised land once again became the territory of another nation. Later there were more rebellions, which resulted in the final destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70AD.

The second stream of thought relates to groups like the Essenes. These groups believed in an apocalyptic event which would restore the kingdom. God would come or he would send a great warrior on his behalf. This warrior would

bring the end of times and a great period of judgment, at the end of which the nation of Israel would be restored and usher in a period of power and wealth for the people of Israel. All the nations would become conquered people under the control of the nation of Israel.

In each of these scenarios it is easy to see why Jesus' display of power over sickness, death and disease created a belief that the kingdom of Israel was about to be restored. Yet his teaching and simple life were a contradiction to what they were hoping for. The mighty king looked more like a lowly shepherd. His words were not military in nature, but of love and forgiveness. His focus was not on developing a structure to rule but to care for people and help them to find God, not attack enemies.

Various groups supported and encouraged these two ideas. The Pharisees sought to satisfy God's law as a way of gaining approval and being selected for places of honor in the future kingdom. The Sadducees' (a political group) main focus was on gaining political power and advancing the status of the nation of Israel at the same time. The Scribes had the responsibility of teaching the law, but often appeared to teach only what supported the current leadership structure. The priests were responsible to help the people in meeting with God, but had more concern with maintaining their power, abusing the people, and avoiding anything that might bring a sudden end to the current freedom they had, while waiting for the king to come. (A king whom they hoped to have control over.) Each group was more than willing to serve the king when he came but, in reality, on their terms and according to what they believed.

It is painfully clear that the great revelation, given through the prophets, of a new structure for the kingdom that focused on a relationship with God had been lost over the centuries. As in the time of the prophets the leaders of Jesus' time were again maltreating the sheep. They treated the sheep as property from which to benefit and not as people to be cared for and helped in developing a relationship with God. Yet, at another level, the lessons learned about serving only the one true God and the dangers of not being faithful were taught well. The people were faithful in fulfilling the requirements of the law. However, this left them open to the abuse of bad shepherds but also prepared them in a unique way to receive the truth that was about to come to them.

It is into this confusion that John the Baptist arrived and began to proclaim the 'coming of the kingdom of God.' This was a phrase that had never been used before. It created a clear break from the expectation of the past and the plan God had for the future. Plus, the messenger did not come to the key leaders but went to the desert to begin preaching. He was clearly seeking out those willing to hear; willing to be found. He was seeking out the lost sheep. His message came right out of the prophets. John declared that he was...

Luke 3:4-6 (Mt 3:3; Mk 1:11; Jn 1:23)(all based on Is 40:3-5)

*"A voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.
Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.*

*The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.
And all mankind will see God's salvation."*

This was an interesting message and not what one would expect. It was proclaimed in the desert, during a barren time of understanding the truth. John was to prepare the way and straighten the path, he was to bring clarity to the message of the prophets and help the people understand what God really wanted to do. He preached when there was a great deal of confusion regarding what God would do and how God would carry out his plans. The rest of his message had a unique focus – all mankind – and a unique concept - God’s salvation - not the restoration of Israel.

That was the goal of the message. His focus can be found in Matthew 3:1 “In those days John the Baptist came, ... Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” And Luke 3:3, “he went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” The call to repentance was not new. What was new was the addition of a specific act to publicly announce this repentance, to declare that the kingdom of heaven was near, and to announce that the one coming would baptize them with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33). He was not coming to enforce the law or attack the current rulers of the land, but to bring grace and truth to the people (John 1:17).

There are two concepts in John’s ministry that we need to focus on that relate to our topic. The first is that the message was to be given to everyone. John went looking

for the common folk, those generally excluded by both the religious and political leaders. He went into the land of the people, and not to the temple. In fact, there is no indication that John visited Jerusalem or the temple during his time of ministry. Yet his message and the response by the people was so powerful it attracted the attention of the leaders; a group that John denounced strongly as vipers (Mt 3:7; Lk 3:7). This was a very strong term since the snake was considered to represent deceit and evil. Jesus used this description as well in relation to the leaders (Mt 12:34, 23:33).

In John's life we see the contrast between a good shepherd and a selfish shepherd. John went looking for the people. He treated the sickness that had separated them from the Lord and provided them with healing and an act of restoration. At the same time he exposed the leaders for the selfish shepherds they were. Their actions, teaching, and life were a deception. They caused the sheep to be lost, confused, and abused.

Second, John became our first example of a shepherd in the redefined kingdom of God. His ministry would be brief but have a profound impact. The people were hungry for a message that related to them and that helped them understand what God was doing. And that is what he did. He took the people back to the heart of the message of the prophets. God cared for them. God saw their condition and knew their hearts. Through John, God called them back to the truth and prepared them for the arrival of the kingdom. John was truly the last of the prophets and the prototype for what a pastor should be; a person crying out in the

wilderness, searching for the lost souls. A person preparing the way for the people to come to God and have an encounter with God. A person who trained others to do the same (remember John had disciples). His disciples did the same work, they cried out the message in the desert places where people were lost and wandering, calling them home to God. His last task was to point the people to the one who came to complete the work of establishing the new kingdom and confirm that the true pasture was God. He is one who rescues the sheep and is the Good Shepherd.

Now comes the transition, the handoff from John the Baptist to Jesus. Jesus returned from the desert to be baptized by John and the first baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred. As soon as Jesus returns from the wilderness he continued the work that John began. In Matthew 4 we are told that this occurred about the time John was arrested. Jesus preached the same message, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near (vs 17). But unlike John, who did his preaching in a remote area around the Jordan River, Jesus began traveling all through Galilee “preaching the good news of the kingdom (vs 23).” In Luke 4:18 we are given more of the content of the message and who it was for.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the
prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,*

*to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Isaiah
61:1-2*

The focus here is on who was to receive the good news. It also tells that this message was to bring freedom to the prisoners (those imprisoned by their sin), recovery of sight to the blind (those who have been blinded to the truth of God's promises), and release of the oppressed (to free them from the worry about their debt before God and the damage being done by the evil shepherds of the world). The message was also about proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor.

Jesus spent his life revealing just what he meant when he proclaimed the fulfillment of this prophesy that day in the synagogue. And while he released many from the prison of disease, demon possession, and debilitating physical injuries, he always had in mind a greater goal. Freedom from physical troubles only has meaning when we are freed from the prison of sin, the blindness of lost faith, and the oppression of never being able to pay the debt we owe. Jesus' goal was to reveal, for all to see, the kingdom God has always been planning and preparing for his people, the sheep of his pasture; this place that provides freedom and release for all who seek it in God.

Like John the Baptist, Jesus' focus was on finding and teaching the sheep. He traveled to the cities, to remote places, to the people rejected by others, to enemy territory, and even to the obstinate leaders (bad and selfish shepherds). The goal was evident. He was searching for

lost and hurt sheep. When he found them he explained the true nature of the kingdom of God, how to enter the kingdom of God, and how to live in the kingdom. He left no doubt what the law really meant and how it was truly impossible to gain entry to the kingdom of God through keeping the law.

It is interesting, as one reviews the teaching from the Sermon on the Mount and the parables, how the writers exposed the emptiness of the teaching of those the people looked to as leaders. Who, by their poor shepherding skills, had created a great hopelessness in the people, of ever being good enough for God. Jesus' exposure of this teaching along with his teaching on the kingdom of God, helped the people better understand the truth about what the pasture of God really was, a relationship with God in the context of God's rule or kingdom.

As he carried out his ministry he also revealed clearly what God wanted from those called to recover and care for the lost sheep. He declared clearly that he had been sent to seek and to save the lost (Lk 19:10). He had come to bring healing to the sick (Mt 9:12-13). And to not lose sight of the needs of those who had not strayed. A point he made in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:31) and of the vineyard owner's equal treatment of all who worked (Mt 20). His teaching was designed to do all of this and clearly reflected all that a shepherd should be, because even as he sought out the sheep he prepared others to do the same.

John traveled through the remote regions and the region around the River Jordan. While doing this he gathered

people around him and they became his disciples. They continued John the Baptist's work. Now Jesus continued the pattern by traveling throughout Galilee. Later he spent time in Judea, and he entered Samaria, apparently for the sole purpose of meeting a woman and starting the process of recovering the lost sheep of Samaria. (A ministry later continued by Philip.) During his ministry Jesus only came to Jerusalem twice. The first was brief. The second was at the end of his life and ministry. That last week of teaching and ministry laid the foundation for the future of the kingdom and for those who would be called to continue the work to all the nations.

When pressed to stay in one place, Jesus declared that he must go and preach to other towns because that is why he had been sent (Lk 4:43). He then chose others to help in the work with the specific command to preach the good news of the kingdom (Lk 9:2). He first sent out the 12 and then selected 72 others to do the same (Lk 10:2). At one point he encouraged his followers to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send even more workers (Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2). Actually this passage in Matthew 9:38 gives quite an image of the work of shepherds. Even though the focus was on a wheat harvest, the principles are the same. The field, or place of work, is not in the church, it is in the world. We need people trained to go out and gather in the harvest, those who are waiting to be found. We will need more people to do this and to prepare others to continue the work.

To further emphasize this need Jesus told parables about finding the lost sheep (Lk 15:1-7), the lost coin (Lk 15:8-

10), and the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32). He talked about the owner of the vineyard looking for more workers for the harvest (Mt 20:1-7). He talked about the need to sow the seed of the good news (Mt 13). He revealed in his prayer in John 17 that we have been selected to carrying on the work he had begun of going to the world with the message. His closing message was to go to the nations and preach the gospel, the good news of the kingdom (Mt 28:18; Mk 16:15; Acts 1:8). He revealed for all, that the shepherds are to go and find the lost and care for them.

In all of this work we begin to see that he is calling us to be part of a kingdom and to enjoy the fruits of that kingdom. He used many terms to describe the kingdom - yeast, mustard seed, treasure, and pearl of great price. While he never called it the promised land or a pasture, it is not hard to see the connection. He called people to experience God and his rule in a new and special way. He wanted people to know what it meant to truly experience the will of God, His presence, in the way that the angels experienced it in heaven.

The prophets began the transition from a promised land to a promised relation; from being sheep in a particular location to being the sheep of God. In the first, all the blessings were dependent on living in a specific time and place, without war, drought, plagues and other dangers that might prevent the land from yielding its blessings. In the second, the blessings are tied to God who has no specific location, who is everywhere and can make his blessings available at any time and in any place. Who is

not affected or restricted by what is happening in the world in making those blessings available.

We saw the beginnings of this in the message Jeremiah gave to the people in exile. They were to settle down and seek the blessing of others. By doing this, they would enjoy life and the fruits of God's blessing even though they were not living in the promised land. With the coming of Jesus the message expanded. It was no longer about the nations going to a specific place to meet God but about taking the message to the nations so they could encounter God. A central point in Jesus' discussion with the woman at the well (John 4:21-24).

When we get to the gospels this idea is developed even further. The key phrase is the 'kingdom of heaven,' found in Matthew (Mt 13:24) or the 'kingdom of God,' found in Mark and Luke (Mk 4:11; Lk 4:43). These two phrases are interchangeable and are used to redefine the meaning of 'kingdom' and the 'pasture' to be found in that kingdom.

There are so many parables and comparisons used to describe the kingdom that there is not enough space for them all to be shared and analyzed. But it would be good to see a few:

- Matthew 18:4 – Rank in the kingdom of heaven will be based on service and humility not riches or other earthly positions or symbols.
- Matthew 13:44-46 – The kingdom of heaven will be worth everything we possess and more. It is

described as a great treasure and the pearl of great price which is worth everything we possess.

- Matthew 22:2 – The kingdom of heaven will belong to and be accessible to everyone no matter what their status is or the state of their life.
- Luke 17:21 – Membership in the kingdom of heaven is based on a relationship not residence in a place.
- Matthew 13:31-33 (Mk 4:30-32; Lk 13:18-21) – The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed and yeast. Once it is present it will influence all those who come in contact with it.
- John 18:36 – The kingdom of heaven is not a physical place but an extension of the kingdom of God in heaven into this world.
- Lk 22:16-18 – The kingdom of heaven is the fulfillment of the promise of God, to dwell with us, and its current existence is the evidence of its final fulfillment in the future.

In Matthew 6:9-13 we are given a description of this kingdom and how we are to experience it. We are to realize that it belongs to God and that his goal is to make this kingdom as real on earth as it is in heaven. We are to benefit from its resources, experience its life based on forgiveness, and receive its protection from all that want to destroy its existence in us.

This new definition of kingdom and what it means to live in this kingdom was the center of Jesus' conflict with the leaders. They wanted a physical kingdom where they

could rule and benefit from their position. They wanted control over God. Jesus revealed that God had no intention of setting up such a kingdom. He even warned of the complete destruction of the world as they knew it, their kingdom. (A destruction that happened in 70 AD when Rome erased Jerusalem and Israel from the map, only leaving a small segment of a wall.)

This conflict became the focal point of the leaders' opposition to Jesus and they used it to crucify him. But his resurrection confirmed in exclamation points that the kingdom would not be limited to a place, a time, or an earthly concept. It had been freed to transcend such boundaries and was available to all the nations, to all lands. The pasture, which is God, was freed from the constraints of the past and made available to all people in all the world.

That is quite a message.

Finally, we need to look more closely at those who are the focal point of the invitation to experience God and become part of the kingdom. We need to understand who the shepherds are expected to seek out and what that involves.

Within the context of the gospels the references to sheep are interesting and varied. Jesus' description of the sheep was that they are harassed and helpless (Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34). They are lost and need to be found (Mt 10:6; Jn 10:16).

Sheep were valuable. They were valuable enough to break the Sabbath law to recover them when lost or injured (Mt

12:12). This comment was followed by Jesus statement that a man is more valuable and should be rescued (vs 13). This is also reinforced by the idea that a shepherd will risk his life to find and care for a lost sheep (Mt 18:12; Lk 15:4).

Sheep are easily scattered, even when they have a good shepherd (Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27). This means that they can be highly dependent on their leader. The loss of a leader causes confusion and uncertainty. This suggests that we need to do more than treat people as sheep, but help them develop beyond living in dependence and learn to lead. This is what Jesus accomplished during the time between his resurrection and ascension. He taught them a new level of dependence and independence that involved a relationship with the Holy Spirit. They could go anywhere: independence, because they had the Holy Spirit with them, dependent on God not a person.

An interesting idea is that even those called to help in proclaiming the good news were called sheep (Mt 10:16). This reflects the comment made earlier that we all were sheep at one time and, in a certain sense, will always be sheep. The world is a dangerous place and we need the protection and care of others and of the Good Shepherd. And, the truth is that not only the sheep but the shepherd, as well, are subject to danger and temptation in this world.

Again, as we saw in the prophets, this description of sheep serves to reveal the nature of our need or situation. But it does not exclude us from responsibility for our actions. Salvation is offered to all who choose to believe (Jn 3:16-

21). And we will be judged, not as senseless harassed sheep, but as people responsible for our actions and for the reasons behind our actions (this is made clear in Jesus' description of the judgment in Mt 25:32-46).

The kingdom of God provides us with the context and clearest meaning of the terms shepherd, sheep, and pasture. It is a message that John began, Jesus continued and expanded on, and then he gave us the responsibility to continue proclaiming it.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We choose our own shepherds. We choose the pasture we want to live in. Sometimes they are false. But the kingdom has come. The Good Shepherd is searching and has enlisted others in the search to reveal to us who the false teachers are and why they are false. He reveals to us what is wrong with the pasture we are living in and how we can find the true pasture that we were created to enjoy.

We have been given the map to guide us - Jesus (I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me – John 14:6). We have been given the true pasture and all of its resources (I am the bread of life – John 6:48, and the living water – John 4:13-14). We have been given the one person who can care for us (I am the good shepherd - John 10:11).

