

# The Importance of the Shepherd's Presence

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## Detailed Outline

*"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you." (1 Peter 5:2 ESV)*

### Introduction

- A. Peter exhorts the Asian elders to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you" (1 Peter 5:2).
- B. One of the most amazing aspects of shepherding sheep is the presence of the shepherd among the sheep.
- C. In his book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, Philip Keller writes:

*"In the course of time I came to realize that nothing so quieted and reassured the sheep as to see me in the field. The presence of their master and owner and protector put them at ease as nothing else could do. Continuous conflict and jealousy within the flock can be a most detrimental thing. The sheep become edgy, tense, discontented, and restless. They lose weight and become irritable. But one point that always interested me very much was that whenever I came into view and my presence attracted their attention, the sheep quickly forgot their foolish rivalries and stopped their fighting. The shepherd's presence made all the difference in their behavior." – Philip Keller*

- D. Of course this applies supremely to Christ's presence among his people.
  - 1. He promises us his continual presence. He is the shepherd and we are his sheep. We know he is always with us. And this is comforting and reassuring to the troubled believer.
  - 2. In John 10, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. And it says, the sheep know his voice (10:4) and he knows their names (10:3). There is a wonderful intimacy between Christ and his people.
- E. In a similar way, the elders' presence makes a big difference to the flock.

You need to know and understand, that your presence is important to the people and it makes a big difference in how they act and feel. This is a true reality.

### F. Illustration

I remember once we had an all-church picnic. A number of the elders did not show up. Others showed up late. As I was circulating among the people, I was asked by almost everyone, "Where are the elders?" They were not saying that to be critical. They really wanted to know where they were. They love the elders. I don't even think they realized they were saying what they did.

## I. Invisible Shepherds

- A. They have a title and an office, but they have no presence among the people.
- B. They come to church on Sunday morning, and see their friends and relatives, but do not understand the importance of their presence among the entire flock.

### **C. Illustration**

1. In a church near ours, the pastor was caught for the second time in an adulterous relationship with someone from within the church. The elders said, "This is too much. We are going to fire the pastor." The pastor on a Sunday morning told the congregation that the elders were dismissing him from his job, even though he had fully repented of his sin. The people became very angry. They said, "We don't know who these elders even are. They are not our pastor. You will stay and they will leave."
2. You see, these men were elders, but they were invisible elders. They were not present among the people. They were just there, like any other church attendee.
3. Maybe they had some legal or formal position in the church, but that's all it was. They weren't biblical shepherds.

## **II. Suggestions for Making Your Presence Known and Felt**

### **A. Greet the people as they come and as they leave.**

1. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of you elders being present when people come into the assembly to be greeted by you and of course others.
2. One of the most important things is for all the elders to be at the door as people leave. Many important encounters happen at the door. People want to tell you about their problems or needs. For some of us, this is the only time we even see these people.
3. See the one-minute shepherding article by Church Gianotti.

### **B. Reach out to the people with friendly gestures, a smile and warm Christian greetings.**

1. It is important that the elders display friendliness to the people, joy in gathering together, and true brotherly and sisterly relationships. If the elders are cold and aloof, the people will become that way.
2. Friendliness and greeting are very important in the family marked by Christ's love. Yet many churches are not friendly to new people. People are standoffish or afraid to reach out to new people.
3. Learning people's names is part of being friendly and loving church. John says, "The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name" (3 John 14).
4. Five times in the New Testament, believers are told to greet one another with the holy kiss. Paul loves to send greetings.
5. I believe we should have a strong greeting ministry. I am not talking about handing out bulletins, but greeting people and directing them.

### **C. Circulate among the people on Sunday morning.**

1. I call it "circulate and percolate" among the people.
2. See those who are alone. The seniors love to be kissed and hugged, especially widows and people of advanced age.
3. Before the meetings start, people may be sitting alone and need a greeting.

#### **D. Have people over to your home.**

We will talk about this in another section, but if you really want to get to know the people, have them at your table to eat and talk about your lives. Elders are to be hospitable!!

#### **E. Visit people.**

Another way to get to be in the presence of the people is to visit them in their homes. You will see them differently after you have been in their home.

#### **F. Ministering to people when they are suffering is an important way that we all connect.**

People when they are hurting are most touched by their shepherds. This is when the relationship is built into deeper sheep-shepherd relations.

### **III. Some Principles Regarding the Shepherd's Presence**

#### **A. When you love the people, you will want to be with them.**

1. Shepherding means being with people. Your life revolves around them.
2. A real shepherd begins to smell like the sheep because he is around them. The same should be true of spiritual shepherds.

#### **B. When you love the people, you will feel a deep sense of responsibility for them.**

1. You think about them, you wonder how they are doing. You miss them if they are not around.
2. You can't rest if one is not showing up to church. When they are facing an operation you call or visit. When they hurt you hurt.
3. Seeking lost sheep –This is something we are all bad at. We give up too easily.

#### **C. When you love the people, you will feel compassion for them.**

1. The great scholar B.B. Warfield said that the key emotional word describing Jesus Christ is compassion, and shepherd must have compassion for people: blind, lepers, outcast women, poor people, children, and the multitudes.
2. We need to be continually helping our congregation to reach out to new people, to be friendly and genuinely concerned, and not just in a holy huddle. This is something you must model and exhort continually.

### **Conclusion**

The point of all this is for you to understand your influence in the flock. Your presence is vitally important to God's people. God has called you a steward of his household (Titus 1:7). The steward must be present in the household.

So I am calling upon you to have a renewed understanding of your presence among the sheep. They can tell if you love to be with them or if you just do things out of rote habit.