

TITLE: Shepherds of God's Sheep

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Author: Dr. James Paul Humphries

Editor: Dominique Kozarchuk

Copy Editor: Gilbert Demers

Cover Design / Layout: Sarah Van Pelt

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Leadership Series

Book 11

SHEPHERDS OF GOD'S SHEEP

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PREFACE

Welcome to the discipleship / leadership series. These little booklets were designed to give basic information concerning various topics about our Christian faith in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of this series is to stimulate thought and to foster a clearer understanding of discipleship and servant leadership. These booklets can be used as a discussion tool for personal study, family devotion, youth meetings or in cell groups. Our hope is that this information will stir the readers and encourage them to go deeper into personal research and study.

Our desire is that these booklets will be a blessing to the reader and a tool that can be shared with others as a gift of encouragement.

Please feel free to mail or e-mail us for more copies or to just write to us with any feedback concerning the content of these studies. We hope you enjoy this offering of knowledge and experience. We pray that Christ will draw you into an ever deeper personal relationship with Himself as you study.

Your servants in Christ,

Rev. Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This booklet comes from a heart of concern for those who lead and care for God's sheep. Christ came as a shepherd to a people who were hurt, scattered and under bondage. He also came as a sacrificial lamb so that the curse of sin and judgment could be removed from our lives. God's sheep are at the center of His heart and He knows them all by name. He has a personal relationship with each one and loves them dearly. We as shepherds need to see God's sheep through His eyes. He has a divine plan for each one. Each of His sheep is a treasured vessel and a gift. While on earth, we are to nurture and care for them in such a way that they will bring more sheep into the fold.

My hope is that you will gain some insights from this booklet and that it will help you to guide and minister to the sheep that God has entrusted to you. We need to remember that one day, we will be held accountable like the three servants who had to give an account for talents entrusted to them by their master (Matthew 25:14-30).

James Paul Humphries

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INTRODUCTION

There have been hundreds of books written about shepherds, pastors, leadership, overseers, bishops, managers etc., so why another? These books give you all kinds of principles and practical tools to help the flock that God has put in our charge. They give much wisdom and insight into the ministries that God calls us to do; but something seems to be missing. I have traveled to many parts of the world and have met thousands of pastors/shepherds. You look into their eyes, which are the windows of their hearts, and you see forlornness, anxiety, worry, stress and confusion about what to do. For some there is hopelessness, doubt that God had ever called them into ministry.

Over the years, I have seen many truths in the Bible concerning what it means to be God's shepherd. This has caused me to look at things differently and I tell people that the ministry that God has given me is "foundation inspector". I go into churches and other Christian organizations and take time to check out the foundation, determining how it is lined up with the Chief Cornerstone. Many of these ministries were clearly called by God, but the things that they have constructed are no longer on Christ's foundation. Paul saw this happening with the Galatian Church. He tells us that they started well, but turned to following another Gospel. He asked how they had been bewitched, who came in amongst them and changed their direction that was so firmly established (Gal. 1:6-9).

I know that buildings have a purpose. Each structure will look different. Likewise, this is what makes the disciple of Christ so unique. Still, the foundation of Christ never changes and we have to be completely aligned with His will and purpose for our lives. Challenges, storms and even persecution do lie ahead. When

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we are on a sure foundation, we as shepherds can have peace that passes all understanding and be able to stand in the worst storm and say, like the hymnists, “it is well with my soul”.

In this booklet I want to review the foundation of what being a shepherd is and challenge the reader to ask the question, where does your foundation lie? Shepherds have had a great impact both positively and negatively on the history of this world. What we do will directly influence the world and the Kingdom of God. The line between the two – the world and the Kingdom – is very small and unfortunately, many shepherds try to keep a foot on both sides of the line.

We also forget we will all stand alone before God on judgment day, without family, church, or other people to blame. God will ask “What did you do with all that I gave, both in possessions and people? How did you use your talents, finance, education, gifts for the sheep that I entrusted to you?" It is time to stop being so fearful of man and turn back to having a holy reverent fear of God Almighty.

The shepherd is called to serve others, to give his life for the sheep. Whether we are a pastor, minister or shepherd, we come under the headship of Jesus Christ. Shepherds are called to go forth and change people's lives, to becoming history makers. We can be the ones that God uses to ignite a spark in someone's life to change the direction of a home, a nation or the world. We are called to be carriers of precious seed, to be planted in the hearts that God has readied for His purpose.

If you are a shepherd called by God, do not take this ministry lightly. It comes by at great price. He will richly reward all those who have been faithful and have given their lives for

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others. God has a plan and purpose for your life that can only be completely fulfilled if you are in line with His foundation. Please take time to call out to God and ask Him to give you the wisdom and understanding of what you are called to do.

Disciples as Shepherds

The purpose for this chapter is to reflect on how God has called us, and what we are doing now in ministering to people that He has entrusted to us. This chapter reminds me of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, where the lord entrusted a certain amount of money to three different men while he was away. He returned to hear an account of what they did with it. The Bible says the lord gave to them according to their ability. It is the same today as a shepherd of God. In this chapter we want to explore our own lives and the things we have been building. What fruit is coming out of the ministry that Christ has given to us? We as shepherds will one day be held accountable for our words and actions and how we cared for God's sheep.

FOCUS AND TARGET FOR TEACHER & STUDENTS

TEACHER: As a teacher, the challenge you face is to teach fellow pastors the importance of understanding clearly what it means to be a shepherd in the church of Jesus Christ. We will have to encourage our students to hear what the Spirit is saying to them about their thoughts and actions toward God and the sheep. They also need to see that they too, are sheep under a Shepherd.

STUDENT: The student will understand the implications and importance of why the disciples of Christ need to be careful of how they shepherd the Lord's sheep. As

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shepherds, they need to see God's sheep as a treasure from heaven.

DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Understanding the meaning of words is the heart to understanding Scripture. Words are the bridge that can help us to understand more about ourselves and about God and His Word the Bible. Please take time to meditate and reflect on the broad and narrow view of each word as defined, along with its synonyms.

SHEPHERD a person who tends and rears sheep; a member of the clergy who provides spiritual care and guidance for a congregation; guide or direct in a particular direction. *Synonyms:* guide, conduct, usher, steer, herd, lead, escort, accompany, walk, show, see, attend, chaperone.

LEADER the person who leads or commands a group; a person followed by others. *Synonyms:* head, principal, boss, commander, captain, chairperson, director, overseer, administrator, pioneer, front runner, innovator, trailblazer, pathfinder, ground-breaker, leading light, guiding light, torch-bearer, pacemaker, originator, initiator, developer, discoverer, founder, architect.

SERVANTS: a person who performs duties for others; a devoted and helpful follower or supporter. *Synonyms:* helper, supporter, follower, attendant, helper.

SHEEP: a domesticated ruminant mammal with a thick woolly coat and (typically only in the male) curving horns; it is kept in flocks for its wool or meat, and is proverbial for its tendency to follow others in the flock; a person who is too

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easily influenced or led. *Synonyms:* ram, ewe, lamb

SCRIPTURE

For this chapter, study the following Scripture. It is the key to a good biblical foundation and it is the next step to help you as a disciple to mature in Christ. Consult your Bible and read it in its entirety. Take into account the author who wrote it, whom it was written to and the context in which it relates to the other verses and chapters around it.

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Acts 20:28

STUDY

This verse indicates that the shepherd should be careful how to lead the flock of God. He has entrusted us with many lives that will produce more sheep for God's glory if we look after and care for them properly.

We are to be careful of not only our own walk in the Lord; as well as the walk of those entrusted to us. The Holy Spirit has called us to oversee these people. He has entrusted us as stewards of these people. We are to remember that the flock which has been given to us has been purchased by Christ's own blood. Each one of these "sheep" has value because Christ paid their price with His life. His atoning blood was the price paid for the mercy which we have been shown. We are not called to do this alone but we have the power, wisdom and teaching of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us.