These truths open the way for us to study the example of the good shepherd, his sheep and the relationship (pasture) involved, which is found in John 10. There we will learn more about how to lead the sheep, the dangers that are involved, and the relationship of the sheep to the shepherd.

Chapter 10

The Good Shepherd

Jesus has been called the Good Shepherd. But do we understand what that title means? Most of us use Psalm 23 as the foundation for our description and explanation of this concept. But it is much more than that. To better understand this title we need to look at how Jesus described the Good Shepherd in John 10.

The best way to do this will be to look at what he says verse by verse.

Verse 1 “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.”

I find it interesting that to begin his discussion of the role and responsibility of a shepherd, Jesus starts with a negative statement. He starts by describing a false shepherd. We have covered the concept in some detail in previous chapters, but there is a difference here. In this case these individuals have been excluded from the sheep pen. For various reasons they have not been selected for this work or did not want to go through the process of being approved but still want access to the sheep and probably the benefits they represent. It is also clear that their identity is known to whoever is in charge of the sheep and those in charge of the entrance. So the only way into the sheepfold is by false means.

Jesus uses two words to describe these people; thief and robber. They do not want to follow the correct process on being approved and they are not interested in doing the work required to gain entry. They also do not want others to be able to see what they will be doing once they gain control or access to the sheep.

The first term is ‘thief,’ one who steals in secret. His goal is to deceive others and gain access, or to use stealth and surprise to take what he wants without anyone knowing who he is and what he has done. Sometimes he works at gaining trust, gaining information with the purpose of betraying that trust and using the information against his target. In another passage Jesus described these people as wolves in sheep’s clothing (Mt 7:15). These could be people who become members of a church and use their position and influence to divide the church and take some of flock as their own. They deceive and connive and convince people that the pastor is wrong, inadequate, incapable and so on. This is not a good example of shepherd that we should follow, but many do. They don’t come through the gate (Jesus). They find other means to gain entry and work their charms to mislead and steal sheep.

The second term is ‘robber.’ This term has two meanings. The central concept is of a person, who by force and the use of violence, attacks others to take their property. There is no attempt to hide what they are doing. They may hide their face but the actions are carried out in public places with the use of threats to frighten people to give up their possessions. The robber will resort to violence if necessary to physically take what he wants. If it causes severe injury or even death,

that is of little consequence, as long as he gets what he wants.

The second meaning creates a bit of a dilemma. During the life of Jesus there was a group of rebels who actively opposed the Romans and often attacked them violently. They would also attack Jews who didn't actively oppose the romans and steal what they needed so they could fund their guerrilla war against their enemy, which they, and many others considered a just cause. Because of this concept many considered them heroes. The Jews called them Zealots. The Romans called them robbers.

It is the second meaning that is used by Jesus when telling the story of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:36). He also used it to describe the priests and how they were using the temple as a den of robbers (Mt 21:13). This term was also used to describe Barabbas (John 18:40) and the two men that were crucified with Jesus (Mk 15:27). These zealots (robbers), believed that what they did was acceptable. It was alright to rob people as long as the cause was just or, in their minds, condoned by God. They robbed to maintain their way of life and as proof of the rightness of that life and their cause. In the end, the people they robbed were injured, the cause they supported was seen by many as destructive. When you take time to look closely at what they were trying to do it, becomes clear that they were the only ones truly benefiting from their actions. However, a true zealot would not attack the innocent and weak to further their cause.

The robber gains access by force and the use of fear. He will take what he wants no matter what the consequences are to

others. If necessary he will destroy anyone who gets in his way. Spiritually speaking, he will twist the scripture to support what he is doing. To oppose this type of person is dangerous. Jesus did and they killed him.

This verse creates a strong image of the life and thinking of the false shepherds and the methods they will use to gain access to the sheep. It also should open our eyes to the fact that not all danger and risk are found outside the sheepfold. Sometimes there are greater dangers within and attempting to prevent the sheep from going out into the world will not protect them from all that could harm them.

Verse 2 – “The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep.”

To better understand this concept, let us consider the positive qualities of the shepherd in contrast to the negative image of false shepherds created in the previous verse, to better define why the good shepherd can enter by the gate.

The shepherd has been sent by God. The others have not (Je 23:21).

The shepherd will lead them correctly. The others will lead them astray (Je 23:32).

The shepherd will not deceive them. The others will do all they can to deceive (Mt 7:15).

The shepherd clearly know the consequences of their actions, can explain how what they are doing is from God and will benefit the sheep. They can be trusted to only take what they need to do their work and are wise in how they handle each situation and issue. The others are described as blind, mute, insatiable, and foolish (Is 56:10-12).

The shepherd is willing to sacrifice his lives and resources for the sheep. The others use the sheep to provide for themselves at the expense of the sheep (Ez 34:2-5).

The shepherd opens the eyes of the sheep to make them aware of what is happening and where the dangers are in the world around them. He are aware of the needs of the sheep and do what is necessary to care for them. The others have no concern for the sheep (Zeph 11:16-17).

This means when the shepherd comes to the gate he has no problem gaining permission to enter. Everyone knows who he is, especially God, who is the one who has approved him.

Verse 3 – “The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”

At this point let us deal with the first and last phrases of this passage. We will save the phrase about the sheep listening for later.

The first concept is interesting. The shepherd must gain permission to enter. But the permission to do so does not come from the sheep. This permission comes from the one who has greater authority. In the context of the Good Shepherd this authority is God. This highlights an interesting point that can affect the church and cause a great deal of tension for the shepherd and the sheep if not correctly understood by both. The shepherd is not appointed to the work by the sheep. He is appointed to this task by God. At the same time, the shepherd is not the final authority about

caring for the sheep and for their activity, nor is it the right of the sheep. This again belongs to God.

But many a shepherd has made the error of treating the sheep as if they were his personal property or his special kingdom to rule. And he does so with little input from the sheep or watchman. The shepherd becomes a world unto himself. He is authorized but abuses the rights given to him. At the other end of this exists the flock that thinks they have all the rights and that the work of the shepherd is to do what they want, provide what they want, and protect them at all costs, even from themselves. They have no interest in what the watchman wants or what their selfishness may cost the shepherd. Even worse, the flock has no concern for how their behavior may affect other groups and shepherds.

This concept is important to keep in focus so that we don't end up being thieves or robbers. We have a supervisor. We have been given the right to enter. No - the privilege to enter. How this has been made possible will be made clearer later in the passage.

The second concept is the phrase 'he leads them out.' A better translation would be 'he causes them to go out.' There are two main interpretations of this phrase. The first is that he draws them out. There is something about his presence that helps the sheep choose to exit the fold. The second is the idea that by his influence they are caused to go out. They know what his presence means. They know what will happen if they agree to leave the fold. They know that because he has come in to them they must go out.

Actually in the Greek there exists a third possible meaning. This same term is used to describe Jesus' action of expelling demons (Mt 8:16), his action when he cleared the temple court (Mk 11:15) and the action of God at the judgment in sending sinners to hell (Mt 22:13). It is also this term that is used to describe what happens to food when being expelled from the body (Mt 15:17). All of these images suggest a strong and forceful action - an action that is not pleasant but is necessary.

While this is not how the shepherds will behave, it does help us see that the process is not about begging the sheep to come out. They are to come out. They are not allowed an option. When the approved shepherd comes, they are expected to leave the sheepfold and go out and the shepherd is expected to make this happen. A good shepherd or approved shepherd understands this truth and is diligent in making the process easy to accomplish but is not afraid to make it happen when necessary.

There is a final idea to keep in focus. The true life of the sheep and the true work of the shepherd is not inside the pen. That is a place intended to provide a time of rest and refreshment. The true life and work occur in the world outside of the pen. To make this clear, the real work of the church of God is not inside the church but in the world, both for the sheep and the shepherd. A good shepherd knows this and by his example the sheep learn to trust in him and are willing to be sent out by him and then follow his life and example.

Verse 4 – “ When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice..”

Here again we have two key concepts. The first is the idea that once he brings the sheep out he will now go before them. The shepherd knows what needs to be done once they are out in the world. He knows their needs and they trust him to provide what they need. He knows how to show them how to live and obtain what is needed. At the same time he helps them to make the best use of the resources and time outside of the pen.

There is an old saying that may help us see this more clearly. “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” It may sound nice to feed and care for people in a protected environment. But that only makes them dependent on the ones who provide the food and care. A true shepherd knows that it is better to let the sheep go out and feed for themselves and learn how to live. In reality the most effective care and teaching occurs while life is happening. A good shepherd knows this and because of his example the sheep learn to trust him and are willing for him to send them out and then follow his life and example. They do this for two reasons: they have seen the evidence of this truth in his life and they have experienced it in their lives as a result of his care and teaching.

The second concept is the foundation that makes the first possible and effective. “*The sheep follow him because they know his voice.*” This concept will be repeated and built on in vs 14 “*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my*

sheep know me.” and in vs 27 “my sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me.”

At first glance one might think that the sheep only follow the shepherd because they are familiar with his voice, that their choice is based more on repetition of contact and memory than on understanding and relationship. However, the other verses reveal it is much more than just habitual contact. It is based on the development of a relationship of trust and confidence. To better understand what this means we need to look at the three words that are used to describe the relationship.

The first word is know. There are two Greek words that are translated as “know” in this passage, *oidasin* and *ginoskow*. The first word is used in vs 4 and means to recognize, be aware of, and have knowledge of. There is an awareness of who is calling based on knowledge of the person, an awareness of who he is and what he represents, and the recognition that it is the correct person to respond to. The second is used in vs 14 and 27 and takes this concept even farther. It includes the ideas of the first but also the idea of learning to know and understand. There is a reason the sheep recognize the shepherd; not just as a voice but for all that voice represents. There has been an investment of time and effort on the part of the sheep and shepherd. The shepherd has studied his sheep and knows them even to the point of giving them names. The sheep have observed the shepherd’s care for them and they know him. According to verse 15 this relationship is compared to that which exists between the father and the son. There is a profound knowledge of one for the other. It is not simply a recognition of a person, a voice,

or another sheep. It is a knowledge based on intimate and constant contact with each other.

The second word is follow. This is the Greek word *akolouthousin*. This word has two levels of meaning. The first level is to accompany, to travel alongside another. This is not a blind following of a leader but an informed decision to travel with another. As I reflect on this and review the images I have of the sheep and the shepherd, I begin to realize that in many of the images (not all) the sheep are not lined up behind the shepherd but are all around the shepherd. Some in front, some alongside, some in the back when traveling to and from the sheepfold. I have the same image of when they are in the pasture and scattered all around the shepherd. In both images they move as a whole. If the shepherd moves, they know and move accordingly. They know! What an image for pastors. When a pastor truly knows the people and they know him, there is a unity in purpose and direction. There is an awareness of where each other is and how to proceed. Whether it is getting to the pasture, moving in the pasture, or returning home. The relationship is such that both know where the other is and what is to be done.

The second level of meaning is to join as a follower and follow. This term is used when referring to the disciples following Jesus in Matthew 4:20,22. They chose to follow him or join him as his disciples. This is not a blind following of a pleasant voice, but a conscious decision to learn and understand who I am following and what my responsibilities will be in following that person. This changes the image that many have of the foolish sheep who blindly follow the

shepherd solely on the basis of the sound of his voice. It also should have an impact on how pastors and leaders of the church view their responsibility to their members. They need to provide enough information so that the people can make informed decisions about submitting to their leadership. They need to reveal the reason for their service and prove that they are called to be a pastor. They need to give permission to the sheep to study their lives and see that they have a relationship with the father that is the basis for their service to the sheep. This will allow them to choose correctly to follow and give strength, encouragement, and confidence to the pastor as he leads them. They will function as one because they know each other.

The third word is hear. It is the Greek word *akoususin* which is the root word for the word follow, discussed above. This word is not simply about hearing a sound but listening and evaluating the content of what is heard. It entails the ability to receive information, to perceive the nature of the information, and to understand what has been communicated. The sheep hear and understand the shepherd. The shepherd's calls the sheep with the knowledge that they are listening and will respond correctly to what he is saying. They know he knows their names and this causes the relationship to develop even further and so they hear each other. This is what pastors need to have happen in their ministry. They need a relationship that is based on hearing one another, which allows them to move in harmony in the world.

Verse 5 – “But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize his voice.”

The implication of this statement is clear for all who are called to pastor and lead the people of God. If the people are not following you there is one of two problems. You are not leading them where they should go and/or you have not spent the time in getting to know them and allowing them to know you and your heart. Think about this, true feeding and development of the people of God does not happen inside the church. It happens in the world. Your role is not solely to gather them, that is easy. The real task is to take them out into the world, so they can grow, learn, and be a visible testimony to others. If this is not happening, then you Pastor, are a stranger and in danger of becoming a thief, even a robber, to maintain control of your flock.

Verse 6 – “Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling him.”

The truth is, only those called to be a shepherd by God will truly understand the depth of meaning to be found in this passage.

Verse 7 – “Then Jesus said again, ‘I am the gate for the sheep.’”

Actually this is quite simple. Jesus is the point of access to enter the sheepfold and he is the point of access for the sheep

to the world. And naturally, the shepherd only can enter and call out his sheep by being identified with Christ and so be approved to enter in order to take the sheep out to live and be the people of God visible to the world.

Verse 8 – “All that came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.”

This refers back to verse 1. If we keep in mind the greater context, then we see that Jesus is most likely referring to the scribes and Pharisees who were present to hear him speak. It could also include the priests. They were attempting to lead others, through their interpretation of the Scriptures and their traditions, but their concept of the way of salvation was false. They were the blind leading the blind (Mt 15:14). This also stands as a warning to all who desire this noble calling, to be careful not to fall into the same trap and so become thieves and robbers instead of shepherds.

Verse 9 – “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.”

Take a moment and recall some of the descriptions of God’s work as a shepherd. Many times the prophets stated that a key task would be to find those who are lost (Ez 34:11, 16) and gather the ones who have been scattered. This is the main point in the parable of the lost sheep (Lk 15:4). It was the reason Jesus came, to seek and to save the lost. The point that is clearly made here is that the shepherd must go in search of those who are lost and then bring them into the fold through the gate. It is not about bringing them into the

church. That will not save them nor change their state. They must be brought to Jesus. The task is not to bring them to the church. That will not save them nor bring them into the fold. That is only possible when we go out to the world.

A final thought. Once they have come in through the gate, the verse states that they will have the freedom to go in and to go out. I find it interesting that it does not refer to sheep or shepherd here. Everyone has this right, to enter the fold when needed and to go out and live life and find pasture when needed. That raises an interesting question: do the sheep need a shepherd in order to enter the fold or leave to find pasture? Or does the shepherd need sheep in order to do the work assigned to him? Maybe it would be better to approach this from the idea that everything is functioning correctly. For example, the sheep have the ability to go in and out knowing their shepherd will be with them. Likewise, the shepherd goes in and out knowing that the flock assigned to him will be with him. And, those who are new will quickly learn to hear their name and know their shepherd.

Verse 10 – “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to its full.”

This is simply a repeat of previous statements with one addition. The purpose of all this activity, the life and purpose of the shepherd, is to bring his sheep to the Good Shepherd, who is the gate, so that they will receive all that God has promised; forgiveness, restoration, and life, as intended by God, the gatekeeper.

Verse 11 – “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Who is more important, the sheep or the shepherd? The truth, is the sheep. Without the sheep there is no need for the shepherd. The shepherd’s existence and purpose are defined by the sheep. To lose the sheep is to lose one’s identity. It means losing one’s life. So which makes more sense, lose the sheep and so lose your life, or lose your life to save the sheep and gain life at a more profound level? Jesus sacrificed his life for all the lost sheep, for all the sheep in the fold, for all the sheep yet to come into the world. He defined who the sheep are - all those lost in sin. He defined the work of the shepherd - lay down your life to find them and bring them in, and to do the same to keep them well and able to survive in the world. (One other point of interest, in the case of pastors and the church, all pastors were once sheep, so without sheep there would never be pastors.)

