

An Urgent Call to Shepherd God's Flock

Detailed Outline

Part 2 of 5

II. Peter's Charge to the Elders (v. 2) (cont.)

B. What Shepherds Do

Peter, like Paul, uses the powerful, vivid imagery of shepherding sheep. This imagery appears throughout the Old Testament, and thus, is ready-made for explaining the tasks of elders. Elders are to shepherd sheep. However, they are not literal sheep but people.

1. The imagery of shepherding sheep pictures the following concepts:
 - a) **Hard Work** – Shepherding is hard work. It's a busy life. Paul says to the Ephesian elders, "In all things, I have shown you that by working hard in this way, we must help the weak" (Acts 20:35).
 - b) **Long Hours** – The shepherd's task is really never done. It starts early in the morning with taking the sheep out of the fold, being with them all day, returning to them to the fold in the evening, and guarding them at night. As elders you may get phone calls at any time of day. The state of the church is on your mind 24 hours a day. It is an intangible aspect of the work.
 - c) **Sacrifice** – There is a great deal of sacrifice on the part of the shepherd. He gives his life for the sheep. He must be dedicated to them. They are dependent upon him. In some cases, the shepherd will literally give his life for the sheep.
 - d) **Dangerous Work** – Sheep have many predators, and the shepherd must be constantly alert to danger. This means the shepherd must have courage. The chief enemy of the church of Jesus Christ is the false teacher. But the false teacher is only an agent of Satan. Like wolves, they never give up and never rest. Shepherds are in the direct line of Satan's attacks. He will always attack them most viciously.
 - e) **Skills** – Shepherding entails many skills. It requires management of land, water, and the sheep's health. There is a great deal of knowledge that goes into raising a healthy flock. Elders have to be good managers of the people, to be sure their gifts are not squandered. They have to know how to motivate and guide people and solve problems. In other words, good shepherd-elders are effective in their work.
 - f) **Presence** – One of the most mysterious parts of this job is the presence of the shepherd with the sheep. The sheep only rest when the shepherd is present, and the sheep know instinctively if the shepherd is not there. In other words, the sheep and the shepherd build a relationship. You cannot be a cold, unfriendly, absentee elder. The people will not follow you.

- g) Love – Ultimately, the shepherd must love the sheep because he has to be with them all the time. This implies care, tenderness, gentleness and at times, toughness.
- h) Authority – The shepherd has authority over the sheep to lead, discipline, teach, protect and care for them.

All of these ideas are entailed in the phrase “Shepherd God’s flock.” Thus the image is rich in its meaning for an elder. Some leaders today don’t like this old-fashioned image, and they would rather use the image of a CEO of a corporation. But this does not fit the nature of the church. It is the wrong imagery for the family of God.

2. What Shepherds Actually Do

a) Protecting

- 1) The church has many enemies. Satan and his merry band of false teachers are constantly attacking the church. If elders are sleepy, the church will be devoured.
- 2) You need to know who the wolves are who are surrounding your church and in your culture. It is our job to protect the church from the wolves that now attack our flocks. This means you need to be knowledgeable of the present-day theologies that will divide and ruin your church.

b) Teaching/Feeding

- 1) One of the best ways to protect the church is through feeding it nourishing food to make the sheep strong. In Acts 20, Paul tells the Ephesian elders that he did not shrink from declaring to them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).
- 2) Feeding is the first and most important job of the elder. Everything the elders do is by means of the Word of God. That is why an elder must meet the Titus 1:9 qualifications.
- 3) You need to know how to feed the flock, and how to teach the whole counsel of God. This requires a clear philosophy of feeding the flock. This will include knowing how to teach the Word of God accurately, how to deliver a message in an interesting and challenging way. Just filling in the pulpit with a warm body is not teaching the people.

c) Leading

- 1) Sheep must be led in and out of the fold. They must be brought to fresh pasture in the hot summer months. They also have to be found when they are lost.
- 2) The biggest complaint I hear about elders is that they are not leading. They don’t solve problems. They don’t confront issues that are hurting the church. They have no fresh vision, no mission. They are caretakers, maintaining the past. They are not in touch with the people or the problems and they may not even know what to do.

- 3) People want to be led! They want their leaders to solve problems, to challenge the church, to take the church forward, and to be attentive.
- d) Healing
- 1) This is the healing ministry – the many practical aspects dealing with disease, the sheering of sheep, keeping them from fighting, and keeping them clean.
 - 2) For the elders it is counseling people, marrying people, burying people, and ministering to families.