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BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

The Bible is full of examples showing how God speaks to His people as those who are shepherds. Shepherding is considered a low profession, but it was also God's training ground to prepare His leaders. Take time to look up these people in the Scripture and reflect on how God can speak to us through their lives. Just as He used them, He desires to use us as His vessels for service.

Abraham: Genesis 12

Put God first.

Followed God's leading.

Cared for His family (Lot) and others.

Gave tithe to God through Melchizedek.

Isaac: Genesis 26

Recognized God leading in his life.

Married Rebekah as his first wife.

Later married three more wives and began to have problems.

Built an alter and worshipped God from it.

Dug many wells to water his sheep.

Kept peace with his neighbours.

Jacob: Genesis 46:28-34

His father was a shepherd.

He Himself was a schemer.

Became wealthy as a shepherd.

Shepherding was his trade.

By shepherding, he received his first two wives.

These are people with normal lives. God revealed Himself to them in a variety of ways, calling ordinary people to do

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extraordinary things for His glory. Shepherding allowed people to move into a deeper personal relationship with Him. God flowed through their lives to touch and encourage others in their lifetimes and for generations to come.

OBJECT LESSON

Shepherd and Sheep Picture: There is a famous oil painting that shows Jesus carrying a lamb across His shoulders. We are told that this picture represents how Christ went out to find the one lost sheep (Luke 15:3). Ninety-nine were safe in the sheepfold but one had got lost. He left the ninety-nine and went out looking until He found it and ministered to its needs. He then picked it up and carried it in His arms or on His shoulders to safety. When He got back He rejoiced with His friends because this lamb was once lost but was found. A true shepherd is one that loves, cares for and rejoices over his sheep at all times.

Transition: Let us look at eight different areas that we as shepherds should be reviewing in our lives once or twice a year. They are foundational to understanding what it means to be a shepherd and servant of the Lord.

I CALLED (Abraham, Moses, Joshua)

The first thing that a shepherd needs to plant clearly in his heart is that he has been called of God to serve people. It can be a challenge and sacrifice both personally and for his family. Yet there are many blessing and rewards that will be received in Heaven.

An overseer needs to understand the potential of what it means to be called as a shepherd of God's church. God takes what

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He gives to us and refines it into tools to serve others with. He entrusts us with gifts that, when combined with those of other members of the body, cause the flock to grow and mature. Our calling is the anchor that ties us to God and His Word.

DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS:

Call: a cry made as a summons or to attract someone's attention. *Synonyms:* cry out, wake up, wake, awaken, waken, rouse, summon, send for, ask for, convene, call together, order, assemble, appeal to, ask, request, petition, urge, beg, implore, entreat, beseech, plead with.

Commissioned: an instruction, command, or role given to a person or to a specially constituted group; a group of people entrusted by a government or other official body with authority to do something. *Synonyms:* task, employment, job, work, piece of work, project, mission, assignment, undertaking, exercise, enterprise, endeavour, duty, charge, responsibility, burden, sanction, authority.

KEY SCRIPTURE

*Now Moses was **pasturing the flock** of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvellous sight, why the bush is not burned up." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God **called** to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do*

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not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Exodus 3:1-6

CONTEXT

- The birth of Moses was during a time of persecution.
- Moses was raised in Pharaoh's house.
- Moses as a young man fled to Median after killing an Egyptian and was confronted by his people.
- In Median he learned how to be a shepherd.
- God called out to him to lead His people.

INSIGHTS

The Bible gives us stories of many people who were shepherds but we will look at three. First for Abraham to become the father of many nations he was called to come out of the land of his ancestors and move to a new land. He walked in faith and trusted God for all his needs. He followed God's leading, building altars of worship wherever he went. Abraham recognized God's hand and praised Him for His goodness that He had shown.

In time, the Israelites found themselves in Egypt under bondage and slavery. God again intervened and spared a baby boy to who would be raised in Pharaoh's house. But when Moses tried to take vengeance on a fellow Israelite, he ended up for forty years in a wilderness as a shepherd. God called him out from a burning bush, to lead the people out of bondage into the Promised Land.

Next, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, God

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raised Joshua (which means “The Lord saves”) to come forth to lead the people into the Promise Land. He was directly mentored by Moses and knew the way to lead the people. God’s hand was on him and he personally met the commander-in-chief of the host of God’s army (Joshua 5:15). Just like with Moses, God worked through Joshua to part the waters of the Jordan as they went forth into the Promise Land (Joshua 3:15). Joshua was called by God and appointed by Moses to lead the people (like a shepherd) into the land that was promised to Abraham (Numbers 27:15-23).

Abraham, Moses and Joshua’s experience as shepherds prepared them to lead people. They took responsibility; they stayed close to the heart of God and worshipped Him at all times. They sought God’s wisdom and this combined with their experience as herdsmen, moulded their character. Herdsmen had time to think and reflect both day and night, spending a lot of time alone. God had a plan for these men to build a people of God that would become as numerous as the sea.

The birthing of godly shepherds was the foundation for the leading of God’s people. We are called to lead, but this call must come from a heart that is characterized by being a shepherd in all areas.

RELEVANCE

A shepherding heart must be called to lead God’s people with a vision and understanding of who God is. A shepherd has an influence that can change the direction of people’s lives forever. We are called to build a place of worship, to walk with God, and to lead the people to a heart of understanding. The role of the shepherd is crucial to the welfare of the sheep and to their ability to be productive. Our words and actions can change and affect the

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course of History. Each person impacts the world by his belief in God. God commissions and empowers in order to complete the call for His glory.

REFLECTION

How has God called me? How have I, through my actions and life, been shepherding others? How do I support and encourage the shepherds whose care I am under.

RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR THE LESSON

Genesis 26:14
Exodus 3:1-6
Numbers 27:15-23

RELATED RESEARCH FOR THE LESSON

1. Identify various ways God summons people to ministry.

II LEARNER / TEACHER (David)

God uses shepherds to birth nations. He called Abraham and made a covenant with him for the people, nation and land. This promise was also given to his son Isaac. Later, God called King David. David taught what it meant to be a shepherd (Psalm 23); he had experienced what it was to look after sheep from a young age. He connected the idea of sheep and people, being alike in nature, habits and character.

DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Teacher: a person who teaches, especially in a school.

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Synonyms: educator, tutor, instructor, pedagogue, schoolteacher, schoolmaster, educationalist, coach, trainer, lecturer, professor, fellow, academic, guide, mentor, counsellor.

Learner: a person who is learning a subject or skill. *Synonyms:* beginner, trainee, apprentice, pupil, student, novice, newcomer, starter, fledgling.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh." Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the LORD said to you, "You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel." So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

2 Samuel 5:1-5

CONTEXT

- The death of Saul and his sons.
- The death of Saul's relatives.
- David's reward for those who killed Saul and his family, or those brought the news to David, was death.

INSIGHTS

The Bible cites many Scriptures concerning David and his

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life as a shepherd. David became known as a man after God's own heart. He walked through many valleys and on many mountaintops with God. As a boy he learned truths that would help in leading people. He confronted a bear and a lion while protecting the sheep and killed both. When Goliath threatened to kill the lambs of God (Israelites), David rose up and killed him also. At a young age he was anointed the next King of Israel. David trusted God and used the gifts and abilities that he was given to lead others.

Just as with many leaders, David was called, but circumstances put him under pressure with the current king (Saul). Saul would go from happiness to rage. In times of rage, Saul would want to kill David. Although David had many opportunities to kill Saul, he knew that God's elect was to be honoured. He had patience and did not seek his own will and desires. David also had weaknesses and failed in many areas. Nevertheless, he had a heart that was soft to God, confessing his sin. Psalm 32:5 says, *"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD; and You forgave the guilt of my sin.'"*

David first allowed himself to be a learner and later applied those lessons to become a leader of God's people. Let us look at Psalm 23 as our teaching tool on becoming a shepherd of God. David was inspired by God to tell us who the Great Shepherd is.