There is no time or space to enter into a discussion of all that is contained in such a statement “a good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep,” but a few scriptures will be helpful for those called to be pastors, shepherds in the kingdom, and of what they should be willing to pay.

Take up your cross and follow (Mt 10:38).

Hate your family (Lk 14:26).

Love your enemies (Lk 6:27).

Hate your life (Jn 12:25).

Leave everything behind (Mt 19:29)

The point here is that what is gained has far greater value than what has been sacrificed. At the same time, shepherding will require wisdom in understanding that this does not preclude our responsibilities to care for our family and our needs. It is about keeping things in perspective.

Verse 12, 13 – “The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.”

This passage raises a key question, who owns the sheep? Are pastors simply hired hands who are chosen because of their skills and then recompensed for their time and service? This is a critical question and how each pastor answers it will have a profound effect on their relationship with the people they have been called to serve. The answer comes from an understanding of the relationship between the Good Shepherd and those called to be his shepherds.

In the time of the Bible there were two types of sheep owners. There were those who owned a small flock and cared for them personally. And there were those who had large numbers of sheep, which meant they needed others to help with the care of the flocks. Sometimes this was handled by family members. The sons of Jacob were responsible to care for the flocks of their father (Ge 37:12) David filled this role for his father (1 Sa 16:19). Sometimes a relative or in-law would be hired. This was the case with Jacob who was employed by his father-in-law Laban (Ge 30:25-31). At other

times slaves, bond-servants, and hired workers were involved as was the case with Job (Job 1:3, 16). What is interesting is that in each case there are examples of those who risked their lives and income for the sake of sheep that belonged to others. David fought bears and lions to protect the sheep of his father (1 Sa 17:34). Jacob suffered greatly in caring for the sheep of his father-in-law (Gen 31:38-41). The shepherds of Job died because they were taking care of the sheep (Job 1:16). Why?

The answer is quite simple. First, the nature of the relationship between the owner and those placed in charge of the sheep. Obviously if it involved a family connection the shepherd probably took greater responsibility for the sheep and was willing to risk more for their protection. This was probably why David risked fighting wild animals. Second, the nature of the shepherd and why he was doing the work. If the person benefitted directly from the status of the flock, as in the case of Jacob, and his faithfulness brought a direct benefit to his family as well then, again, we can begin to see why that person will risk more for someone else's flock.

But when we come to those who are slaves, servants, or employees, why would they be willing to take such risk? A slave or servant would do so for two reasons: either out of fear of a punishment, or because there is a clear evidence that their owner cares about them. If not how could the owner trust another to care for his sheep without him being present all of the time? Fear and love are the two things that will bind these people to their owner or employer. David is an example of the power of love. Men gathered around him, even though they knew the risk. They followed him knowing

he would care for them as was shown by his effort to recover their families after they were abducted by Amorites (1 Sa 30).

But those who are only working to earn a paycheck or those who realize that the owner does not care about them, will not take such risks and will run instead of placing themselves at risk. They will also quit if the work is too hard or they see something that looks better and will provide more. For pastors it is all about the nature of our relationship with the good shepherd. That relationship will determine if we are good shepherds or simply hired hands. This will in turn affect his relationship to the people he is called to lead and how well the people will listen to him and accompany him.

Before we move on there is one more word to consider, the **wolf**. It would seem obvious that the wolf refers to Satan. He is always on the prowl looking for the opportunity to scatter the sheep and by this action trap and carry off as many sheep as possible. If there is the hope of catching a sheep the wolf will go to great ends and wait long periods for the right time to cause confusion and snatch the unsuspecting out of the hands of the shepherd. This describes very clearly the behavior of Satan. He is also works at testing the character of the shepherd. He watches to see how his presence affects the shepherd. The wolf knows who is afraid and who will run. A hired hand will run. A true shepherd will not. The reasons will be covered in greater depth in the following verses.

Verse 14, 15 - "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.” (See comments on verse 4 and 11 above.=

Verse 16 – “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

This passage is in agreement with the directions that Jesus gave in Mt 28:18-20, Mk 16:16:15; Lu 24:48 and Acts 1:8. The message is to go to all people everywhere. It is a fulfillment of the prophesy in Isaiah 49:6 that this flock would be open to people from all nations. It also means that all who serve the good shepherd have the same responsibility, to go to all the world and bring in the lost sheep. Romans 10:14-15 emphasized this truth that people must go wherever the lost may be found. A further point is that all of us are the voice of Christ to everyone we come in contact with. So everyone is a shepherd to someone and has the responsibility to go out and find the lost and bring them in through the gate. This also means that as pastors you are to help make this happen and it can only happen as you lead the people out into the world.

Jesus set the example. He left heaven and came to the world, to find the lost and bring them in. He brought them in through his life and sacrifice. That is a key responsibility of all who are called to lead - to help everyone, including themselves, to go out from the fold, (the church), into the world and bring others in. This expression of love and sacrifice will be the key to them hearing the one voice that speaks the truth.

Verse 17-18 – “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Here is the heart of the whole matter. This is what makes the work of the shepherd all possible. It is what defines the difference between those that are shepherds called by the good shepherd and the rest who are thieves, robbers, wolves and hired hands. The love that the shepherds experience because of their obedience to the Good Shepherd. We are loved by the Good Shepherd in the same way that he is loved by God. This love guides and defines all that needs to be done for the sheep to grow. It guides and defines all that must be done to find the lost. It defines why it must be done and what will be gained by doing the work. It also reveals to the sheep what they can experience from a shepherd who has been selected and approved.

Do you love the sheep? Do you know why the Father loves the sheep? Do you know how to teach the sheep to love the Father? Your answers will define what kind of shepherd you will be and what kind of sacrifices you will be willing to make.

Let us jump to verses 27-30 - “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.”

Here again we see many familiar terms from the other verses. However there is one new concept, “no one can snatch them out of my hand.” The Greek word *harpazo* means to take by force. When the work of shepherding is done correctly the sheep will be secure. Either they are in the sheepfold under the care of the gate keeper or they are with the shepherd. Sheep will huddle together when they sense danger, or when they hear key words and sounds from the shepherd. When they do this it is hard for a wolf (see vs 12) to simply snatch one from the flock, even more so when the shepherd is present. In the spiritual realm, the good shepherd multiplies this reality. As pastors correctly carry out their task it increases the security of those they care for. When they teach dependence on the Good Shepherd and act as a guide to him then their sheep will be secure even when out in the world. The goal is to be sure they know who they ultimately belong to and understand the security that is available to them because of the Good Shepherd and those who lead them to him.

This passage has so much more to offer us but this should provide a starting point in understanding the significance of the role of a pastor. It also helps us begin to understand the responsibilities the pastor has as he carries out the tasks involved. Now it is time to look at what Jesus was telling Peter in John 21:15-18.

Chapter 11

Feeding the Sheep

John 21:15-19 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Up until now we have been talking generally about the work of the pastor, the sheep and their relationship to the mission. We have talked about the ideas, the words, and what they mean. Now it is time to look at the motivation for this work and how it impacts the work of the pastor and defines what he does, why he does it and what should be the result of his work. The term mission is not used in this passage directly but the questions, comments, and especially the final command represent what the mission is all about.

The first things that stands out in this passage are the first and last comments. The first is a question, “do you love me more?” The last is a command, “Follow me!” The work of the pastor and his ability to carry out the mission are anchored in these two phrases. The rest of the passage is for defining and focusing on them and relates to the pairs of words being used.

The first pair is the words *agapeo* and *fileo* (*translated by the word love*), which are used to define love and relationship. The second pair is *bosko* and *poimaino* (*feed and provide for*) which deal with the nature of the care being given to others. The third pair is *arnion* and *probaton* (*lamb and sheep*) which are the terms for the ones receiving the care and attention. To understand what is being asked and stated we will need to consider the meanings for each of the pairs and how they relate to each other.

The first pair of words is used to open each round of questions and answers. This group is linked to the question about the state of the relationship that exists between Jesus

and Peter; between the Good Shepherd and the one called to serve.

To understand this, we need to understand the context of the question. Peter had failed a number of times in doing what he had promised to do. Most notable was when he denied knowing Jesus three times. This denial was done publicly and so the question “do you love me?” is asked in the presence of others. One of them had witnessed this denial. The others probably were aware of what happened, but they had also seen Peter attack the servant of the priest; an act that denied faith in Jesus power and decision. The disciples had seen Peter flee with them; a denial of a promise to stay with Jesus even if it cost him his life. They had heard that he denied Jesus three times, in the courtyard of the priest; a denial of the relationship that existed.

At this moment the proud Peter became the humble servant being reminded of his promises to serve, follow, and obey the master. To emphasize this, Peter is asked this question three times. Two key words are used as part of this process. The first two times Jesus uses the word *agapeo*. The final time he switches to the word *fileo*. In all three cases Peter responds using the word *fileo*. These two words are related but have a few key differences. *Agapeo* is considered the highest form of love. It is based on a high regard and reverence for another person or belief. It involves a total commitment and trust in the one who is the object of this love. *Filio* is considered the love one has for their friends. It is interpersonal and relational in nature.

Peter honestly answered that he loved Jesus and avoided falling once again into the trap of pride. This is an example to each person who is called to be a shepherd of God's flock; a position of honor but best accomplished from an attitude of humility and honesty. The shepherd cannot love his sheep as God loves them. In fact the only way he can do the task given him is by loving God first and keeping his focus on the one who is assigning the work.

There has been a great deal of discussion about why Jesus changed the wording of the conversation. For others the issue is not the change but the purpose of asking the question three times. Before we attempt to consider what Jesus was doing and why he and Peter used the words the way they did, we need to examine these words and how they were used by Jesus.

First we need to be aware that these two types of love may not be exclusive. According to the various dictionaries, (Kittel, Thayer) these two words are not two levels of love, one being higher or better than the other. You don't learn one in order to gain the other, or develop one type of love in order to reach the other. It is more likely that the two are interconnected. Brotherly love is the most common idea for understanding the word *phileo* and selfless love is the most common way to understand the word *agape*. They may need each other in order to function at their fullest capacity. If you do not have a deep affection for someone, how can you serve them selflessly? And likewise, if you do not know how to deny yourself, then how can you truly have affection for another?

FILEO

This word's most common use relates to how people prefer someone or something more than another object, status, or relation over anything else. Contained in this idea is the concept of commitment. The stronger the feeling of *fileo*, the stronger the commitment. This also relates to how a person defines their preference and commitment.

This is seen in a number of the negative statements made by Jesus about the choices and attitudes of the Pharisees, scribes, and others. Yes, *fileo* can have a negative direction. In Matthew 6:5 Jesus states that this group loves to pray, not because they prefer God but because they prefer the attention of others. They commit themselves to prayer to gain attention. Their focus is on caring for their status in the eyes of others. They make a deep commitment to love prayer but for the wrong reasons. This idea appear again in Matthew 23:6 where Jesus states that they love the best places and again in Luke 20:46 where he says that they love being greeted publicly, having the best seats, and places of honor.

In Matthew 10:37 the word *fileo* is used in Jesus' description of one's relationship with their parents, or children, and their relationship with Jesus. Jesus said if you love them more than me then you are not worthy of the kingdom. We often focus on the negative aspect here of how our relationship with others can negatively impact our worthiness of serving in the kingdom, but this same word is used to describe the nature of our relationship to Jesus. Our affection for Jesus must supersede our affection for family and others. It is not

that such affection is wrong, what is wrong is when there is a problem with the focus and goal of this affection.

To further understand this we need to look at the following scriptures. In John 12:25 we see this truth. Jesus states that if you love your life you will lose it. If your life has greater value, greater focus than anything else, then a time will come when you will lose everything. We often lose sight of the fact that life is not an independent reality. Life is a complex association of people, ideas, and values. To focus on the value of “me” to the exclusion of others will cut us off from all that is life and will mean the loss of all that life truly is. How much more when we focus only on ourselves, excluding God, the creator of our life from who we came?

At the other end of the spectrum this same word *fileo* is used to describe Jesus’ relationship to Lazarus (John 11:36, 38). Jesus set aside any plans he had and risked his life to go to the grave and to see the sisters. He made full use of all his resources to provide what was needed for his friend. This is a grand expression of what *fileo* means.

Fileo is the word that is used to describe God’s love for those who are his in John 16:27. Jesus states that God loves the disciples because they have chosen to love Jesus. God has chosen to prefer them, to commit himself to them, and to care for them because he sees this same love in them. So when we read Peter’s declaration of love for Jesus this is the meaning of what his words are stating: I have given up; set aside all love for myself and the values of this world. I love you Jesus. Yes I failed in the past but here and now I declare for all to hear that I prefer you above all others, I commit

myself to you before anything else and I will do everything I need to do to care for this relationship. But you know all of this. You know I love you more than these.

That is quite a range of meaning for the word *fileo* - from a negative self-love to a deep and permanent commitment to a relationship with God and his Son. Even as the Pharisees and others did everything they could to love and promote themselves, Peter was ready to do everything he could to love and promote Jesus.

AGAPEO

As before, the dictionaries (Kittel, Thayer) have some interesting ideas for us to keep in mind. The basic idea of *agapeo* is to have a high regard for the value and importance of a relationship, action, or benefit. It suggests that the person prizes this above everything else.

But just like *fileo*, *agapeo* can have a negative aspect. Jesus uses *agapeo* in describing the love one can have for money, a false master (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13). It is used to describe the desire of those who love the best seats and the praise of men (Lk 11:43; Jn 12:43). The strongest of this use of *agapeo* is found in John 3:19, where men love darkness rather than light.

This idea that love, *agapeo*, can have both positive and negative applications is seen in two different passages that deal with the same ideas, Matthew 5:43-46 and Luke 6:27-35. Jesus opens this passage by telling us to love our enemies in the same way we love our neighbors. This seems reasonable. True love, as seen in God, seeks the best possible

for one's enemies, because this is how God operates. The truth is we are all enemies of God and he has chosen to love us. If we choose to follow this path of love then we must love our enemies and do for them everything God has done for us. This seems pretty clear and sensible.

What is difficult to understand is that Jesus uses this same word in describing the love that sinners have for each other. This *agapeo* love can exist without a focus on God. It is possible to have selfless love and not have God present in the relationship. This love leads to a descent into darkness and separation from God. There exists a way to avoid taking this direction. It is the fact that we have an example of the better way. God has given us the pattern to follow: his relationship with his Son. This then opens the way to experience that same love and so be able know God's love. We love God because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). This is John's evaluation of our ability to experience and practice *agapeo* in relationship to God. The true issue is our ability to duplicate this process in our relationships with others.

So how does all this relate to the discussion between Jesus and Peter? Many have said that the shift in words may not have any deep profound meaning. There is also the fact that both words are used to describe similar ideas. Both involve critical choices. *Fileo* seems to relate more to choices of the heart, *Agapeo* to choices of the head and will. Both are important to have a fully developed relationship in the end. We may begin with *agapeo* but in the end *fileo* should be a result of that choice and an integral part of our relationship.

So Jesus asks Peter, Do you love (*agapeo*) me? Not just like anyone else can love me or these who are here with us. Peter responds that Jesus knows all that has happened. He knows the depth of his love (*fileo*). But their relationship has gone beyond that choice. Jesus asks again, Do you love (*agapeo*) me, truly love me? He means, It is not enough to love me more than these. I want to know and I want them to know what the state of our relationship is. Peter responds using the same words as before.