Shepherds Ministry Description: Psalm 23:1-6

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are

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with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

An important part of this psalm is the first few words – “*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*” This is so important for the shepherd to understand. It is the foundational stone we must build our faith upon. We must confess wholeheartedly that God is our Shepherd and there is no other that we desire but Him.

The following are ten points that we can learn from David's example of a shepherd.

1. He makes (v2).
 - To lie down in green pasture; a place of wonderful food. It is like a good loaf of bread to a person
 - *He brings people into rest. This is what we are to do for the people we shepherd and look after.*
2. He leads (v2).
 - I am drinking from clean water that is still and quiet.
 - *He brings people refreshment and peace.*
3. He restores (v3).
 - I have been set in the right direction.
 - *He puts my feet on solid ground.*
4. He guides (v3).
 - There is a path of righteousness which I follow.
 - *He brings me into Christ's righteousness and into*

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the truth of the Gospel.

5. He walks with me (v4a).
 - I am not left alone but he accompanies and goes with me.
 - *He helps me to face and to walk through the physical, emotions and spiritual challenges of my life.*

6. He comforts and protects (v4b).
 - I am comforted by His rod that fights for me and with the staff that guides me. He picks me up when I fall.
 - *He brings comfort from the rod (the Word of God) and from the staff (the presence of the Holy Spirit).*

7. He prepares for me (v5a).
 - A place to eat, a banquet. This place is before my enemies and they will see how God cares for His sheep.
 - *He feeds and cares for me and shows to my enemies the power and blessing God pours out on those who love Him.*

8. He anoints my head with oil (v5b).
 - We are a quest of His household (sheepfold) and He inspects us for bugs and ailments and he uses his ointment (Holy Spirit) generously.
 - *He brings us into and under the anointing of God. We are His people and He will pour His Spirit upon us generously.*

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9. He blesses me always (v6a).
 - I shall receive God's goodness and love all the days of my life.
 - *He brings me into a place of understanding and experiencing God's love and goodness for His people.*

10. He is with me always (v6b).
 - We will dwell together.
 - *He will bring us to a place of dwelling with the Lord Jesus Christ forever.*

David teaches the role of a shepherd and gives to us an example to follow. In the New Testament, Christ builds on the truth of ministering to His sheep.

RELEVANCE

Shepherds were often chosen by God to lead His people. They become His voice and were obedient to do the will of God. They were humble people who raised sheep. God wants people with a shepherd's heart to lay down their lives for the sheep and can be trusted with His people. In the past, they built nations and today are to be church builders, preparing the bride of Christ for His great return. God Himself was known as the Chief Shepherd and those who follow after are His apprentices. We are to learn from our Masters' character as we go where He leads. The roots of a shepherd's heart are a love for God and a burden for His people.

REFLECTION

What training ground is God taking you through? Are you doing all you can to learn how to be a good shepherd? Are you

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treating God's people as a gift that He has entrusted to you?

RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR THE LESSON

*Go and tell David My servant, 'Thus says the LORD, "You shall not build a house for Me to dwell in; for I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel to this day, but I have gone from tent to tent and from one dwelling place to another. In all places where I have walked with all Israel, have I spoken a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to **shepherd** My people, saying, 'Why have you not built for Me a house of cedar?' Now, therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the **sheep**, to be **leader** over My people Israel.'"* **1 Chronicles 17:4-7**

*Blessed be the LORD, Because He has heard the voice of my supplication. The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him. The LORD is their strength, and He is a saving defense to His anointed. Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; Be their **shepherd** also, and carry them forever.* **Psalm 28:6-9**

*He also chose David His servant and took him from the **sheepfolds**; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to **shepherd** Jacob His people. **Psalm 78:70-71***

RELATED RESEARCH FOR THE LESSON

1. Triad of Psalm, Chapter 22, 23 & 24

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III PROPHECY (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah)

Throughout the Bible God spoke through prophets, warning the shepherds who lead God's sheep. In this example, we have prophets that tell us about a coming servant that was to be both shepherd and sacrificial lamb for the people. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Micah give us a window about a Messiah who would give His life for the sheep. They tell with profound accuracy the details about what this Messiah would face and the price He would pay for the redemption of the people.

DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Prophecy: a prediction of what will happen in the future.
Synonyms: prediction, forecast, prognostication, for tell, prediction.

Prophet: a person who predicts, or claims to be able to predict, what will happen in the future; a person regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God. *Synonyms:* seer, forecaster of the future, prophet.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.
Isaiah 40:11

Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, And declare in the coastlands afar off, And say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock."
Jeremiah 31:10

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*And He will arise and **shepherd** His **flock** in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth.*

Micah: 5:4

CONTEXT

- The nation of Israel was following after the god's of other nation.
- They were not being obedient to the command, statutes and laws of the Lord.
- The temple was not a house of prayer or true worship but a place of business and unspeakable sin.
- The shepherd of God's flock had become hired hands.
- The kings did not lead the people according to God's will.
- Division and destruction was in the land.

INSIGHTS

During this time the shepherds of God were nowhere to be found. They sought after anything they desired. God's sheep were being scattered and killed, the nation was coming apart and the people had turned their back on God.

But again God had a remnant of those who remained true to His heart in spite of the challenges and circumstances. They knew the heart of God and were willing to stand in the gap. These prophets were trying to give hope to the people, encouraging them to return to God.

God has sheep everywhere but needs shepherds to lead, guide and teach them according to the truth of God. That is why when the priests failed He sent the Good Shepherd for His sheep;

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one who would lay down His life for them. Isaiah was prophesying that a shepherd would come and shed His blood so they could have redemption and life. He described this shepherd as a servant who would be mocked, beaten, pierced and crucified by His own people, but death would not have the victory. He would overcome the hold of sin and death.

Jeremiah tells that even though the sheep have been scattered God has not forgotten them and in the fullness of time would call them back to Himself. He tells of a shepherd who was and is God and would be one who truly cared for His sheep.

Jeremiah also gives a stern warning to the shepherds who are scattering the sheep. They have not attended to them and now He would come and shepherd them and call them back to a place that He has named as His own and there He would feed them and care for them. At that point once again they will be fruitful and multiply. He will bring them into a place of rest.

Micah is our third prophet who describes the coming of a great shepherd. In the last days this Shepherd would rule over all the earth. His life has given us hope and a future that we can completely entrust to Him.

The example of these three prophets remind me of our present day, for the harvest is ripe. Churches though seem to be on the decline and the sheep are being torn and scattered everywhere. People seem to be directionless and do not know what voice to follow. The church has much to learn about our Shepherd and how its leaders are to care for the sheep.

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RELEVANCE

We must understand that God has given us a True Shepherd (Jesus) and we must follow His word and leading. It is not us who lives but Christ that lives within us. We have been called by the Messiah Himself to work as shepherds for His sheep. We must answer the call and say like Isaiah, "Here am I send me." We are to be servants and minister to all who will receive.

REFLECTION

Who the Messiah to me? Do I worship Him for what He has done for me as a sacrificial lamb? Is he truly the one and only shepherd in my heart?

RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR THE LESSON

Isaiah 22:13 Instead, there is gaiety and gladness, killing of cattle and slaughtering of **sheep**, eating of meat and drinking of wine: Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.

Isaiah 53:6 All of us like **sheep** have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

Jeremiah 23:1-4 Woe to the **shepherds** who are destroying and scattering the **sheep** of My pasture! declares the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the **shepherds** who are tending My people: "You have scattered My **flock** and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds," declares the LORD. "Then I Myself will gather the remnant of

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*My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. I will also raise up **shepherds** over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the LORD."*

***Jeremiah 50:6** My people have become lost **sheep**; their **shepherds** have led them astray. They have made them turn aside on the mountains; they have gone along from mountain to hill and have forgotten their resting place.*

RELATED RESEARCH FOR THE LESSON

1. Shepherd or a Hireling.
2. Meaning of a Messiah.
3. List and study the prophecy of Christ in Isaiah.

IV JUDGEMENT (Ezekiel)

When God entrusts something to us we must realize that there will be a day coming that we must give an account to Him. There is a need to be responsible to each other but most of all we are accountable to God. The book of Revelation states that we will be judged not so much by what we have said, but in what we have done (Revelation 22:12). Therefore whatever He has given to us we need to use it for His Glory. We will look at two prophets who were going to proclaim a day of coming judgment on the shepherds of God's sheep.

DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Judgment: the ability to make considered decisions or come to sensible conclusions; assume the right to judge someone,

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especially in a critical manner. *Synonyms:* verdict, decision, adjudication, ruling, pronouncement, decree, finding, conclusion, determination, sentence.

Accountability: required or expected to justify actions or decisions; responsible. *Synonyms:* responsibility, liability, answerability, reporting, obedience.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

*Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the **shepherds** of Israel. Prophesy and say to those **shepherds**, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, **shepherds** of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the **shepherds** feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. They were scattered for lack of a **shepherd**, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them.'"*

*Therefore, you **shepherds**, hear the word of the LORD: "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a **shepherd**, and My **shepherds** did not search for My flock, but rather the **shepherds** fed themselves and did not feed My flock; therefore, you **shepherds**, hear the word of the LORD: 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against the*

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*shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the **shepherds** will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.””* **Ezekiel 34:1-10**

*Thus says the LORD my God, “Pasture the **flock** doomed to slaughter. Those who buy them slay them and go unpunished, and each of those who sell them says, ‘Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich!’ And their own **shepherds** have no pity on them. For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land,” declares the LORD; “but behold, I will cause the men to fall, each into another’s power and into the power of his king; and they will strike the land, and I will not deliver them from their power. So I pastured the **flock** doomed to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the **flock**. And I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Favour and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock. Then I annihilated the three **shepherds** in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me. Then I said, “I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another’s flesh.” I took my staff Favour and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the LORD. I said to them, “If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!” So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.” So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD. Then I cut in pieces my second staff Union, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. The LORD said to me, “Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish*

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shepherd. "For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hoofs. Woe to the worthless *shepherd* who leaves the flock! **Zechariah 11:4-17**

"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate," Declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; and I will turn My hand against the little ones. It will come about in all the land," Declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"
Zechariah 13:7-9

CONTEXT

Ezekiel 34:1-10

- Ezekiel was a watchman.
- God spoke through Ezekiel about the coming judgment on Israel.
- Prophecy about how the city of Jerusalem that it would fall because shepherds did not put God's Words into practice.

Zechariah 11:15-17

- Judgment on Israel's enemies.
- The coming of Zion's King.
- The LORD will appear.
- The armies of God will come and fight for the people.
- The LORD care for Judah.

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INSIGHTS

As we look at these two men's writings we will see what God was saying through them concerning judgment on shepherds. Because we as shepherds have been entrusted with much, there will be a greater accountability expected from us. We are to be clear teachers of God's Word, by the way we teach and live. This will shape the direction of people's lives for all eternity. As we hold people's lives in the palm of our hands, (entrusted to us by God) we need to be good stewards of these great treasures God has given us.

Ezekiel 34:1-10

Man's Way:

Care: They only look out for themselves.

Leadership methods: do what is right in their own heart.

Scatter the flock: bring division and death.

Plunder: take what they want and feed off the sheep.

Accountable: they are only accountable unto themselves.

They control everything.

God's Way:

His ways are different than the world's ways.

There will be judgement for all the shepherds of His Sheep.

He cares for all with love and compassion.

Zechariah:

- **The Good Shepherd (11:4-17)**
 - **Two staffs: (v7)**
 - One called "favour" Acts 20:2
 - One call "union"
- **Removed three shepherds (v8)**

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Sheep oppose shepherd and His work:

- Released covering over them.

Sheep devour each other:

Breaking of the two staffs:

- Favour –revoking his covenant and covering them
- Union – breaking up of the nation of Israel the twelve tribes
 - **Deuteronomy 28:64 & 29:24-25**

Thirty pieces of silver:

- Given back to the temple leadership
- Bought potter's field – they bought a field because it was blood money.

The Foolish Shepherd: **Zechariah 11:15-17**

WHAT THEY WILL NOT DO:

- will not care for the lost
- will not seek the lost
- will not care for the young
- will not care or heal the injured
- will not feed the healthy
- will not remain with the flock

WHAT GOD WILL DO:

- He will strike them
 - Their arms – power will be gone, they will be paralyzed
 - Their eye (mind or thinking) – intelligence nullified results - powerless to fight

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The True Messianic Shepherd: Zechariah 13:7-9

- **Striking of the Shepherd:**
 - scattering of the sheep
- **Refiners Fire:**
 - Holy Spirit
- **Remnant will be spared:**
- **Sheep will call and God will answer:**
- **The sheep will say, "The LORD is my God":**
 - Confession of their mouth and heart.

RELEVANCE

God has entrusted His sheep to us and one day we will be brought before Him to give account of how we handled them. Our ministry will undergo the refiner's fire and that which is of God will remain and that which is not will be burned. There are many things that shepherds waste their time and effort on, things that have no value to the kingdom of God. We also hold on to things that could be exchanged for something of greater value. The Lord taught the disciples a parable of three men who were given different amounts of money. In the end the master came back to check on His investment that he had entrusted to them. Two cause the money to grow or to double where the one he just hid it and made an excuse to the master which was true but was not acceptable. To the two He double there rewards but to the one, he took away even that which he had and then he was called a "worthless servant" (Matthew 25:14-30). As pastor we need to remember that each day is being record and we will be held responsible for what we say and do for God and with that He has entrusted to us.

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REFLECTION

Do I work though each day as though I will be accountable for my actions? Do I minister in a way that demonstrates Christ in me? Who's will am I carrying out – mine or God's?

RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR THE LESSON

Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

RELATED RESEARCH FOR THE LESSON

1. Judgment seat of God:

V **SERVANT / LEADERS (Ezra, Nehemiah)**

Shepherds need to work together as much as possible, so that when one is weak the other can be strong. Christ sent out His disciples two by two and the early church had people going in groups of two to five. Life was never intended to be done alone. God wants us as shepherds to have accountability with another and an effective way to achieve that is to work as a team. Nehemiah and Ezra arrived in Jerusalem at slightly different times and each had a different call for ministry, but they work together to accomplish what God asked them to do. All great moves of God happen through people sharing the vision with others and together they can accomplish it.

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DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Servant: a person who performs duties for others; a devoted and helpful follower or supporter. *Synonyms:* helper, supporter.

Leader: the person who leads or commands a group, organization, or country; a person followed by others. *Synonyms:* chief, head, principal, pioneer, front runner, innovator, trailblazer, pathfinder, ground-breaker, leading light, guiding light, torch-bearer, originator, initiator, developer, discoverer, founder, architect, influencer

Team: two or more people working together; come together as a team to achieve a common goal. *Synonyms:* harness, yoke, bridle, hitch up, couple, coordinate, complement, pair up, join forces, collaborate, get together, come together, band together, work together, unite, combine, cooperate, merge, link, ally, associate, amalgamate, integrate, pool resources.