One more time the question is asked but this time Jesus makes a shift. “Peter, do you love (*fileo*) me?” Now the question gets tough. Twice Peter has stated that his love is not just from his head or selfless in nature. It is a love based on a deep relationship and understanding. To have Jesus switch words and directly challenge that declaration could be truly discouraging and deal a crushing blow to Peter if he did not truly love Jesus. The focus is on going beyond loving because he is loved, beyond loving out of a sense of duty, but to move into a deeper sense of love. Because there is something more profound to have and experience. Peter understands and responds.

What is critical here is that the others understand the goal of *agapeo*. It is to create a more profound relationship. This is not an easy process. It is a struggle. We need to learn that love has two elements - a head and a heart. This will have a profound effect on what we do in the church and why we serve. This will impact our care and the objects of our care. For those called to be pastors there is a need to be questioned, like Peter. We need to know the truth, that God knows about who we are and the reasons behind our

willingness to be a pastor. He knows if we love him, and as we answer this question it will help us to effectively do the work. It will also help in avoiding traveling in the wrong direction and focusing this love on the wrong person or goals. Me and my desires.

That brings us to the next set of phrases which involves providing care and nourishment as a pastor. As before there are two words being used *bosko* and *poimaino*. These are not complicated words but have an overlap as well. *Bosko* simply means to feed, or provide food. *Poimaino* is more involved. It is the total process of guiding and helping with the purpose of watching over and making it possible for those being guided to find the food. The process of feeding in the first is more direct: in the second it is more indirect. It happens as a result of the guidance and care given.

In this passage the word to feed is used in the first two cases. Peter is told to feed the lambs and then to feed the sheep. In the last case he is to guide and care for the sheep. Similarly, we need to clarify the two terms being used for sheep in this passage, which are *arnion* and *probaton*. *Arnion* is the term used for a lamb. This word is only used here in John and in the book of Revelation, almost exclusively when referring to the Lamb of God. In John it refers to the little ones, the ones who are helpless and defenseless. The other word *probaton* refers to adult sheep. This is the term Jesus used throughout the New Testament in his parables and descriptions of the people who need the care of a shepherd.

Returning to the two words about care we see a pattern developing. It involves three stages of pastoral activity in relation to those he is to care for.

- Lamb and feed – young sheep need a great deal of care. They need to be fed by others and cared for by others. They need to grow in many ways before they can feed and live independently of others. A pastor's job has been described as finding the lost, caring for the weak, and feeding them so they will mature. This is a good description of what must be done to find the lost souls of this world. Whether they are children, youth, adults, or the aged. All need to be fed, taught how to live, and provided for until they are strong enough to feed themselves and become a contributing member of the community.
- Sheep and guide – Once sheep are grown they know how to find the food available in a pasture; they know how to function as a member of the flock. The shepherd's work now is to help them know his voice and provide for their care and development. They must understand what the shepherd is saying or doing in relation to leading them, providing for them, and protecting them. The sheep learn and become productive members of the flock. Is it much different in the church? Paul used the concept of milk and meat to define the difference between young Christians and older Christians. The work here is to help the believer understand at a deeper level who they are and all that is involved in being part of the

family of God and following the voice of the shepherd, Jesus.

- Sheep and feed – This relates to adult sheep and the ongoing care of the flock. This relates to when all the flock is functioning properly. The sheep have a clear understanding of what is happening, when things need to be done and of other factors, related to being part of a flock. It is the difference between all of the sheep following the shepherd and the sheep surrounding the shepherd and the whole moving as one. The first represents the need for careful provision and guidance. The second represents a flock that is fully developed and mature. The shepherd only needs to do a few things to provide for the ongoing care of the sheep. Much of the care no longer requires his direct attention. In the church, when the pastor leads the sheep to maturity the work expands. All members of the body know what to do and take care of their responsibilities with a minimum of input from the pastor. His work focuses on providing key resources and direction as needed.

These three rounds of questions and answers between Peter and Jesus give us a good image of the total work of a pastor. He is to seek out and help new believers into the church. He is to guide them in becoming mature members of the church. Finally he is to provide ongoing direction on how to live as a member of the church. That leaves only one more element.

It is at this point that Jesus says “follow me.” This brings it all to a focal point and clarifies all that has been said. Jesus is making it clear that he is asking Peter and everyone called to be a shepherd to follow him. These two words carry a world of meaning and purpose. And when put alongside the three cycles of this conversation it further anchors the points made above.

First, just like Jesus, a pastor is called to go into the world and seek out the lost. As part of this work he is to feed and care for them in such a way that allows them to grow and mature. Second, just like Jesus, the pastor is called to guide those in his care. He is to guide them in how to live in the kingdom of God, prepare them for the service they will be called to do as members of the kingdom, and teach them what God’s love involves. Finally, just like Jesus, the pastor is called to provide ongoing provisions so that each member is involved in the search for the lost.

This is just what Jesus did. He spent his time in a constant search for the lost. At the same time he was constantly teaching and preparing those who responded. And the focus of all this work was so that when the time came each of them could do the same for others with the promise that he or the Holy Spirit would always be with them, providing and feeding as needed so they could live.

Please keep in mind that the idea of us as sheep is a partial concept. It was not intended to create a prison or cage in which we would live. In the end we are not sheep. We are to go beyond that concept. We are called to be shepherds, every one of us. We are all to seek out and care for someone. We

are all called to help them grow. We are all called to continue to supervise and encourage so that they too can become shepherds.

This is exactly what happened to Peter. Peter the lost sheep, the fisherman, told Jesus to leave. Peter, the brash man who made promises he could not keep but who Jesus patiently led and cared for. Peter, the humble honest man who was now ready to take the next step of becoming a shepherd in the knowledge that Jesus would always be there.

And so Jesus commands him to “follow me.”

The fact that this includes the “mission” becomes clear as Jesus brings everything into focus in his closing words to the disciples and to the many others that were also present. He tells all of them to go, to preach, to make disciples, to baptize them, and then teach all that they have been taught. Likewise we are all called to this task. Some of us are called to pastor a few, some to pastor many. But all with the same goal; feed them, guide them, and then provide what is needed to continue the process.

Chapter 12

The First Shepherds - a key example

Now that we have the broader perspective and some detailed understanding of the terms and their use it is time to look at how the early Church carried out the directions. What kind of shepherds were they? What kind of sheep did they train? Finally, what kind of pasture did they live on?

Let us start with the last one first.

Pasture

Jesus' final words to the disciples included a very strong command. **Wait**. He had spent another 40 days with them in multiple settings, feeding and teaching them again. He met with as few as one and as many as over 500. Then he said **Wait**.

Can you imagine what that command felt like? They had witnessed the greatest miracle of all time. They knew that everybody was talking about the missing body. There were all kinds of rumors and stories. Yet, over 500 knew the truth.

In this group were the inner core and those who had believed in Jesus, truly believed, before the crucifixion. They probably told their friends and family. People who are already on your side were easy to convince and were predisposed to believe. Telling those who aren't, even when the facts are clear, is another matter. This is not a time to

depend on your own abilities and resources, your own personal pasture, so to speak.

So, for ten days more they wait. They review. They pray. And then comes the resource that will never fail, never be blocked, never be limited. The Holy Spirit comes. The counselor, sustainer, the one who convicts, authorizer and source. In this moment they learn what God has been promising. God is the pasture, and step by step, they will learn and reveal to us through their lives and writings that once we belong to God nothing can separate us from the source of life. We have an eternal pasture.

The disciples, now called apostles, meet every day to teach what they have learned. They preach it and live it, and every day more believed and were added. Then they are arrested and the authorities realize what it means to be connected to God. They see the evidence in the words and manner of the apostles. They see it in the death of Stephen and the subsequent explosive spread of the gospel. They try to eliminate Paul and it only makes the pasture, God, available to more and more until all the Roman Empire is impacted. Every time someone received the truth from God, access to the source multiplies. It is the nature of who God is. The only thing that limits access to God, the pasture, is lack of knowledge.

And so the teaching continues. The apostles teach disciples. The disciples become deacons and missionaries and preachers. These in turn repeat the process in Antioch and on it goes. The best example of this is Paul's ministry in Ephesus. Paul stopped traveling for two years and focused

on teaching. The record states that by the end of that two years all of the province of Asia has been reached with the gospel.

The reality is that everywhere the believers go the pasture is already there. God has been preparing and people are receiving the truth, the gospel, and in that moment God enters and changes everything.

The pastor

In the first section, it might have sounded like the growth of the church was a smooth journey. But it was not. There were a number of obstacles that had to be dealt with for the gospel to spread. These are issues that every pastor must deal with.

Threat – In fear the disciples had run. They had escaped, fearing to admit their relationship to Jesus, except Peter, and he failed in the end. Now they would deal with it again. The apostles were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. The authorities commanded them, using all the authority they possessed, to stop the apostles from preaching the name of Jesus. They thought they had authority because they mistakenly believed they represented God, tradition, and history. The apostles knew otherwise. The apostles had walked with the risen Son of God and knew at a personal level who was the true authority. So Peter's response placed all present and future threats in perspective. "We must obey God rather than man(Acts 5:29)." After being beaten they went to the source in prayer to seek, not protection, but greater courage and power to proclaim the truth. Stephen was killed yet they spread the word to all of Judea. Paul,

over and over, faced these threats and never wavered as he lead and taught others to follow God above all else.

Pastor, how are you handling the threats that seek to stop you in the work of being a true shepherd?

Control – The faster the new church grew the greater the demands became. A time came when there was a need to divide the work. The temptation was to form an inner group and then restrict access to leadership roles by keeping control in the hands of the inner group. The situation that brought this into focus was the distribution of aid. Those who were outsiders, not from the neighborhood, (Greek-speaking Jews from other countries), were not being treated as equals. It could have been easy to hold on to power, and lose the focus of teaching. It could have been easy to share control with close family and friends. If that had happened then the gospel would have died on the spot. It would have become a cult with limited following. But that didn't happen. The leaders chose from the outsiders. All the new leaders were from outside of the region, all Greek speakers or Hellenists. This declared to all that the qualifications for service were not to be based on the standards of the world but on relationship with God and the evidence that a person was filled with the Holy Spirit. Anyone from anywhere could serve.

Pastor, are you sharing the work with those who are selected by God?

Ethnocentrism – The church was doing well at accepting those who were Jews or converts to Judaism. The farther the

news spread the more contact it had with those who believed in God but were unwilling to adapt to the culture of the Jew. Cornelius became the spark that revealed for all to see the full extent of God's plan. It was not easy to accomplish. It required three powerful visions before Peter was willing to consider entering the house of a Gentile. To further drive home the point, God did not allow Peter to finish his sermon to Cornelius and his family. God made it clear that the offer of salvation was based on faith in God, not conversion to another lifestyle. This opened the door to the ministry among the Gentiles in Antioch and to the entire mission work among all gentiles in the rest of the world.

Pastor, are you trying to make everyone look like you before they can be part of the church and share in the work of evangelism?

Legalism – The faster we grow the more people we have in the church. The more people there are, the greater likelihood of encountering differences in opinion and lifestyle. The danger in all of that is that we may begin to establish systems and rules to help us decide when a person is acceptable and what is appropriate behavior and appearance. Conformity to a human standard can easily become more important than a changed heart. The great council of Jerusalem dealt with this issue and rejected such concepts and their use as a basis for determining true faith and conversion. Rather what they encouraged was a sensitivity to others, respect for culture, and acceptance of differences as long as they did not impact the truth. Paul expounded on this in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 with his declaration that, “I have become all things to all

men so that by all possible means I might save some.” It is a challenge to really know what is happening in the heart of a person but that is the job of the pastor, to know his sheep.

Pastor are you settling for a type of legalism in evaluating who can be part of your church, who is ready to be trained, and when they will be allowed to serve?

There may be other points that could be presented as part of this type of evaluation but this is sufficient for us to understand that the church was growing and that those called to pastor were learning all that was involved in feeding, caring for, and guiding their sheep.

The apostles and those with them had received the message to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the world. Step by step they were learning just what that meant and how to allow others to become part of the process. One of the best examples of being a pastor is found in the life of Barnabas.

It was Barnabas who sold a piece of land to help care for the needs of others (Ac 4:36). This action resulted in the apostles changing his name from Joseph to Barnabas which means “Son of Encouragement.” It was Barnabas who took the time and risked meeting Saul after his conversion. It was Barnabas who saw the truth and brought Saul to the apostles, opening the door for his acceptance and future ministry. It was Barnabas who remembered Saul and invited him to join in the work in Antioch. This led to the two of them being sent as the first missionaries. At the right time it was Barnabas who yielded his place of leadership to Saul (now

called Paul.) It was Barnabas that saw something more than failure in John Mark and worked with him until Paul, who had rejected John Mark for his failure, declared that he was helpful in the work. Barnabas is a great example of a pastor who worked to develop others to serve.

Sheep

We need to stop for a moment and consider who the sheep are. If we assume that the apostles were the first shepherds then everyone else in the upper room must have been the sheep. Sounds good, but there is a problem with that. When the Holy Spirit descended it was not limited to the twelve. Scripture says the tongues of fire fell on everyone, which may have been a group of 120 people, made up of men, women and possibly youth and children. Further, as relates to those who heard the message in their own tongue, 15 groups are mentioned by name, but it also states that people from every nation were present. So the number of people who were involved in proclaiming the good news was far greater than the 12 apostles.

So, with these facts in mind, the sheep, then, all those listened and responded. The number that responded on the first day was 3000. That number, however, could easily have been much larger because in the culture of that day when doing a census, only the men were counted. So we know for sure that 3000 men believed but have no idea how many women, youth and children responded.

These new believers devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles. They came to the temple court, the only place big enough for them all to gather to be taught. They also

gathered in their homes and shared life together. It says that daily more were added (Acts 2:47). The healing of the blind man resulted in another surge in growth (Acts 4:4). This time, the scripture states clearly that the number of male believers was now 5000. It is feasible to believe that over 5000 women were believers and it would be hard to guess how many youth and children were also part of the group. A conservative guess for the total number of believers would be between 15,000 and 20,000. And, according to Acts 5:15, that number kept growing. Later some of the sheep become leaders. Among them were the seven deacons. Then it says that the church began to increase rapidly and even some of the priests became believers.

This represents incredible growth. Consider this: in order to care for this number of people and this level of growth it was necessary for many of those first converts to become shepherds for small groups of people and of leaders of key ministries. The proof of this is the selection of the seven deacons chosen to care for the physical needs of others but who promptly began teaching and preaching as well. Most notably is Stephen, who became one of the most powerful apologists of the group. There was also Philip, who after Stephen's death led the spread of the gospel into Samaria.

Here are a couple more facts to keep in mind that show that the sheep were not just being fed and protected but were being prepared and sent out.

- Spread of gospel after Stephen's death – Acts 8:4 states that all those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

- Samaria – Philip started the church in a village in Samaria, in turn, which launched an extensive ministry. This work was quickly turned over to local leaders. Philip was later sent to a desert road and Peter and John returned to Jerusalem
- Ethiopia – Philip led the eunuch to the Lord. He returned home and tradition states that he founded the church in Ethiopia.
- Cyrene and Antioch – Those scattered by the persecution traveled to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch preaching and teaching. They opened the door to the work among the Gentiles. These sheep launched a great work and sent the first missionaries. (Acts 11:19-21; 13:1-3).
- Iconio, Derbe and Listra – Paul and Barnabas appointed elders to watch over the work after they left. This same group trained and recommended Timothy to Paul as a coworker. Timothy was often assigned to do follow-up work as in Berea (Acts 17:14) or continued ministry as in Macedonia (Acts 19:22).
- Ephesus – Paul made a critical decision here that would affect all of the province of Asia. He rented a hall and began teaching daily all who are willing to be taught. From this group, people traveled to all parts of the region sharing the message they had received. The key example of this is Epaphras, who according to tradition, founded the church in Colossus - a city that Paul never visited.
- The list – At the end of the book of Romans is a long list of people who Paul trained and shared in the

work of pastoring others. This is only a sample, there are other lists and other people who started as sheep and then became pastors.

If one stops and considers the scope of the number of people reached, the size of the region involved, and the time involved in accomplishing the work, it becomes apparent that the plan was clear - train the sheep to become the pastors and carry the work to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth. The time period covered by the book of Acts is roughly 35 years. Paul's ministry lasted about 15 years. By the year 70 AD all of the apostles, except John, were dead. Yet the church can now be found in an area that stretches over 7900 km (5000 miles) east to west, Spain to India, and over 4400 km (2768 miles) north to south, southern Russia to Ethiopia.

It should be clear from this information that the new concepts of pasture, pastor, and sheep are understood. The pasture is wherever God is, which is everywhere. The work of the pastor is to care for and train the sheep to become pastors. And the responsibility of the sheep is to travel down every path knowing that they have been prepared and the food, water, and peace they need will always be available as they journey and will always be waiting for them wherever they go and whenever they arrive.

We should also be seeing another truth. The best way to reach the people of a community, of a region, or the world, is by sending out the sheep and letting them become the ones who lead others.

Chapter 13

Living out the instructions

As we move into the letters of Paul, Peter, John and James it will be helpful to recall a portion of Jesus' prayer for the disciples and those who would come after them.

Juan 17:20-23

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Jesus' focus clearly reaches far beyond the life and ministry of those who would be part of the first wave of people carrying out the work of shepherds. First, he searched out the lost sheep and then cared for them, and finally he equipped them to repeat the cycle with the next generation of believers (sheep). He prayed that this group of between 120 and 500 people (men and women) would be the catalyst for others to believe in Jesus and all that his life represented. Through them the world would learn who Jesus was, why he came,

and they would learn of the God's love and believe that Jesus was sent by God.

Three times in these verses Jesus states clearly the purpose of his prayer - that others will believe in him, that God sent him, and to let the world know of the love behind this message and its goal of uniting them with God.

That the disciples took this seriously was clearly shown in the history of the church recorded in the book of Acts. They were diligent in obeying God's directions of carrying the message to the lost sheep of Israel and the lost sheep of the nations. By the end of the book of Acts, we see how powerful the message was, especially when those who received it were faithful in sharing with others what they learned.

Based on this, one would expect extensive use of the terms that have figured so prominently in defining the people involved; *sheep* and *shepherds*, (and the blessing or relationship), presented and developed *pasture*, (or as we saw it redefined as the Kingdom of God). And yet, this is not the case. In fact, the terms shepherd, sheep and pasture practically disappear from view. Sheep is used only three times. The related term "flock" only four times. The term shepherd only appears three times and the word pasture, is never used. (see Appendix 1 for a list of scriptures).

We have discussed extensively how the concept of the kingdom of God (kingdom of heaven and related references) has replaced the concept of pasture. All that we need is now made available to us as we become part of this kingdom and follow its appointed leader, Jesus. We also saw how this idea

is a key part of the proclamation of the good news. So that explains why the word “pasture” is no longer present. It has been redefined as “kingdom” which we will then see revised again and tied to another word,” church.” Church has two contexts, the place where the work of the kingdom is carried out and the name given to those who gather in a specific place and so represent the kingdom. It is the place where those who follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd, come to experience God’s presence and learn more about what unity with God means. It is where they learn about the resources available to them to live as members of this new flock and how to seek out and share this information with others.

This word “church” also replaces the idea of sheep or flock in identifying people and groups of people and defining their relationship to the kingdom and its head, Jesus. In this context the flock exists at various levels and refers to them as members. All members everywhere in the world are called the universal church. All members in a specific location are called the local church. In time the term would also be used to identify the location where the members gathered. Of the 50 times this word is used, the majority relate to this context, that of a specific group of people that have gathered to learn of God and serve Him in their place of residence. A common phrase is the church in such and such a place.

It is easy to see how the word church has come to replace the word “flock.” It covers all the sheep, all those who believe and are saved; in other words, the entire flock under the care of the Good Shepherd. It also relates to specific groups in specific places and usually involves a person responsible for leading and caring for them. Gathering people into a fold

involves coming together for times of worship and study of the Bible; times designed to prepare them for their life and activity in the world.

The discussion has now moved from general ideas about the role and nature of sheep to specific descriptions about what is expected of those who are followers of Jesus. Paul's discussion of the armor of God in Ephesians 6 is a key one. It is significant in that the armor being discussed is the armor of the Roman soldier. This armor was designed to allow the soldier to leave the fort and engage the enemy. It is also significant from the perspective of revealing the role of the leader in preparing the people to go out into the world to carry the truth to those who are lost.

Peter describes the sheep as, "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pe 2:9). In 2 Peter 1:5-9 he lists a series of characteristics that they should develop so that they will avoid being ineffective and unproductive in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These two examples are sufficient to reveal that being a sheep in the kingdom is much more than just following a person. It is about joining that person in the work of proclaiming and teaching the gospel to all with whom they come in contact.

There is also a bountiful supply of information on what it means to be a sheep, a member of the kingdom or church. This information covers everything from dealing with sin, dealing with one's relationships with others, (parents,

children, spouses, slaves), and more. A key focus of all this is learning to be Christ like, to live out in real time the truth that Christ taught, and then carry the gospel to those who need to hear.

By now it should be clear that the concept of being a shepherd is much more than just leading sheep about. It is about enabling the sheep to become productive members of the kingdom. It is about facilitating the process of developing them into shepherds and leaders as well.

As mentioned above the term “shepherd” is hardly used. It has been replaced in a limited way by several terms. (Limited, in that even the words used to replace it are not used extensively. An explanation of these terms and their use can be found in Appendix 1.) What becomes more common are instructions, descriptions and explanations that reveal what it means to be a leader, the work that is involved, and how the leader’s lives should help the sheep become leaders as well.

One of the key aspects of this activity is being an example to others. Paul uses this idea often. A key passage would be 1 Co 11:1 “follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.” Or, Ph 3:17 “*join with others in following my example and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.*” Paul also tells others to be an example as shown in 1 Timothy 4:12 “*set an example for the believers in ...*” and Titus 2:7 “*in everything set them an example by doing...*”

The letters are filled with information and teaching on what that example should look like. Two key passages are found

in the book of Philippians. The best known is the description of Christ's example of setting aside everything to come down and become our sacrifice for sin (Ph 2:4-8). We are to follow this example as leaders and help all those under our care to do the same. The second is Paul's description in Philippians 3 of how to live the Christian life. It is a powerful illustration of how the call to feed and care for the sheep is becoming a reality in Paul's life. Paul not only seeks to be an example but he takes the time to explain what being an example entails.

A brief look at key phrases in this chapter will be informative about what is being taught to those once called sheep but now called to leave behind the limitations of that description and be taught to become shepherds, leaders in the church. Here Paul presents a number of key concepts for leaders to study and live out in their lives as they teach others to move on from being lambs, to being sheep, and finally to becoming shepherds or leaders for those they come into contact with. To better understand what this means let us look at a few of the relevant statements:

Philippians 3:8 – *I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

In the previous verses Paul has just listed all the things that could give him status and respect. It is an impressive list when related to the context in which he lived and ministered. Likewise, a leader must deal with a similar list and decide

which is more important, his personal status and the maintenance of that position with those around him, or sacrifice it all because his relationship to Christ is vastly more important and valuable. True leadership, true shepherding, focuses on this truth: all things must be placed under Christ and defined by that relationship. If we cannot do this, then we are not capable of being a shepherd and those under our care will always be dependent on us and not learn to depend on Christ. They will become disciples of Paul, or of Peter, or of Apollos, or Cash Luna, or even of a false teacher. They may even call themselves disciples of ____ (insert your name). According to Paul this is rubbish and rubbish never produces anything of lasting value.

Philippians 3:10 – I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

The prior passage was about position. This one is about desire. What do you really desire? Power in this world, fellowship with the famous, or becoming like one of the great teachers, pastors, or evangelists? It doesn't matter which it might be, they all represent a desire for power. However, a true pastor understands that to have real power is to sacrifice everything. It means dying to self, dying to pride, dying to my _____. Paul talks about becoming a new creation in 2 Co 5:17. This must be apparent by the passion we have for Christ in our life. There is nothing more important and those we lead and teach should know it and be drawn by this truth. We exalt God and they learn from us to do the same because our desire is to know Christ and live as he did.

Philippians 3:12-14 - *I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

This is a powerful passage and contains several concepts that are hard to separate because they build on each other.

- 12 - *Take hold of that for which Christ took hold of me* – Do you know why you do what you do? Do you understand clearly what God wants to happen in your life and how you are to share this with others? Christ came to save me and has told me repeatedly to tell others. Not just tell them but make disciples. Not just make disciples but help them commit themselves to this relationship. Not just commit but teach others all that they have learned.
- 13 - *I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it* – This relationship, this work, is a lifetime process. That means having a clear and evident honesty about where you are in the process with God and the burning desire to keep working on its development. A true expert knows what he doesn't know and is constantly seeking to improve and grow. A true shepherd knows that every day and every situation represents the possibility to learn and improve.
- 13 - *Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead* – past achievement does not guarantee future success. Reaching one goal only reveals the next step in a much bigger vision. A true shepherd

looks far beyond the moment, far beyond the current situation, far beyond the present reality. He is always working to develop God's vision in his life and in those he is called to guide.

- 14 - *I press on toward the goal to win the prize* – Over and over in his letters Paul talks about reaching others with the gospel. He talks about training others to continue the work. A shepherd's goal is reaching the lost sheep and then helping them to continue the process. Read the list of people in Romans 16. Consider how this focus of Paul was realized in their lives and through them to others.

Philippians 3:20 – *Our citizenship is in heaven*

The true shepherd lives by a unique set of rules and as a good citizen devotes his life to living by those rules and helping others to understand them and do the same. Paul states it this way in 2 Co 4:17-18 “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” Do you see with the eyes of God and understand clearly what you have been called to do? Are you teaching others to see and live as citizens of heaven revealing to all they touch the true king?

We could explore many other passages and expand on these concepts and the work of a leader. The title or word used to describe this person is of little importance. What is critical is that they have within them the heart of a true shepherd; not one who leads mindless sheep but one who takes those sheep

and helps them become productive members of the kingdom of God.

This should help us begin to understand the shift in terminology. In the first part of this book the focus was on defining the meanings of the terms and the roles. We needed to understand that God is the true pasture. We needed to understand the importance of having people who will lead and care for others. We needed to understand who the sheep are and what it means to care for and them guide them. But now there is no need to repeat all of that. Instead the focus is on exploring in depth how to carry out the work of a pastor or an elder, bishop, overseer, or deacon (depending on the translation you are using).

We need to have examples of what is involved in applying what we have learned and the Letters of the New Testament give us that. We need to see the process of transforming sheep into future shepherds and the Letters give us that. We need to see how the promise of God as the true pasture can be experienced and the Letters give us that and even more.

The pasture is no longer a promise but a reality. God, Holy Spirit, and Son are revealed to us and they live in us as was promised. The sheep are no longer imagery but real people experiencing all that God has promised. They are so much more than sheep; they are restored children of the family of God, with all the rights and responsibilities that pertain to that truth. The shepherds are not just people watching over sheep. They are leaders called to seek out the lost, lead them home and then equip them to take the search for the lost across the street and to the ends of the earth.

Yes, the Letters tell us how to carry out the commands of Jesus to find the sheep. They help us understand how to feed the lambs. They guide us in the process of caring for the sheep. Finally they show us clearly the importance of feeding the sheep with the goal of each one maturing as intended by God and becoming involved in repeating the process. In closing this section consider carefully Paul's description in Ephesians 4:11-13

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Question 01

What is the difference between evangelism and mission?

This is a question that many people ask when talking about carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. The answer is more about how we have used these terms in the past and not about describing the two activities.

We need to be aware that the word evangelism does not appear in the text of the New Testament and the word mission appears rarely. In the places where it is used it is not in the context of proclaiming the gospel.

Evangelism is a word that was coined after the New Testament was translated into Latin and is used to describe activities of a person or group who proclaims (euaggelizo) the gospel (euaggelion). The person doing this is called a preacher of the good news (euaggelistes). These three words are used by almost all of the authors of the New Testament. The first two words are used extensively. The third only appears three times.

The one thing that is clear from the beginning is that all believers have been called to proclaim the good news. Alongside of this, the Scripture makes it clear that some are called specifically to this work, and to this end they are given special gifts by the Holy Spirit (Ep 4:11; 1 Tim 4:5). But nowhere does it state that anyone is excluded from telling

others the good news (the evangel), and proclaiming the message (to evangelize).

The word ‘mission’ appears once in the NIV version of the Bible but in other versions it is translated by the word ‘ministry.’ This is the closest word in the New Testament to the word mission and is used to translate the Greek word *diakonia* (ministry) and the related words *diakoneo* (to minister) and *diaconos* (the person who ministers). These words relate to waiting on or serving others in the context of a local group of believers or local church.

The word mission and its use as we know it originated with the Jesuits in 1598 when they began sending missionaries abroad. It comes from the Latin word *missionem* meaning to send. It is based on the word used in the Latin Bible to describe Jesus’ act of sending the disciples out to preach. By the time we get to the modern era, the word missions is the key word used to describe sending people to serve in other countries.

In the early days of organizing missions, many groups assigned this work to the department that supervised all evangelism related activity. Many used titles such as ‘The Home Frontier and Foreign Missionary Society’ (United Brethren). In time various denominations divided this department to differentiate between the activity of those sent to work in the home country and those sent to foreign countries; The at-home ministry was often called the Home Missions board. The Southern Baptists and Presbyterian churches still use this type of phrasing for the board that oversees all missions activity related to evangelism and

church planting in their home country. For many, this board includes all evangelism and church planting efforts.

The out-of-the country ministry was termed the Foreign Missions board, a phrase still used by the National Baptist church. Many churches, while not using this phrase, have a department whose sole focus is doing evangelism in other countries. In the Wesleyan Church we call this department Global Partners.

Over time, ‘evangelism’ came to represent all work done in the home country and the word ‘missions’ described all the work done in other countries. This concept would continue until Ralph Winter wrote a book that described three levels of evangelism, from home missions to foreign (cross-cultural missions).

The basic idea behind this new understanding of evangelism was a return to the fundamental concept that evangelism is speaking to anyone anywhere about the gospel. In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells us what this means. In this passage we learn what evangelism is at its simplest level. It is being a witness for Jesus to our neighbor, our city, our region, and to the world. Missions is basically doing the same thing, but includes entering a new culture, learning a new language, and overcoming different barriers and obstacles in that process.

In the Bible there is no specific word for this evangelistic activity. But we are clearly told to do everything that makes up what we now call evangelism. We are to be involved in evangelizing the world with the gospel. The focus of evangelism is the “evangel” or good news. In reading materials on evangelism, Ralph Winter divided this activity

into three levels. These three levels relate to who is involved in doing evangelism and the issues the impact that activity.

Level one evangelism involves groups of people who have the same or a very similar culture and background. Those presenting the gospel speak the same language and have the same culture and background as those receiving the message. When a term or gesture is used by one, it is understood by the other person. These people share the same history and many other areas that identify them as being part of the same group. This makes it easy to be understood.

Level two evangelism means there are some differences. While the people may share the same language there are differences in culture. Even the language may pose a problem because the same terms may be used but have different meanings attached to them, or the pronunciation may vary enough to make comprehension difficult, an example of this in English would be the term boot. In North America it can have two meanings. One refers to a type of shoe that is worn, the other refers to forcing someone to leave or firing someone from a job. In England it may have those meanings as well, but a third one is added which is used to refer to the storage area at the rear of a car, the boot. In North America this would be referred to as a “trunk.” More interesting are the terms used for the metal piece used to control the flow of water from a water pipe. Various terms are used: pump, valve, tap, faucet, spigot or pipe. Each term helps to define where you are from and what type of English is used. There may also be differences in religious and moral terminology, so communication becomes more difficult: for

example the definition of truth and its related concept of honesty.