Understanding: the ability to understand something; comprehension; an individual's perception or judgment of a situation; sympathetic awareness or tolerance. *Synonyms:* comprehension, grasp, grip, mastery, perception, discernment, appreciation, interpretation, insight, knowledge, awareness, consciousness, familiarity, acquaintance; skill, expertise, proficiency, belief, perception, view, idea, conclusion, conviction, feeling, opinion, intuition, impression, assumption, way of thinking, point of view, compassion, sympathy, pity, empathy, feeling, concern, consideration, tenderness, tenderheartedness, kindness, kind-heartedness, sensitivity, insight, brotherly love, neighbourliness, decency, charity, goodwill, mercy, mercifulness, gentleness, tolerance, warmth, warmheartedness, affection, love, compassionate, sympathetic,

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sensitive, considerate, tender, kind, thoughtful, tolerant, patient, forbearing, merciful, forgiving, humane, good-natured, approachable, supportive, reassuring; tactful, diplomatic, perceptive, subtle, prudent.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

*This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe **skilled** in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God was upon him. ... For Ezra had **set his heart to study** the law of the LORD and **to practice it**, and **to teach** His statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

Ezra 7:6 & 10

*Then **Nehemiah**, who was the governor, and **Ezra** the priest and scribe, and the Levites who **taught the people** said to all the people.*

Nehemiah 8:9

CONTEXT

- The people were coming back from exile, having been in captivity for about 50 years.
- They were being lead back from Babylon to Jerusalem with permission of the King.

We can learn a lot about team leadership from these two men.

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INSIGHTS ABOUT TEAM LEADERSHIP

1. Team Shepherds: carrying the load of ministry together.
2. Team Teaching: giving people a clear understanding.
3. Team Character: setting a good example corporately.
4. Team Message: speaking and living the Word in love.
5. Team Service: helping each other in serving.
6. Team Revival: seeing together fruit from the Labours.

INSIGHT ABOUT PEOPLE: Nehemiah 8:1-18

1. The people must come (v1).
2. The people must understand (v3).
3. The people must see and hear (v5).
4. The people must respond (v6).
5. The people must learn from others (v7).
6. The people were lead by the leader of their household (v13).
7. The people must carry out and do (v15).
8. The people must do things together (v17).

RELEVANCE

Ezra and Nehemiah were called to do two large jobs. One was spiritual, getting people to understand the Word of God and what it meant for their lives. The other was physical, to building the walls of Jerusalem. The key to being a team leader is to lead people with understanding. People are often very willing to get involved if we make things clear and properly instruct them in what we hope to see them do. The leader /shepherd must understand who he is in Christ and must try to learn all he can about God's people.

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REFLECTION

How have I got involved in team ministry? Am I a team player or not? How can ministering as a team be used for God's glory?

RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR THE LESSON

Nehemiah 8: 1-18

RELATED RESEARCH FOR THE LESSON

1. Look at different models of leadership.

VI MAKER, MENTOR AND MODEL (Jesus)

Jesus spoke a lot about shepherds and sheep. It was a wonderful metaphor of how He himself was a shepherd and would become the sacrificial lamb for all mankind. The religious people knew that a Messiah would come and His nature would be one of a shepherd. In the Old Testament the word king and shepherd could be interchangeable because the job of a king was to shepherd and care for his people. Jesus would proclaim to be God and that Shepherd/King which was prophesied and promised in the Hebrew Scriptures, had now come.

As a shepherd, Jesus taught the people that He was the way to an abundant life for all those who would believe. He was the shepherd that King David had in mind when he wrote Psalm 23.

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DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Maker: God; the Creator; a person or thing that makes or produces something. *Synonyms:* Creator, Prime Mover, master of the universe, manufacturer, builder, constructor, producer, author, architect, designer, framer, originator, inventor, founder, father.

Mentor: an experienced and trusted adviser; to advise or train. *Synonyms:* adviser, guide, confidant, counsellor, consultant, master, spiritual leader, trainer, teacher, tutor, coach, instructor.

Model: a system or thing used as an example to follow or imitate; a three-dimensional representation of a person or thing or of a proposed structure. *Synonyms:* copy, representation, imitation, double, duplicate, lookalike, reproduction, type, version, mould, template, framework, pattern, design, guide, blueprint, paradigm; sample, example.

KEY SCRIPTURE

*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a **shepherd** of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers. This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.*

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*So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **I am the door of the sheep**. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. "**I am the good shepherd**; the good **shepherd** lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a **shepherd**, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. **I am the good shepherd**, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one **shepherd**. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."*

John 10:1-18

CONTEXT

- In the last part of chapter 9 Jesus affirmed His deity. The blind man was interrogated by the religious leaders, and after He was let go, Jesus spoke to him about the importance of believing.
- Jesus wanted the Pharisees to know that it was them who were blind and unfit to be shepherds of the people.
- Jesus taught about people who tried to come through other

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means than the one door; these are thieves and robbers.

- Jesus is the door to the sheepfold.
- Jesus warned about those who came to steal and kill, whereas He protected and gave life.

INSIGHTS

The role of a shepherd is not easy, for it seems sheep are most vulnerable and helpless animals. They are skittish and fearful. They need a lot of attention. Scripture tells us that the people are like sheep without a shepherd, wandering aimlessly and open to all kinds challenges. We all are in need of a true shepherd.

There is a relationship that grows between the shepherd and the sheep. He gets to know them and they remember his voice. He calls them by name and they come. A true shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. We are warned that there are other kinds of shepherds (called hirelings) who work just for money. When trouble arises they are nowhere to be found. The true shepherd cares for the sheep in every detail. He watches over them, anoints them with oil, makes sure that they have proper food and water, keeps away the enemies and provides shelter for them to sleep. When one is missing he knows of it and goes out to look for that lost one because he has great love and concern for them.

A shepherd had three tools for his trade. A rod was like a club that was used to protect the sheep, a staff that he would use to guide and rescue the sheep and a sling to fight off enemies, as well as to herd and move the sheep.

The shepherd would lead his herd, going before them. He would choose the ground where they would graze and get the place ready where they would sleep at night. Jesus, as our shepherd,

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came to give us life and to protect us from our enemies. We to as shepherds must be wise and seek God in how we lead the people, so that they can have good food, a peaceful place to rest. Plus we should know where our sheep are and be ready at all times to protect them from the enemies and to help them to overcome the challenges that they may be facing. A true shepherds does not give up on his sheep when times are rough, he goes out and find them and if need be, lays down his life for them.

We would like to focus for a few moments on five different pictures that Jesus our great shepherd taught to His Disciple / Shepherds.

Picture 1: I am: John 10:1-30

The shepherds Heart:

- Care for the sheep.
- Will die for them (v11-15).
- Good shepherd.
- Difference between true shepherd and hireling.

The Shepherds voice: v.3

- Speaks of relationship.
- They know Him.
- Sheep will follow (v.4).
- He goes before them.
- They will not follow a stranger (v.5).
- They will listen to His voice (v.16).

The Shepherds Ministry: Psalm 23

- Food –grass and water
- Health care – anoint head with oil
- He walks with us

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The Shepherd as a Door: v.7-9

- Gate or the door.
- Protects.
- Watches over the sheep.
- Protects against thieves and robbers (v.1).
- All who enter through Christ will be saved (v.4).
- Thief comes to steal and destroy (v.10).

The Shepherds Tools: Psalm 23

- Rod or club (v.4).
- Staff (v.4).
- Sling and stones.
- Oil (v.5).
- Bag to carry things.

The Shepherd Purpose and Goal

- To produce more sheep.
- Christ comes to give life (v.10).
- Show goodness and love.
- Protect and keep the sheep safe.
- He comes to lead us so we can lead others.

Picture 2: Sheep without a Shepherd: Matthew 9:35-38

A shepherd is Going:

- He was going through the towns and villages.