The most common situation where this kind of difference occurs involves immigrant groups in a country. These people exist in two cultures and to communicate with them requires the evangelist to learn more than what his culture has taught him. This can range from simple to complicated.

- Shift from rural to urban culture
- Moving from one region to another in a country
- One tribal group moving into the territory of another
- People emigrating from one country to another

Such moves can be related to

- Economic issues
- Human trafficking
- Famine
- War
- Natural disaster

These events force large groups of people to relocate. Each of these groups requires time to understand the differences and changes, even as they learn the new language and culture they have entered. Likewise those who seek to evangelize must learn about the culture of these people and show God's love and care for them.

Level three evangelism involves communicating with people who are clearly different, they speak another language and have a totally different culture. Simple things

like gestures can cause misunderstanding. Raising one's eyebrow in the Philippines indicates that a person is listening and agreeing with your statements. In Suriname this action means that a person is homosexual and interested in a relationship. In another country a man uses this action to attract a girl's attention. For some it indicates surprise or shock at what is being said. To share the gospel at this level involves learning a new language and culture to be effective.

Communicating the gospel in all of these settings is evangelism. However we now generally use the term "evangelism" when discussing Level one, and we use the term "mission" when discussing Level two and three. We do this to identify the different issues involved in evangelism. (For a fuller look at those issues and others you can read chapter 5 in *Missions: From God, Through the Church, to the World*, by Perry Hubbard. It deals with this topic in greater detail.)

All of this means that the 'mission,' the task of sending people to evangelize, is the responsibility of everyone. Under this broad concept exists the work of preaching, discipling, baptizing and teaching the gospel (evangel) at home and to other tribes and peoples. We are all part of the mission, to evangelize – proclaim the good news - and to promote, support and go on to missions – to proclaim the good news to other tribes, peoples and cultures.

Question 02

What is the whole gospel? Part 1 The content.

Take a moment and read the following three texts.

Lk 24:46-48 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Mt 28:19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Mk 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Which of these contains the evangel, the gospel?

For many people the gospel is what is found in the passage from Luke; the death and resurrection of Jesus in payment for our sins. Many will then quote John 3:16 as support for this idea. Indeed Jesus was sent for this purpose and the goal of this message is for us to believe and be saved. This message is the basis of many evangelism tools. One of the

best known is the four spiritual laws. 1. You are a sinner 2. You owe an unpayable debt. 3. Jesus came and died for your sins 4. Everyone who repents will be forgiven.

But is that really all there is to the gospel?

Another group will turn to Matthew 28 and say that the gospel is about teaching everything that Jesus taught those who followed him. The gospel is not just a phrase, it involves all the teaching of Jesus. It is much more than telling people they are lost, and that if they will confess their sins they are granted membership in the family of God. It includes discipling them, helping them to commit their lives to the truth they have learned, and then being able to communicate that truth effectively to others and repeat the cycle.

But this concept is still too limiting a concept.

Mark 1:1 suggests that the gospel it is much more than a set of phrases, or even limited to the teaching of Jesus. His teaching was based on a much broader concept of the evangel. It is what motivated the coming of the angels to announce the arrival of the Messiah. They came to bring a message that glorified God and revealed the plan of peace to all the nations.

The complete gospel begins in Genesis and will not be completely written or understood until all that is described in Revelation has been completed. The whole gospel involved an understanding of all that God has been doing and planning through the history of mankind; all that he did in and through his son Jesus; and all that has been done, and

will be done, up to and including the return of Christ and the establishment of the new heaven and earth.

Consider carefully these phrases from John 3:16

God so loved the world – Think about how many scriptures there are in the Old Testament that express this fact over and over. Even in the midst of carrying out judgement there are words that reveal his love. In every period of history, from the fall, and the promise that victory over the enemy will be won, to the time of the prophets, when God judged his people and yet promised that his plan would be fulfilled through one born of the line of David. God loved and loved. God planned and prepared his message. When Jesus arrived his story became the latest version and the fullest version of the message, the gospel, that God has repeatedly announced to each generation willing to listen, and even to some that weren't so willing.

Hear the words of Jeremiah 31:3 related to this love, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” This easily reflects on and agrees with the words of Ps 103:17 “But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord 's love is with those who fear him.” These are only a sample of the scriptures that remind us of the truth of God's love for all his creation and that God has always loved us and always been working at restoring the relation that was lost that one day so long ago in the garden.

He gave his only Son – This idea began on the day that Jesus was born and continued until he descended into the grave, was resurrected and then ascended to the throne that was higher than any other and where he received the name

that is above all others (Ph 2:9). We make a serious mistake if we only consider Jesus death as the sole expression of this act.

Jesus (God) gave up much more than that. He set aside, for a time, all his rights and relationship as the triune God to live among us. For 30 some years (which in the scope of eternity is barely a blink in time) God surrendered this intimacy, instant communication, and complete oneness, so that we would understand the profoundness of his love.

Jesus (God), set aside his authority, his knowledge, his power so that he could live like us. Yes, he performed miracles and more. Yet they were not done in his authority but by the power of the Holy Spirit. The knowledge and words he spoke came from the Father through the Holy Spirit. He tells us this fact over and over in the book of John.

God then let his son die, and in that moment, gave up life. I don't think anyone will ever be able to understand what this fully meant. To accept the burden of all sin, for all time for all who confess. To have to descend into hell, come face to face with Satan, and experience, even for a moment, what all who refuse to believe will experience. There is nothing to compare it with, no words are adequate, although many have tried, to express it. Scripture tells us that even the angels want to understand but don't (1 Pe 1:12).

That whoever believes – This gospel is not just about what God did to make our salvation possible. It is not just about all that happened in fulfilling the plan God had made. It is about all of that and everything that happens as a result of what God did before Jesus came and through his coming to

earth. Everything from the resurrection until Jesus return. That is the scope of the gospel. The gospel is the expression of what happens when anyone believes.

Paul writes about this concept when talks about his gospel three times in his letters. Twice in Romans (2:16, 16:25) and once in 2 Timothy 2:8. In these passages Paul talks about all he is doing for the sake of those chosen by God to be saved. He talks about filling up in his body what is still lacking (Col 1:24). This is not about his suffering providing forgiveness but about the price needed to carry the message to all who have not heard. That is a core truth of the gospel. The gospel involves telling people the four points lined out in the discussion of the passage in Luke 24:46-48. It is about everything that needs to be taught so that people truly understand this information, people who believe and become disciples capable of telling others and teaching them. It is about everything God did before Jesus came, everything Jesus did, and everything that continues to be done to reveal God's love to all the world.

Pastors, the question for each of us is, are we proclaiming the whole gospel? Are our lives and ministries a part of the ongoing gospel that does what God did for each of us? What kind of sheep are we training, those who never become part of the whole gospel, just another herd of dumb sheep, or are they children of the Heavenly Father, brothers of Christ, who truly become the gospel to the world?

Question 3 - The whole gospel –

Part 2 What does it mean to share the good news?

Knowing the content of the gospel is important. But so is the next - sharing that information with others. When thinking about how this is done most of us think of the phrase “preaching the gospel.” This phrase is very common in the English translation of the Bible. It conjures up images of people preaching in the church, preaching in evangelistic campaigns, and of specific people, evangelists, who are typically those doing the preaching.

In reality this image is not totally accurate. To start with, the word ‘preach’ does not appear in the Greek. It is like the word mission and is derived from a Latin word, *praedicare*, to proclaim publicly, which became the basis of the French word *précher* which means to give a sermon or to make known religious truth (Dictionary.com).

The word preach is used to translate three different Greek words,

- *Kataggello* – to declare for all to hear
- *Kerusso* – to proclaim publicly
- *Euaggelizeo* – to proclaim good news

There is also a fourth word that is often used in relation to these words, *didaskeo* – to teach.

Of all these words only one contains in its meaning the idea of proclaiming good news, *euaggelio*. Each of the others involves an action with no specific content. In the case of *kataggello*, *kerusso*, and *didaskeo*, the content of the message must be defined in order to know what the person is telling others.

Keeping this in mind you will see that it is also possible to declare, proclaim, or teach, for all to hear, false truth (2 Co 11:4; Ga 1:8-9), the traditions of man (Mt 15:9), doctrines of man (Mk 7:7) and even to teach the truth for the wrong reasons (Ph 1:16-18).

The majority of uses of the above terms contain some interesting concepts for us, especially as relates to content and the location for providing the information, as well as who is receiving that information.

It will be valuable to review each of these.

Euaggelizeo.

Outside of the writings of Luke and Paul this word is rarely used. Matthew only uses it once. Mark and John never use the term and it only appears 5 times in the books of Hebrews and 1 and 2 Peter. One of the references in Peter is about Jesus proclaiming the good news to those that are dead (1 Pe 4:6).

The word *euaggelizeo* is most commonly translated as ‘preach the gospel’ which is more correctly translated as ‘proclaim the good news’ (Lk 7:22, 9:6, 20:1). In the writings of Luke this word is further combined with other

terms so that one is proclaiming the good news about the *euaggelio* (good news or gospel - Lk 4:18), the good news of God (Lk 4:43), and the kingdom of God (Lk 16:16).

In the book of Acts Luke begins to expand on this concept of using the word euaggelizo in combination with other ideas. Here is a list of some of the combinations

- Proclaim good news of Jesus (5:42, 8:35, 9:20, 10:37, 11:20)
- Proclaim good news of the kingdom of God (8:12)
- Proclaim good news of the word of the Lord or word of God (8:25, 13:5, 14:21, 15:35)
- Proclaim good news of the resurrected Lord (17:23)
- Proclaim good news of forgiveness through Jesus (Ac 13:38)
- Proclaim good news of peace (10:36)

Paul expands even further on this concept of proclaiming the gospel means:

- Proclaim the good news of the gospel of peace (Ro 10:15, Ep 2:17)
- Proclaim the good news of the gospel of God (Ro 15:20)
- Proclaim the good news of the gospel of Christ (1 Co 9:18)
- Proclaim the good news of faith (Ga 1:23)
- Proclaim the good news of the riches in Christ (Ep 3:8)

Also, Paul often uses the word by itself for the proclamation of the good news. From the context in these cases it can be generally inferred that he is using this in reference to proclaiming the good news that is found in Christ. As a result most translators simply add the word gospel when translating this word.

It becomes clear that the concept is to proclaim the good news and in general this good news relates to what God has done for us and how that was carried out through the life (teaching), death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Kateaggeleo.

This word is often translated by the word ‘preach’ but would be better translated as ‘declare.’ It is not used in the gospels, but is used seven times by Luke in the book of Acts and five times by Paul. As mentioned above it is always paired with other concept, as in the following examples:

- Declare the word of God or word of the Lord (Acts 13:5, 15:35)
- Declare forgiveness through Jesus (Acts 13:38)
- Declare the way of salvation (Acts 16:17)
- Declare the light (Acts 26:23)
- Declare your faith (Ro 1:8)
- Declare the testimony of God (1 Co 2:1)
- Declared the Lord’s death (1 Co 11:26)
- Declared Christ (Co 1:28)
- Only in 1 Co 9:14 is this work used in relation to declaring the gospel.

Kerusso.

This word follows the same pattern and is better translated with the word ‘proclaim.’ This means we will always need to know the context in which this word is used in order to know what is being proclaimed.

John proclaimed a message of repentance (Mt 3:1). When he was killed, Jesus continued this ministry (Mt 4:17). It is this word that is used the most in describing the process of communicating information about all that is involved in clearly informing people about the whole gospel.

It is used in combination with the word *euaggelio* at least eight times. The phrase ‘proclaim Christ’ or Jesus is used seven times. The phrases ‘gospel of God’, ‘gospel of the kingdom’, ‘gospel of peace’ are used another eight times. There are another 12 combinations used as well relating to various aspects of the life and activity of Christ and God’s work in providing salvation for all who believe. You can find them all in the chart in appendix 3.

Didaskeo

This word is used more than any of the others. It appears 83 times in the New Testament and covers a wide variety of ideas such as the following as well as many other topics and ideas.

- Teach the gospel of the kingdom (Mt 4:23)

- Teach the commands of men (Mt 15:9)
- Jesus' teaching (Mt 28:20)
- Jesus' doctrine (Mk 1:21)
- Way of God (Mk 12:14)

Often it simply is used to state that Jesus was teaching others with no reference to any specific material. This occurs at least 30 times, most of which appear in the Gospels. What is interesting is, it is almost never used in connection with the word *euaggelio*. You do not teach the gospel. In Paul's letters this becomes very clear. You teach:

- The way of the Lord (Ac 18:11, 25)
- Repentance (Ac 20:20)
- Christ (1 Co 4:17; Co 1:28)
- Revelation of Christ (Ga 1:12)
- Faith (Co 2:7)
- Traditions (of Church) (2 Th 2:15)
- Church structure (Timothy's assignment) (1 Ti 2:12)
- Teach others to teach others (another assignment of Timothy) (2 Ti 2:2)

Teaching is not about revealing the good news but about explaining the good news and how to live by it.

Occasionally the words are used in combination.

- Proclaim and teach the gospel of the kingdom (Mt 4:23)
- Proclaim and teach the good news of the gospel of the kingdom (Mt 9:35)

- Proclaim and teach in the cities of Galilee (no content specified) (Mt 11:1)
- Announce good news to the poor, proclaim deliverance to the captive and sight to the blind (Lk 4:18)
- Proclaim and announce the good news of kingdom of God (Lk 8:1)
- Announce good news and teach in the temple (Ac 5:42)
- Announce good news and teach in Antioch (Ac 15:35)
- Proclaim and announce good news about the gospel of peace (Ro 10:15)

Euaggelio.

This word is used 67 times in the New Testament. But it is only used in combination with the above words nine times. 24 times it is used in combination with other words like God, Jesus, Christ, Kingdom of God. The rest of the times it is used to describe the whole content of the gospel. The chart in appendix 3 shows all of this and more.

There is a very interesting item to note. All of the proclaiming, teaching, and announcing of the gospel occurred as a result of people, Jesus, disciples, and others going to where the people were to communicate the information. This becomes even more apparent in the book of Acts. The Apostles went to a place where people commonly gathered, the temple. But the activity of proclaiming, teaching and the announcing the gospel was not restricted to that location. They also met in their homes and

shared openly with others. When the persecution started it states in Acts 8:4 that those who were scattered continued this process everywhere they went.

Proclaiming, announcing and teaching the good news was not restricted to a specific location or the responsibility of a specific group of people. It would not be until later in Acts when people would begin to gather in specific places; but not for the purpose of proclaiming the good news, rather to be taught in how to live it out in their lives. They gathered to be disciplined so they could go out into the world to share what they had received.

Pastors, are you hearing this? Your job is not to get them to come to the church to hear the good news. Your task is to teach the people so they will go to where the people are to announce, proclaim, and teach the good news.

Finally, what is even more interesting is that of the four passages used to promote missions in the church, only one of them uses any of the words used for proclaim or announce the good news.

Matthew 28:19-20 uses the words disciple (*matheteuo*), baptize (*bautizo*), and teach (*didasko*) to cover in detail what Christ is authorizing in his name.

Mark 16:15 uses the word *kerusso*, proclaim, with the word *euaggelion*, good news in describing the work.

Acts 1:8 uses the word *martus*, or witness, to describe the activity we will be responsible to carry out.

By now it should be clear that we are not called to preach sermons in the church with the idea that this is announcing the good news. Preaching, according to the definition and root concepts, is about preparing a sermon to explain to people the word of God. This relates more to the idea teaching in general as Jesus so often did, both with the people and with the disciples. Paul promoted this method of discipling others to go out and proclaim the good news wherever they went. Relying on a only select group of people to do the work of evangelizing would have prevented the church from accomplishing what it did in such a short time.

People were to be discipled so that they could go out into the world and proclaim the good news. They were to be taught all that the gospel contained, from God's first steps in preparing the plan, fulfilling the plan in Jesus, and all that is involved in carrying out the plan until the return of Christ. It was never to be restricted to a few limited phrases. Yes, Jesus came, incarnation. Yes, he lived among man. Yes, he died, sacrifice. Yes, he rose again, resurrection. But this is only a small part of all that the gospel includes. All believers everywhere, at every moment, are to be involved in proclaiming, announcing, and teaching everything that is a part of this total gospel.

Take the time to review the charts in the appendix and consider carefully all that is involved in proclaiming, announcing, and teaching the good news among the sheep of the fold that you have been assigned to, and prepare them to do this work wherever they live and work in the world.

Question 4 – How does the Lord’s prayer relate to carrying out God’s mission?

Mt 6:9-13

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.(NIV)

Our Father who art in the heavens, let thy name be sanctified, let thy kingdom come, let thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth; give us to-day our needed bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but save us from evil. (Darby)

Our Father in heaven: May your holy name be honored; may your Kingdom come; may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need. Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us. Do not bring us to hard

*testing, but keep us safe from the Evil
One.'* (TEV)

Jesus was asked by the disciples to teach them to pray. This is the prayer he shared with them as a guide for them to use when praying or communicating with their Heavenly Father. Above are three translations of this prayer. There are differences in various parts of the prayer. The most notable relates to how God's name is treated and the active presence of God's will and kingdom on this earth. The other difference is found in relation to the act of forgiveness. Some translations used 'debts' or 'wrongs' and yet others use 'trespasses' and 'sin.'

Understanding the first two differences are critical. The last one may or may not be significant depending on how we look at the overall concept of this prayer and what is being sought by the one praying to God and the results that should be sought through this act of prayer.

In reality, this prayer has mission as its central purpose. This is seen in the clear focus of the first verses. We are to understand who God is and how to honor him. We are to be actively involved in bringing the rule of God to this earth and make his will the key focus. The goal is that these three focal ideas would exist in the same way that they exist in heaven.

A more literal translation for the first part of the pray could be as follows;

My creator God, Father of all, who exists in the heavens and all that they encompass make to be holy and honored your name as in reality it is. Make your kingdom to exist on earth in the same way that it already exists in heaven. Further, as your kingdom becomes real on this earth, make it to follow your will here on earth in the same way that it is followed in heaven.

The Greek has so much more content than can be easily translated into other languages. Because of this, it is important for us to take the time to study what is happening in the Greek. When we do we often we gain a profound insight of what is being said. Here we gain a greater comprehension of the focus of the prayer.

God's name is holy by its very nature, but not all mankind treats the name of God with the respect and honor due to the one who is holy and above all. The mission is about revealing to all, the holy and perfect nature of God. It is this revelation more than any other that reveals the depth and scope of our sin.

God's kingdom already exists. He is the absolute ruler of the universe. He is obeyed without question by all who dwell with him in the heavens. There is no hesitation, no questioning, and an absolute understanding that God is always correct. As a result obedience is never an issue. Mission is about helping people to understand this fact and to respond in obedience to all that he reveals to us about himself, his rule and our need.

God's will already exists. In truth, there is no one who can thwart the will of God. While he has given us the freedom of choice there will be a day of reckoning and we will deal with the consequences of our choices. The mission is about helping people understand this truth and learn to fear God and to understand his will. The Bible clearly states it is not his will that any perish but at the same time we all will be judged based on how we respond to the will of God. The mission is about informing others so they can understand this will and make an informed decision.

It is not hard to see the mission of God and what is involved in that mission in the first part of the Lord's prayer. It is when we come to the next section that we lose sight of the central

purpose of this prayer: advancing God's plan for all of creation, all of mankind.

Again it will be helpful to consider a more literal translation (personal)

Make to be provided the bread we need each day. Make to be forgiven our faults and what we owe even as we were forgiving the faults and the debts others were owing to us. Do not make us to be tested and you make us to be rescued from the evil (some translations say evil one).

One thing that we need to keep in focus which will help us in understanding the purpose and focus of these phrases, is the context. These are not independent phrases. They are part of a whole which is the kingdom of God. God is the center of the kingdom and the focus is to make all that is part of the kingdom become a reality on earth as it is in heaven. With this in mind let us consider each phrase.

The bread for each day –

Generally people think of what they need physically to live each day. This, to many, includes food, housing, clothing, and at times more. Yet in the context of the prayer this may be only a small portion of what is intended. The question for us to consider is what do we need in the way of resources each day to carry out the ideas and directions from the first part of the prayer?

Think about the following statements of Jesus:

- *Jn 4:13 "but whoever drinks of the water I give him will never thirst."*
- *Jn 4:28 "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."*
- *Jn 6:35 "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry."*

- *Jn 7:38 “Whoever believes in me, as the scriptures has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”*

To carry out the mission of God we need more than physical bread. We also need to be praying that God will provide us our spiritual needs daily, so that we can be part of making God’s kingdom and His will active and present in our lives and in all the world. Jesus promised this when he told the disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to guide them and counsel them. Peter declared this truth in his first sermon when he recalled for all the promise of God that he would give his Spirit to all and that young and old would be involved in proclaiming the truth (Joel 2).

Forgive

This statement is not isolated. Jesus taught over and over about a new type of forgiveness and love. There was to be a significant shift. Before, forgiveness was given to those who loved you and were part of your family and your community. However, this prayer reveals the shift that God wants in our relationships. The truth is that in the kingdom of God all of us, at one time were enemies, outcasts, and unacceptable. Yet God chose to forgive us based on the action of his son Jesus who forgave, from the cross, those responsible for his crucifixion.

Consider this declaration which comes after the prayer in Matthew 6:14-15. “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” God forgave us even when we were sinners. We need to pray that we will learn to forgive as well so that people will see the kingdom and not just hear about it. (read Mt 18:23-35 to further understand this.)

Trial or testing

There is very little information on what this may mean. Paul used a similar concept in 1 Co 10:13 to encourage the Corinthians when dealing with trials and temptation. “And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” There is no promise that we will not encounter challenges and threats to our faith. Jesus was attacked and he warned that we too, as his followers would experience the same in our lives as we serve in the kingdom.

What we need to keep in focus is that there are two issues involved here. There is the temptation and trial that we bring on ourselves. There is also the trial and testing we will face because we are part of the kingdom of God and are seeking to tell others. Based on the context the focus is on the second. Also, based on Paul’s comment the idea is that God will be present and keep us strong as we deal with the threats that will come because we are citizens of heaven.

Safe from evil

Paul declares in clear terms that we are in a battle and this battle is not against the lost. The battle is against “the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12)” Peter tells us that Satan is prowling, seeking to devour the unprepared (1 Pe 5:8). This means those who do not realize the true scope of the mission of God and are only thinking of their little domain. A domain of one is always at risk. However a domain of God and all those who follow him is impossible to overcome. This particular petition could easily be seen as a request to God to keep one focused on where he belongs and on the kingdom that makes one’s security a reality.

This prayer is about the kingdom and the keys to making it present in this world. It also opens the way for the will of

God to be experienced through us as we submit ourselves to the direction of this prayer and to the one who authorized it.

Question 5 – What can we learn from Timothy and Titus about being a shepherd?

Shepherd’s manual for Discipling – Evangelism 101 to 399

1 Timothy 1:18 “Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction...so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience.”

2 Timothy 1:15 “What you heard from me, keep as a pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.”

2 Timothy 2:2 “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”

Titus 1:5 “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

In the book *Evangelism Explosion*, Robert Coleman states that the most effective method of evangelism is discipleship.

Jesus used this method to train 12 and commanded them to make disciples. Paul focused much of his ministry on the training and preparation of others to continue the work and carry the work beyond where he was able to visit. Throughout the writings of Paul we read about those who were discipled and joined him in the work. Some of them were:

- Silas – He became Paul’s traveling partner after the break with Barnabas
- Timothy – He was prepared by his local church and then joined Paul who further discipled him in the ministry and who on many occasions was sent to follow-up and extend the work.
- Titus – Paul often sent him back to visit places where they had ministered and continue the work.
- Epaphras – He was trained by Paul during his time in Ephesus and represents a large number of people who were discipled and who then traveled throughout Asia proclaiming the gospel and planting churches.
- Priscilla and Aquila – They were trained by Paul during his time in Corinth, joined him in the work in Ephesus; and later traveled back to Rome to continue teaching others and to lead a local church.

We could also mention Onesiphorus, Erastus, Trophimus, Linus, Artemas, Tychicus (and many others) - people that Paul discipled. While Paul was truly a great preacher and teacher, the true measure of his success was his ability to train others to continue the work. It is in the books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus that we see the reality of this. Paul discipled others so that they would carry on the work.

In these books we see the nature of Paul's commitment to discipling others. He did not just want to see people believe in Christ, he taught them so that they would become like him in his commitment to proclaiming the gospel and duplicate what he was doing in the lives of others.

The scriptures above reveal this commitment. Paul, over and over, emphasizes the importance of the work of teaching. He uses a number of terms to stress the importance of preparing others to serve and of making sure they receive good teaching. (A list of the terms, definitions, and references can be found in appendix 2.) Also, he makes sure they avoid teaching what is false or unprofitable.

There are number of key references that can help us understand how important is the discipling process and what is our responsibility as shepherds to be sure we properly train the sheep so they can become the future teachers for the sheep that are being rescued and brought into the fold (church).

1 Timothy 3:14-15 – “I am writing these instructions so that, ..., you will know how people out to conduct themselves in God's household.”

We are commissioned to be sure that those we are responsible for understand clearly how to live as a member of the kingdom of God. They are to be prepared to live a life that brings honor and respect to God and the gospel. Paul says that the leaders are to have a good reputation with outsiders. As you read the letters you will see that this is a key part of the teaching that is to be given to every age

group, gender, and status, free or slave. People are to be taught to be an example that draws others to Christ.

1 Timothy 4:15-16 – “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine (teaching) closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

It is important that we understand clearly the need to disciple others. The teaching we received was more than merely salvation, it was an offer of a restored relationship. This relationship changed us and restored us to the family of God. We are to be continually in the process of being disciplined in this relationship and through that, provide proof of the power of God to save and change those who believe. As we are diligent others will be willing to hear and be disciplined. They, in turn, will learn to do the same for others.

2 Timothy 2:2 – “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”

This passage should be read over and over and studied constantly by every person, every pastor. We have been given a great treasure and, with that treasure, a great blessing. We are to be constantly searching for those ready to be trained in all that we have been taught. This also means teaching how to search out the scriptures and grow in them. Some are called to teach their children (the biblical responsibility of every parent), others to teach those around

them, and others to become the shepherds who will equip others to continue the process. This quality, the capacity to teach, is one of the qualifications listed for those who are overseers in the church, the shepherds of God's people.

2 Timothy 2:15 – “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

Do you know what it means to be an approved workman? What it means to be a shepherd in the kingdom of God? Take the time to reread Matthew 28:18-20. An approved workman is one who is going to the whole world, making disciples, baptizing those who believe, and then teaching them all the gospel. Most importantly, to not just be a witness of Christ but to be the visible example of Christ to all and to be discipling others in this truth.

2 Timothy 4:2 – “Preach the word: be prepared in season and out of season: correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience.

Even as Paul proclaimed the message to Timothy and others in Lystra, Timothy, he is to do the same. Even as Paul disciplined Timothy he is to do the same. The goal is to duplicate this in the lives of those under my care. And always, with patience, because God was patient with me, even when I was a sinner.

Titus 2:7-8 – “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show

*integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech
that cannot be condemned...”*

It is not just about telling others what to do and how to do it. It is about revealing it, first through our own lives which provides the foundation for our teaching. When this is true the shepherd cannot just lead his flock but must provide for them the foundation needed for the process to be repeated.

Paul makes a crucial comment in 1 Co 3:6. He states he planted the seed, Apollos watered. He then repeats this concept but in a different form in 1 Co 3:10, Paul laid the foundation and another builds on it. As part of this process of planting and laying a foundation there are two things he wants to keep in mind. 1. That God makes the work possible and 2. That Christ is the source, the seed in the first and foundation blocks in the second. He then warns us that the work will be tested. Poor work, selfish work, lazy work will be destroyed. Work that honors God and opens the way for others to grow and build on the truth will be rewarded.

This is the goal of Paul in these letters to Timothy and Titus. He wants to equip them so that they will plant seed that grows, provide the proper nourishment for it to grow and reproduce. He wants them to build on the true foundation. A foundation that will enable others to build on and so on. A process that allows each to makes it possible for the next seed to be planted and for the next stone added until there is a great harvest, a wondrous building where God is revealed and honored.

Pastors, that is our task. Train those in our care to be the Timothy's and Titus for those they come in contact with, for

those who hear, believe, and will be disciplined. Our presence here is the proof that this works. Each generation discipling the next generation. Each pastor caring for and training the sheep under his care to reach others until we reach the whole world, every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Question 6 - What can we learn from John about continuing the process of mission?

1 Jn 1:1-4

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

In this passage we find the heart and soul of what it means to pastor and to prepare those in our care to pastor others. Training sheep to be a shepherd to others is not a complicated process. It is not something that requires years of training and experience. Nor does it take a profound

understanding of the word of God. Actually, it is something that is rooted in who we are as a Christian and what we have already learned. It is sharing what we know with others and then teaching them to do the same. It is about maintaining the connection of the past through the present into the future.

We see this in the gospels. Matthew, a tax collector, shared all he learned so that other Jews could learn as well and they could share that information in a way that it could be used to disciple, baptize and teach others. Mark was a second generation Christian. He was not one of the original twelve. He listened to Peter's story and then told others what he had learned. Luke was even farther removed from the original followers. He was a convert of Paul. He had a friend, Theophilus, who was asking questions and so began the process of researching the truth. He talked to everyone he met who could tell him about Jesus. By the time he was done he had told the story of Jesus and the early history of the spread of the gospel to many others. He helped people see how they were the witnesses and could tell their story so others would be guided.

Then came John. His gospel contains many stories and teachings not found in the others. It was written after most of the eye-witnesses were dead. In his gospel he included stories of people and how they responded to what they were taught. They learned and, in turn, taught others. In other words, the sheep became shepherds. Here are some examples of this process:

John the Baptist (Jn 1:6-8) – “There was a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to

testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.”

John was taught the scriptures and knew what his work was. He called himself a “voice crying in the wilderness.” He was to prepare the way so that others would find the one who could save them. As soon as possible, he pointed others to Jesus. He trained disciples to help in the work.

Andrew – (Jn 1:32-42) “The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him”

Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. One day when Jesus was passing by, John pointed Jesus out to Andrew and another disciple. They immediately left John to follow Jesus. Shortly after that Andrew went and found Peter and brought him to Jesus.

Philip –(Jn 1:45-46) “Philip found Nathanael and told him, ‘we have found the Messiah.’”

Jesus had just invited Philip to follow him. Philip responded and went in search of Nathanael to invite him to come and meet Jesus as well.

Woman at the well – (Jn 4:27-42) “Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’”

Jesus stopped by a well and had a very profound conversation with an unlikely person. They talked about religion, faith and life. In the end, this woman ran to her

town, risking being ignored, so she could lead the people to Jesus.

Man born blind – (Jn 9) “I have told you everything and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again: Do you want to become his disciples too?”

An uneducated blind man saw more clearly than all the religious leaders. His comments reveal how much he had learned and how well he perceived what had happened. He was not intimidated by the leaders and shared without fear what he had learned. He sought to lead them to the truth he had discovered. They rejected his leadership but that did not matter. He knew the truth and fearlessly shared it. He became a clear guide to others.