A shepherd is Preaching:

- He was preaching the Good News of the kingdom.

A shepherd is Doing:

- He was healing and ministering to the diseased and sick.

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A shepherd is Seeing:

- He saw the crowds had compassion on them. They were being hassled and were helpless.
- He saw people who had no shepherd no true leader.

A shepherd is Teaching:

- He taught the harvest was plentiful but the labourers were few. He saw people as a harvest field.

A shepherd is Praying:

- He called them to pray and seek.

A shepherd is Sending:

- He will send if they will ask.

Jesus wanted the disciple to see what He saw and do what He did. The challenges are no different today. We must move forward and trust Christ to help us bring in the harvest of sheep.

Picture 3: Sheep and Goats: Matthew 25:31-46

He will come again

- To call and receive.

He will be on His throne

- All nations will be before Him.

He will separate Sheep from Goats

- Sheep on the right side were always where the right-hand of fellowship came from.
- Goats on the left.

He will speak to the sheep on His right

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- They "did" unto others (v40). (they served first and asked questions second)

He will speak to the goats on the left

- They did not do or see (v45).
- Depart from Me, into eternal fire.

Jesus wanted people to know that there will be two kinds of people when judgement comes; they will be separated by the shepherd. One group will have eternal punishment and the other will have eternal life. Shepherds must go and tell people about the Kingdom of God.

Picture 4: Hireling and Wolves:

*Matthew 7:15-16a Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in **sheep's clothing**, but inwardly are **ravenous wolves**. You will know them by their fruits.*

Matthew 10:16 Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

*John 10:12-13 He who is a hired hand, and **not a shepherd**, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the **wolf** coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the **wolf** snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.*

*Acts 20:29-31 I know that after my departure **savage wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert,*

...

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The Hireling:

- There will be attacks on the sheep.
- Hireling will not fight the attackers.
- Hirelings will run away because they only work for money.
- They were often religious people who spoke much but have little action or commitment.

The Wolves:

- They are the enemy.
- They will show no mercy.
- They will hide their true identity by wearing sheep's clothing.
- They will try to separate the sheep.
- They are there to destroy and kill.

The wolf does not care for others and has made up its mind what it wants – to cause the hireling to run and therefore he will devour the sheep. Wolves are very crafty. If we are to overcome we will have to put on and use the full armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). We must always be in prayer, seeking God's wisdom on how to fight the enemy. We need spiritual eyes to see, ears to hear and faith to stand firm in.

Picture 5: Jesus and Peter: John 21:15-19

Peter had lost his focus.

Peter's love was not steadfast yet.

Peter was challenged by Jesus about his love and commitment.

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Peter was told by Christ to:

1. Feed my lambs (v.15).
 - Look after the little new born babies.
2. Take care of my sheep (v.16).
 - Minister and care for the sheep.
3. Feed my sheep v17
 - Healthy sheep need to be fed so they can reproduce.

Peter was told of the challenges that laid ahead for him.

Peter is called again to come and “FOLLOW ME” (v.19).

Take the above passage and replace it with your name. A challenge we face in all relationships is to keep love strong and firm. Often the Scripture tell us that we become lukewarm or cold in our faith. A shepherd must keep his heart full with Christ love if he is to keep firm and strong in the ministry.

RELEVANCE

Some of us are called to be leaders, whether in our own family or a small house group. We all have a responsibility to help the sheep that are around us. We need to be hearing their cries so that we can help and lead in such a way so others will follow. Paul told the church, “follow me as I follow Christ.” As disciples we need to come to the place of willingness to laying down our lives for others.

Christ brought forth a new covenant through His blood that would change the way shepherds minister to their sheep. The walls of division would be torn down. He would move from being a

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shepherd in the fields to a shepherd who would guide us from within our hearts. He would empower us to go and set the captives free. Matthew 10 tells us that He gives us authority to call people to Himself and in Matthew 28:19-20 we are commissioned to go and make disciples for Christ.

REFLECTION

Do I know my Shepherd's voice? Am I able to hear Him over the noise of my surroundings? How am I influencing other people that I am in contact with each day?

RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR THE LESSON

Psalm 23:1-6 the Lord is my shepherd...

Isaiah 40:11 ... like a shepherd He will tend His flock; ...

Hebrews 13:20-21 ... the good shepherd.

1 Peter 5:4 ... the chief shepherd.

RELATED RESEARCH FOR THE LESSON

1. **Shepherd Job Description:** Psalm 23:1-6
2. **Shepherd & Hireling:** John 10:12-13
3. **God the Shepherd of Israel:** Isaiah 40:11

VII EQUIPPERS (Peter, Paul, James, John)

Being a shepherd carries with it great responsibility; God entrusts us with people's lives. It is our responsibility to equip them (give them tools) train them (how to use the tools) and nurture them (guide, establish them while using the tools) while they go forward and serve others. It is strongly noted that shepherding

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God's people is a lot of work and very stressful. People by nature resist change. Let us look at our New Testament fathers to see what we can glean from their writings on how we should be shepherding God's people.

DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Equip: supply with the necessary items for a particular purpose. *Synonyms:* provide, furnish, supply, issue, fit out, stock, provision; array, attire, dress, arm, prepare.

Train: teach (a person or animal) a particular skill or type of behaviour through practice and instruction over a period of time; point or aim something. *Synonyms:* instruct, teach, coach, tutor, give lessons to, school, educate, edify, prime, drill, demonstrate something to, make something clear to, put someone through their paces, guide, mould, indoctrinate, condition.

Nurture: care for and encourage the growth or development of; the process of caring for and encouraging the growth or development of someone or something *Synonyms:* bring up, care for, provide for, take care of, attend to, look after, rear, support, raise, foster, parent, mother, tend; feed, nourish; keep, grow, cultivate, encourage, promote, stimulate, develop, foster, cultivate, advance, boost, forward, contribute to, assist, help, aid, strengthen, fuel, bringing up, care, upkeep, cultivation, fostering, tending, rearing, raising, training, education.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal

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*covenant, even Jesus our Lord, **equip** you in every good thing to do **His will**, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.*

Hebrews 13:20-21

CONTEXT

- Paul is giving a concluding exhortation to the Hebrew church.
- He tells them that God will never leave nor forsake them.
- Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.
- We are to look forward to the city that is to come.
- We need to praise and continue to confess His name.
- A reminder to be obedient to our leaders.
- The importance of praying for our leaders.

INSIGHTS

When we read in the Scriptures we often think that there are two levels of people that God speaks to but this is not true. We are all called to strive to the best of our ability. For all disciples of Christ, things that are written to the disciples or to the church are also written to us as shepherds. All Scripture is used by God for the **equipping** of believers. All Scripture is key to the work and ministry of the shepherd, whether the Scripture uses the word shepherd or leader or elder or deacon or the church. We are commanded to walk the walk that Scripture has laid out for us. That is why Paul tells Timothy that, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, **equipped** for every good work.”* II Timothy 3:16-17

These four men give us insights to shepherding the flock of

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Christ. They are church planters and **equippers** whose writings were given to help nurture the church. As shepherds we need to study and learn from them.

Peter: Faith & Hope

- Challenge us to be living stones for Christ (1 Peter 2).
- We are to expose darkness with light (1 Peter 2:11).
- We are called to be fruit producers.
- Christ calling on our lives must remain firm and sure.
- We are to praise God for the living hope that we have in Christ.
- We are to live a holy life so others may see Christ shining through us.
- We are to be good examples of what a marriage is to others.
- There will be suffering and challenges to our faith.
- We are to watch for false teachers.
- The day of the Lord is coming and we need to be ready.

*Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd the flock** of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the **flock**. And when the **Chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

1 Peter 5:24

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Paul: Grace & Mercy

- We are to train and equip people.
- We need to tell others about grace / righteousness.
- We are to walk in discipline and maturity.
- We need to appoint leadership (deacons and elders).
- The church is under the headship of Christ.
- We are to minister and use our gifts to build up one another.
- We are stand firm on the foundation of Christ.
- We are to be clothed with the full armour of God.
- We do not live under law but grace.
- We live under the new covenant of Christ, which is to love God and love your neighbour.

James: Perseverance & Humility

- We will face many trials and tests as we walk with Christ on the earth.
- We are the first fruits of Christ.
- We are not just to be hearers but doers of the Word.
- We will wear the crown of life if we remain faithful (James 1:12).
- We need to humble ourselves and Christ will lift us up.
- We need to be very careful how we speak with our tongues.
- There are also two kinds of wisdom, the world's and God's.
- We are to be careful that we do not show favouritism amongst people.

John: Love & Fellowship

- We need to manifest Christ's great love one to another.
- We serve Christ out of a heart of love.
- We need to remember that we are children of God (1 John 3:1).
- We are to take the Word of life to others.

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- We are to walk in the light so as to not stumble.
- We are to keep our eyes open for the antichrist.
- We are not to love the things of this world.
- We should be testing the spirits to see who they are from.

These are small excerpts of teachings that will help us **equip**, train and nurture those that God has entrusted us with. As the opening Scripture teaches, we are to **equip** people according to God's will. We do this on the basis of God's covenants and promises that He has made to us through the shedding of His blood. We have a great calling from God and we are entrusted with many earthly treasures.

RELEVANCE

The moment I start to lead a group is the moment that I have taken on the responsibility to shepherd them. Size does not matter when it comes to leading and influencing others. As shepherds we need to know the principles of God's Word, taking on the character of Christ which comes through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We must prepare ourselves for the ministry that lays ahead of us. We should rise up, study God's Word and pray so our heart will be ready to serve according to God's will. Paul Tells Timothy, **2 Timothy 3:16-17** *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

REFLECTION

Do I realize the responsibility of a shepherd? Do I have a God given plan that I can use to help me train, equip and disciple others for Christ Jesus?

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RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR THE LESSON

1 Peter 2:21-25 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like **sheep**, but now you have returned to the **Shepherd** and Guardian of your souls.

RELATED RESEARCH FOR THE LESSON

1. The shepherd and the great commission.
2. Shepherds and the Word.
3. Shepherds and Prayer.
4. Shepherd to Shepherd relationship and fellowship.

VIII EXHORTATION (Jude)

Jude is one of the smallest books in the Bible. We are exhorted by Jude on how to be a shepherd. He shows through graphic metaphors what some of the shepherds are doing. We are warned to watch for these kinds of shepherds, as well as guard our hearts from becoming one.

DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Exhortation: an address or communication emphatically urging someone to do something. **Synonyms:** urging, encouragement,

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persuasion, pressure, insistence, goading, beseeching, call, charge, injunction, appeal, admonition, warning, sermon, lecture.

Warning: a statement or event that indicates a possible or impending danger, problem, or other unpleasant situation. *Synonyms:* notice, advance notice, a word of warning, forewarning, alert, hint, signal, sign, alarm bells, caution, piece of advice, notification, information, exhortation, injunction, advice, counselling.

Remember: have in or be able to bring to one's mind an awareness of (someone or something that one has seen, known, or experienced in the past). *Synonyms:* bear in mind, keep in mind, not lose sight of the fact that, not forget, be mindful of the fact that, take into account, take into consideration, don't forget, be sure to, be certain to, mind that you, make sure that you.

KEY SCRIPTURE

*These men are blemishes at your love feast, eating with you without the slightest qualm- **shepherds** who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.*

Jude v.12-13 (NIV)

CONTEXT

- What will happen to Godless people.
- Sin was not only in the world but was gaining a strong

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foothold in believers.

- Reminder of what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Warning to those who follow the ways of Cain.

INSIGHTS

The key to these verses in regards to shepherds is that they were fruitless. They were not producing anything for God's kingdom or for His glory. We are entrusted with sheep so that through our shepherding they will produce more sheep. God's desire is to see fruit from us as shepherds that will last and grow into more fruit for others to enjoy.

These verses are directly addressed to us – those called, kept and loved by God. We as shepherds need to be reminded daily about our walk with God. This is why the Holy Spirit was sent to us – to teach, warn, exhort and bring back to memory those things that we have made in covenant with God.

These few verses picture for us some very challenging truths concerning what many shepherds will be in the last days. These will be leaders that have no concern for others and especially not for Christ.

Fruitless: v. 12-13

Graphic Metaphors:

1. Blemishes at your love feast

- They are poor examples at the communion service. The focus is to be on Christ not them.

2. Feed only themselves

- They feed themselves first and most likely eat

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the choicest food.

- They have lost their servant heart for others.

3. Clouds without rain

- Their words and actions are all noise but have no substance to them.
- They show up but produce nothing.

4. Autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted – twice dead

- At the end of the season their leaves fall off and all will see there is no fruit.
- They show that they are a dead trees as well as seeing no fruit which makes them twice dead.
- Because of producing no fruit they will be uprooted and will be burned.

5. Wild waves of the sea

- They are wild and are going their own way.
- They will sweep others off to their destruction.
- They are water but produce nothing other than destruction and harm to those who sail on them.

6. Wandering stars

- They do not stay firm but go their own way.
- Their beauty is lost in their disobedience.
- They will be like a black hole that nothing will be seen from.

These are the pictures that Jude paints of many people who call themselves God's shepherd. Their foundation is in themselves and they do what pleases their own desires. They do not work within the body of Christ but outside of Christ's teaching and leadership. Jude gives warning, for they think they are Christ's

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sheep but in reality they are goats and will be cast away.

RELEVANCE

We must remember that by our fruit we are known and by our fruit we will be judged. It is never too late to get back on track. We can always come to the Lord and confess our wrong doings. This means humbling ourselves before Him and asking Him to cleanse and forgive us for where we have walked astray. God's heart is always open to hear from us and restore us back on the path of righteousness if we will call upon His name. We need to stop working as individual and start walking and working with other shepherds as a team. We need to pray for each other, encouraging one another. We need to see that other shepherds are members of the body with unique gifts and God can use them to teach, encourage and strengthen us in our walk with Christ.

REFLECTION

As a shepherd, when I look in the mirror what do I really see reflecting back to me? Who does God say the real me looks like? How do my sheep see me and talk about me to others?

RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR THE LESSON

Isaiah 57:20-21 But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

Acts 20:8 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

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1 Corinthians 11:20-22 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

Philippians 3:17-21 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself

2 Peter 2:1-22 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and if He

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condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.

Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, revelling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is

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overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

RELATED RESEARCH FOR THE LESSON

1. **Research other Biblical warnings to shepherds:**

CONCLUSION

Isaiah focuses on the servant/shepherd and the book of Revelation focuses on the servant/lamb. We need to see that Jesus Christ has a big heart both for the sheep and for His shepherds. He wants to flow through us with the power of the Holy Spirit to produce fruit that will last. Christ the Great Shepherd became the sacrificial Lamb for us, modeling how we need to lay down our life for the sheep. It is not I that live but it is Christ who lives in me. I am His temple and what dwells within is a great treasure that He died for. Every lamb is a gift from God and we must treat them as a treasure of great value.

Let us give the last word on this teaching to Christ Jesus, the one who is our Shepherd and Lamb:

*Revelation 7:14-17 These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the **Lamb**. For this reason, they are*

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*before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the **Lamb** in the center of the throne will be their **shepherd**, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.*

APPLICATION

The time has come to have a good look at who we are and check our foundation. Then, we must ask God to show us what kind of structure and what kind of a foundation, have we been building on and does it bring honour and glory to the Lord. We must daily check to see what kind of fruit that we are producing. All eternity is hanging in the balance for us and for other when it comes to the way we shepherd God's sheep.

MEDITATION

A. For further insight and understanding, please study these other supporting Scriptures:

Isaiah 63:11

Jeremiah 3:15-16

Jeremiah 12:10

Jeremiah 25:34

Jeremiah 50:6

Nahum 3:18

Zechariah 10:13

Luke 2:8-20

B. Study Questions:

- 1) List some key truths that you have learned from this discipleship step?
- 2) What are some actions that you sense the Holy

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Spirit is challenging you to change in your life?

- 3) What word in the definitions have you seen in a new and fresh way?
- 4) What is the key truth that you would like to share with someone else?

MEMORIZATION

Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus,

Help me to be the shepherd that you have called me to be. I desire to have a servant heart that would be willing to lay down his life for the sheep. Lord, I desire to know the sheep you have given to me. I want to know the challenges that they face. I pray that I will do it out of pure love. Give to me a fresh and new burden for people. Help me to see them as treasured gifts that you have entrusted to me. I pray that I may be able to teach and minister Your Word faithfully to your sheep. I love you Jesus, but I feel weak. Help me to move each day in your strength and righteousness. I desire to see fruit in my life from the things that I do and pray that you will use me to lead other's to serve as shepherds also. Let my life be an instrument in Your hands that will help teach and instruct others about You.

Sincerely your servant,

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Appendix

A: Commitment Prayer for Shepherds

Dear Lord Jesus,

I come to You now and ask that You show me those areas where my heart has become calloused and hard. Restore unto me the joy of my salvation and my call to You as Your shepherd. Where I have fallen short, I ask for your forgiveness. I come to you today to confess the sins that your Word has shown me I have committed. Lord, I need to have a fresh vision for my life.

I pray also that You will bind me close to Your heart and to Your church. Let me shepherd the people You have entrusted to me in a way that will cause them to grow and mature and prepare them for your Second Coming.

I pray for a caring heart for your sheep, that I will be willing to give and lay down my life for them. Let me be a true gate of the sheepfold, a shepherd that will protect the sheep with his very life. Help me to see and hear their needs and do my best through Your strength and power to minister to them.

I pray that You will also bring other shepherds, elders, deacons and friends who will help me to grow and mature. Help us to come together as a three cord rope – where we can work as a team to grow and nurture your church. I realize that I do not have all the gifts to do everything. Bring people into my life who will help me in my weakness so that together we can shepherd Your people.

I also pray for a deep personal relationship with You, Jesus. Wherever you lead I will follow. I desire that people will see You

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in my life. I desire that they will see a true shepherd – not doing things because of money or prestige but for the joy of just serving You.

I pray that You will also help me to be a good shepherd to my family first and then to my church and community.

Your servant in Christ,

B: Commitment Sheet

Today I commit myself afresh to Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. I commit to go out according to His will to be a blessing and encouragement to others. I want to be a lighthouse so others can see, to be an ambassador of reconciliation.

Today, I commit to studying, praying and seeking God's will for my life and for the sheep He has entrusted me with.

Today, I commit to being a team shepherd, working with other pastors to help the sheep, to grow and use my giftings to be a blessing and encouragement to others.

Today, I commit to being a leader who will proclaim the Gospel of Christ, no matter what the cost may be and go wherever Christ may lead me.

Today, I commit to be a channel of your Holy Spirit, letting Him flow through me as a vessel of His. I desire to be a vine that people can pick from if needed.

Today, I commit to clearly teaching and preaching the

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Word of God in such a way that they will understand. I want sheep who will not be just hearers, but doers, of God's Word and Will.

Today, I commit to fulfilling the great commission – to go and make disciples – teaching them to produce fruit for Your Kingdom and for Your Glory.

Signed by:

Witnessed by:

Dated:

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Project L.A.M.B.S. International

Making disciples is the call and mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus urged the disciples to follow Him. He laid down before us the teaching and the walk that we need to follow with Jesus as our supreme example. It is imperative for every believer and the church to know that disciples are not born but they are made. For the church to be strong in the last days, we must be about the business of equipping the saints (disciples) for the work of service.

Dr. James Humphries has been ministering for over 40 years, and has experience in a variety of ministries including church planting, children's ministry, street ministry, youth ministry, camp ministry, pastoral work and directing and teaching in schools all over the world. In addition, he has taken part in traveling and ministering in the USA, Mexico, Ukraine, Myanmar, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Thailand and across most of Canada. He completed his B.R.E. and his M.A. from Briercrest, and his Doctorate of Ministry from Providence Theological Seminary in the spring of 1999.

In January 1996, Dr. James Humphries resigned as pastor of a local church with a vision to reach further abroad with the Word of God and to use it to train labourers for Christ (Matthew 9:36-38). He shared this with Dr. David Smith and Dr. Chuck Nichols of Providence Theological Seminary and they greatly encouraged Dr. James Humphries and his wife Irene to develop what God was laying on their hearts.

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In March 1997, they traveled to Jamaica where they met several pastors who were very concerned about the need for training and disciplining their young people as leaders in their churches. Dr. James Humphries and Irene did not know this would be the starting point to an international ministry of discipleship training around the world known as Project L.A.M.B.S. International.

To date, Project L.A.M.B.S. has ministered in Canada, Myanmar, Ukraine, Africa, Jamaica, Mexico, Israel, Thailand, Japan, Dominican Republic, Naga Land and China. We offer over 30 different courses. Our graduates number over 1000, and are serving worldwide. Out of this group of graduates, we have equipped and trained directors, teachers and pastors who in turn are carrying out II Timothy 2:1-2 to an even larger group of people.

In 2002 it was discovered that Irene had cancer again. God gave Irene another three years and because of that she was still able to travel and teach in many different countries. Shortly after what was to be her last trip, Irene was hospitalized in February, 2005. A few weeks later she went home to be with her Lord and Saviour on March 9.

My second wife Hkaw Win was raised and trained mostly in the land of Myanmar. She has earned B.th, University Degree and a master of Divinity Degree in Myanmar. In April 2007 she finished a second Master's Degree at Providence Theological

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Seminary in Christian Education. After July 1st, 2007 she headed back to Myanmar to head up the Christian Education Department for the Myitkyina Kachin Baptist Association and oversaw various ministries to 62 churches. After her four-year term was completed, she has been traveling and working as an interpreter and doing translations concerning various kinds of discipleship books and materials.

Over the last ten years we have lived in the countries of Myanmar and Thailand preparing a variety of resources in the Burmese (Myanmar) and Kachin Languages. To date we have published over 20 different kinds of books. Our goal is to equip and establish people as Disciples of Christ. Please pray for God's leading and wisdom. Our walk with Christ has taken us down many challenging pathways but we have seen the faithfulness of our Lord and Savior in every area. His grace has been sufficient.

Founder and Director,

Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

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Discipleship / Leadership Booklets

1. My Call with Christ
2. Called to His Purpose
3. Abiding in the Vine
4. Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding
5. Scripture: The Disciples' Anchor
6. Baptism: The Disciples' Testimony
7. The Disciples' Church
8. Servant Leadership
9. Teacher / Learner, Learner / Teacher
10. Being Wise Builders
11. Shepherds of God's Sheep
12. End Times
13. Relationship Pilgrimage
14. Christ's Disciple
15. Disciple's Prayer Life
16. Communion
17. Ambassadors for Christ
18. Full Armour of God
19. Good News for Challenging and Changing Times
20. Christ our Mediator
21. Jesus our Deliverer
22. Mission and Missionaries
23. Passing the Torch
24. Full Gospel Discipleship
25. Five Fold Ministry
26. Envisioning Change
27. Individualism VS Community
28. Igniting a Mission Fire
29. Igniting Discipleship Equipping
30. Igniting the Gospel
31. Psalm 23
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