Children – (Jn 12:12-15) While the participation of children is not mentioned in John it is important for us to remember that the children boldly proclaimed the words recorded by John. Their childlike faith and courageous action scared the leaders. But Jesus stated that their action was approved by God. They had the right to be in the front and provide leadership in declaring Jesus as king.

Andrew and Philip – (Jn 20:20-22) “Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

A group of Greeks came who wanted to see Jesus. Philip brought them to Andrew and together they lead them to Jesus.

Jesus’ prayer – (Jn 17:18) “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world...My prayer is not for them

alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.”

Jesus prayed that those who had been following him would be effective in communicating the gospel to others and so lead them to Jesus. The goal was to bring them into unity with God and Jesus so that the whole world would know that Jesus was sent by God out of love for all the world.

John’s reason for writing – Jn 20:31 “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

John knew the whole story of Jesus’ life. He had access to all the other apostles and thousands of others. He was one of the inner three. He knew the whole picture and chose these stories to make it possible for others to believe, for others to be guided to Jesus.

This is the basic truth of shepherd, sheep, and pasture. Teach them to share what they know about the one who has saved them. This is the focus of the passage in 1 John 1:1-4. Being a shepherd is about knowing what you have seen and telling others. It is about knowing what you have heard and telling others. It is about what you have experienced and the fellowship you have with God. You have touched God and he has touched you. It is about knowing all of this and using it so that others will have the same fellowship that you enjoy.

So think about it. What have you heard? What have you allowed God to tell you through his word and others who are his children? What have you seen? What has changed in your life that makes you aware of God’s presence? How has

God touched you? How has he guided you? Now use all of your answers to help others find the same level of fellowship with God so they can tell others what they have seen, heard and touched. When this happens they will become God's shepherd to those God brings into their world.

Too often we make shepherding way too complicated, as if only a few can ever be qualified to lead others. Shepherding in the kingdom is more about letting God use us to guide others and less about what we do to prepare ourselves to lead. There is a need for both, the guidance that only children can give, and the guidance based on a mature understanding of God's whole gospel. No matter which one is needed at any given point, they both function on the same principle: share what you have seen, heard, and touched so that others will find true fellowship with God.

For some all that is needed is the simple directions. For others they will need those who are fully anchored in God's word to guide them through the labyrinth of life to find the truth that is God. And the basis for this? Just read the rest of this short book and learn what it means to love others as we have been loved. Then you will be a shepherd ready to train others to become shepherds. Then we will all be able to carry out the mission of God to reach all the lost of the world with the message of the whole gospel.

What is the relationship of the pastor to the mission? It is simple, do everything you can to teach people how to guide others to Jesus.

Appendix 1 – Sheep, shepherd, and pasture in the Letters.

As we enter into the letters of the New Testament we will see a major shift in topic and content. The words we have been studying practically disappear.

Sheep

There are only three references that use the word sheep.

Ro 8:36 describes Paul's life of sacrifice as like that of sheep who are sacrificed for the benefit of others.

He 13:20 comments about Jesus' sacrifice and his role as shepherd of the sheep.

1 Pe 2:25 is the only passage that deals with sheep and only in the context of lost sheep that have now been found and returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

There is one other word used in the context of sheep and that is the word 'flock.' This word is used four times

1 Co 9:7 contains two of them and deals with the right of the one caring for a flock to benefit from the resources that come from a flock.

1 Pe 5:2 describes the responsibility of an elder to feed the flock of God that is in his care.

1 Pe 5:3 continues that idea with the recommendation that this should be done by being an example to the flock in their own life

Shepherd

The word shepherd is also only used three times. Two of them are found in the texts above (He 13:20 and 1 Pe 2:25).

The third is:

1 Pe 5:4 talks about the return of the chief shepherd and what those who serve as elders will receive for their service.

Instead of the word ‘shepherd’ several others words are used to describe those who are called to lead and care for those who are part of the church or the kingdom, which represents the flock of God.

The first of these is the word elder. There are several passages that describe the qualities and work of this person. The best known of these is found in 1 Timothy 3. This passage will be dealt with as part of a discussion of the books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

Actually two different Greek words are translated ‘elder.’ The first *presbuteros* simply means an older person or senior member of the community. The second is *episkope* and means one in charge. It is only used four times and two of them are in 1 Ti 3:1 and Ti 1:7 and relate to Paul’s description of an approved leader. A third is mentioned above (1 Pe 5:2) and the fourth is used as part of a list of people that Paul is communicating to. Depending on the translation, *presbuteros* may also be translated as the word ‘overseer’ or one responsible for supervising. Others will translate this with the word ‘bishop’ which has the same meaning as that used in the passages in Timothy and Titus.

There is one other word of interest. The word *diakoneo*. This word is actually a verb (not a noun as we like to think) and means to minister to or serve others. On two occasions it is translated as ‘one who serves.’ In this case it is a noun (Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3).

Pasture

The word pasture does not occur in any of the letters. In place of the word pasture we find discussions about the kingdom of God and the church and how God works in and through them. It is in this context that we learn about our relationship with God who is our true pasture. We learn how the Holy Spirit works in us to reveal God to us and through us to reveal Him to others. We learn how Christ is present in us, renewing, restoring, reconciling us to God. We learn what it means to be a child of God and have a relationship with the one who created us and loved us enough to provide for our salvation and to once again walk with God as Adam did in the garden.

Appendix 2 – Terms and references related to teaching – 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus

Paul uses a number of terms related to the process of instructing others in what it means to be a shepherd, to have responsible for the lives of others, and leading them as they grow in their relationship with Christ. Here is a list of the

terms used, a brief definition, and list of the references where the term is used. (The number before each word is the Strong's reference number.)

1317 – *didaktikos* - prone or willing to teach.

References – 1 Ti 3:2 – quality of a leader; 2 Ti 2:24

1319 – *didaskalia* - teaching or doctrine, relates to the content being taught and the action involved in presenting that content to others.

References – 1 Ti 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Ti 3:10, 16; 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1, 7

It is generally described as sound teaching that will benefit and guide others. Except in 1 Ti 4:1 where it refers to false teaching, in this case that of devils. This is something that is to be carefully identified and avoided.

1321 – *didasko* – to teach or instruct

References – 1 Ti 2:12; 4:11; 6:2; 2 Ti 2:2; Tit 1:11

In all but one reference the concept is about the responsibility to thoroughly instruct others in the truth.

In Tit 1:11 talks about the effect of teaching what is false in the lives of others.

2085 – *heterodidaskaleo* – to teach falsely

References – 1 Ti 1:3; 6:3

This reveals that it is possible to teach what is false and is counter to sound teaching.

3809 – *paideia* – education process and its content

Reference – 2 Ti 3:16

This relates to a program or instruction in how to live

3811 – *paideuo* – to train up or educate a person in what to do and how to live correctly

References – 1 Ti 1:20; 2 Ti 2:25; Tit 2:12

This can be both in the form of what should be avoided and what should be done to live correctly in following the truth.

4994 – *sofronizo* – to instruct someone to behave in a correct manner

Reference – Tit 2:4

This is used in describing the responsibility of older women to teach younger women how to behave

Appendix 3 – Scripture guide to key words to proclaiming the gospel

	kerusso	euggelizeo	didaskeo	euggelio	diamartiro	location
	2784	2907	1321	2908	1263	
	verb	verb	verb	noun	verb	
Mt 3:1	proclaim					Wilderness of Jordan
Mt 4:17	proclaim					galilee
Mt 4:23	proclaim		teach			synagogues
Mt 5:2			teach			mountainside
Mt 5:19			teach			mountainside

Mt 7:29			teach			mountainside
Mt 9:35	proclaim		teach	gospel		synagogues
Mt 10:7	proclaim					lost of Israel
Mt 10:27	proclaim					cities
Mt 11:1	proclaim		teach			cities of Galilee
Mt 11:5		announce the good news				synagogue
Mt 13:54			teach			Nazareth
Mt 15:9			teach			
Mt 21:23			teach			temple
Mt 22:16			teach			temple
Mt 24:14	proclaim			gospel		all nations
Mt 26:13	proclaim			gospel		whole world
Mt 26:55			teach			temple
Mt 28:18		3100 teach (make a disciple)				all nations
Mt 28:20			teach			end of the world
Mk 1:4	proclaim					wilderness
Mk 1:7	proclaim			gospel		galilee
Mk 1:21			teach			synagogue Capernaum
Mk 1:22			teach			synagogue Capernaum
Mk 1:38	proclaim					next towns
Mk 1:39	proclaim					synagogues galilee
Mk 2:13			teach			seaside
Mk 3:14	proclaim					mountainside
Mk 4:1			teach			seaside
Mk 4:2			teach			seaside
Mk 5:20	proclaim					Decapolis
Mk 6:2			teach			synagogue
	kerusso	euggelizeo	didaskeo	euggelio	diamartiro	location
Mk 6:6			teach			nearby villages

Mk 6:12	proclaim					region
Mk 6:30			teach			region
Mk 6:34			teach			isolated place
Mk 7:7			teach			
Mk 8:31			teach			
Mk 9:31			teach			
Mk 10:1			teach			Judea
Mk 11:17			teach			temple
Mk 12:14			teach			temple
Mk 12:35			teach			temple
Mk 13:10	proclaim			gospel		all nations
Mk 14:9	proclaim			gospel		wherever
Mk 14:49			teach			temple
Mk 16:15	proclaim			gospel		all the world
Lk 1:19		announce the good news				Mary
Lk 3:3	proclaim					Jordan area
Lk 4:15			teach			synagogues
Lk 4:18		announce the good news		Lk9:6		poor
	proclaim					captive
						blind
Lk 4:19	proclaim					
Lk 4:31			teach			Capernaum
Lk 4:43		announce the good news				other cities
Lk 4:44	proclaim					synagogues Judea
Lk 5:3			teach			seaside
Lk 5:17			teach			wilderness
Lk 6:6			teach			synagogue
Lk 7:22		announce the good news				poor
Lk 8:1	proclaim	announce the good news				every city and village

Lk 9:6		announce the good news				through the towns
Lk 9:32	proclaim					sent out
Lk 11:1			teach			unknown
Lk 12:12			teach			multitude
Lk 13:10			teach			synagogue
Lk 13:22			teach			cities and villages
Lk 16:16		announce the good news				
	kerusso	euggelizeo	didaskeo	euggelio	diamartiro	location
Lk 20:1		announce the good news				temple
Lk 20:21			teach			temple
Lk 21:37			teach			temple
Lk 24:47	proclaim					nations
Jn 6:59			teach			synagogue Capernaum
Jn 7:14			teach			temple
Jn 7:28			teach			temple
Jn 8:2			teach			temple
Jn 8:20			teach			temple
Jn 8:28			teach			temple
Jn 14:26			teach			upper room
Jn 18:20			teach			synagogue, temple
Ac 1:1			teach			ministry of Jesus
Ac 1:8		3144 shall be witness				Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of earth
Ac 4:2		preach 2605	teach			people in temple
Ac 4:18			teach			sanhedrin
Ac 5:25			teach			temple
Ac 5:28			teach			sanhedrin
Ac 5:42		announce the good news	teach			temple

Ac 8:4		announce the good news				scattered abroad
Ac 8:5	proclaim					a city of Samaria
Ac 8:12		announce the good news				Samaria
Ac 8:25		announce the good news			testify	many villages in Samaria
Ac 8:35		announce the good news				road to Ethiopia
Ac 8:40		announce the good news				Azotus to Caesarea
Ac 9:20	proclaim					synagogues Damascus
Ac 10:36		announce the good news				house of Cornelius
Ac 10:37	proclaim					house of Cornelius
Ac 10:42	proclaim				testify	people
Ac 11:20		announce the good news				Antioch
Ac 11:26			teach			Antioch
Ac 13:5`		2605 declared				Salamis
Ac 13:32		announce the good news				Antioch in Psidia
Ac 13:38		2605 declared				Antioch in Psidia
	kerusso	euggelizeo	didaskeo	euggelio	diamartiro	location
Ac 14:7		announce the good news				Lystra and Derbe
Ac 14:15		announce the good news				Lystra and Derbe
Ac 14:21		announce the good news				Derbe
Ac 15:1			teach			Antioch
Ac 15:21	proclaim					every city
Ac 15:35		announce the good news	teach			Antioch
Ac 15:35		2605 declared				all cities visited
Ac 16:10		announce the good news				Macedonia
Ac 16:17		2605 declared				Philippi
Ac 17:3		2605 declared				Thessalonica
Ac 17:18		announce the good				Athens

		news				
Ac 17:23		2605 declared				Athens
Ac 18:11			teach			Corinthians
Ac 18:25			teach			Corinthians
Ac 20:20			teach			house to house
Ac 20:25	proclaim					Ephesios
Ac 26:23		2605 declared				Ceasarea Agrippa
Ac 28:31	proclaim		teach			Rome
Ro 1:8		2605 declared				Rome
Ro 1:15		announce the good news				Rome
Ro 2:21			teach			Rome
Ro 10:8	proclaim					
Ro 10:14	proclaim					need for a preacher
Ro 10:15	proclaim	announce the good news				need for a preacher
Ro 12:7			teach			Rome
Ro 15:20		announce the good news				where Christ is unknown
1 Co 1:17		announce the good news				wherever sent
1 Co 1:23	proclaim					
1 Co 2:1		2605 declared				Corinth
1 Co 4:17			teach			every where in every church
1 Co 9:14		2605 declared	gospel			anywhere
1 Co 9:16		announce the good news				
1 Co 9:18		announce the good news				
1 Co 9:27	proclaim					others
	kerusso	euggelizeo	didaskeo	euggelio	diamartiro	location
1 Co 11:26		2605 declared				Lord's Supper
1 Co 15:1		announce the good news				Corintios
1 Co 15:2		announce the good news				Corintios

1 Co 15:11	proclaim					Corintios
1 Co 15:12	proclaim					Corintios
2 Co 1:19	proclaim					Corintios
2 Co 4:5	proclaim					Corintios
2 Co 10:6		announce the good news				regions beyond
2 Co 11:4	proclaim			gospel		
Ga 1:8		announce the good news				Galatia
Ga 1:9		announce the good news				Galatia
Ga 1:11		announce the good news				Galatia
Ga 1:12			teach			
Ga 1:16		announce the good news				heathen
Ga 1:23		announce the good news				
Ga 2:2	proclaim					Gentiles
Ga 4:13		announce the good news				Galatia
Ep 2:17		announce the good news				those who are far off
Ep 3:8		announce the good news				Gentiles
Ph 1:15	proclaim					
Ph 1:16		2605 declared				unknown
Ph 1:18		2605 declared				
Co 1:23	proclaim				gospel	unknown
Co 1:28		2605 declared	teach			asia
Co 2:7			teach			asia
Co 3:16			teach			one another
1 Th 2:9	proclaim			gospel		Thessalonica
2 Th 2:15			teach			Thessalonica
1 Ti 2:12			teach			Timothy
1 Ti 3:16	proclaim					Gentiles
1 Ti 4:2	proclaim					at all times

1 Ti 4:11			teach			Timothy
1 Ti 6:2			teach			others
2 Ti 2:2			teach			others
Ti 1:11			teach			others
He 4:2		announce the good news				unknown
	kerusso	euggelizeo	didaskeo	euggelio	diamartiro	location
He 4:6		announce the good news				unbelieving Jews
He 5:12			teach			unknown
He 8:11			teach			unknown
1 Pe 1:12		announce the good news				unknown
1 Pe 1:25		announce the good news				unknown
1 Pe 3:9	proclaim					spirits in prison
1 Pe 4:6		announce the good news				to them that are dead
1 Jn 1:3		518 Declare report what we have seen				
1 Jn 2:27			teach			