

They Smell Like Sheep

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Introduction:

- A. When God created the local congregation he created a body in which we could grow more mature spiritually and maintain a holy life for the Lord!**
1. Each of us have vital roles and abilities that pooled together make helps us to grow and become spiritually what we ought to be! (**Eph. 4:11-16**)
 2. One role we see here is the role of pastors:
 - a. Although a preacher could do the work of a pastor, a pastor is not a term that describes a preacher (like many in the religious world uses the term)
 - b. This word “pastor” is used interchangeably with the terms elders and bishops
- B. Having qualified men serving as elders (or pastors) in this congregation is a goal we are working toward and something we must not become satisfied without!**
1. It's God's plan for the growth and development of the church – We cannot see ourselves as being what we ought to be until we develop elders to lead the church
 2. In order for us to develop elders we must have men who desire the work! There's a difference between desiring some position & having a heart for the work! (**I Tim. 3:1**)
 3. What is this work we should desire? What work should we prepare ourselves for? You can't be preparing yourself for a work you don't understand!

I. The Elder's Work: The Work Of A Shepherd:

- A. Since none of us are shepherds, let's notice what a shepherd's work was like:**
1. Crucial to a shepherd's success is the relationship he has with his sheep:
 - a. He's as much a part of the land as the sheep were – He'd even sleep among them!
 - b. Via a life of shared experience he nurtures an enduring relationship of trust
 - c. The sheep grew up around the shepherd – It'd associate the shepherd's touch and voice with “green pastures” & “still waters” → Safety, security, love, & trust!
 2. Sometimes he'd have to tap the sheep to correct it! This was a love tap that was linked to their relationship! This was effective because the shepherd smelled like sheep!
 3. At night he'd bring the sheep into a circle enclosure to sleep:
 - a. As the sheep entered he'd inspect each one. He would check them for insects and for injuries gently comforting them by calling them by name
 - b. This enclosure had a “doorway” – At night he'd sleep lying across this entrance way – Wolves and robbers could only get to the sheep over his dead body!
 4. The shepherd so cared for his sheep that he would even lay down his life for them!
- B. When God has chosen leaders among His people, He has always looked for a person with a “shepherd's heart” and a “shepherd's mentality”**
1. When God chose David to lead His people, God looked among sheep! (**Ps. 78:70-72**)
 - a. God's sheep needed the same kind of care, protection, and guidance
 - b. God knew that along with a heart of integrity, David would carry over the same leadership principles that he learned and cultivated among his sheep!
 2. When the prophets and priests of Israel lost focus of how to rule the people, it was the shepherd's heart that God called them back to! (**Ezekiel 34:2, 4-5**)
 - a. They had ruled the people selfishly which led to the neglect of the sheep
 - b. As a result God's people were wandering around without direction as a sheep without a shepherd! This is the condition Jesus came and found them in!
- C. The Lord stands as the greatest example of what it means to be a shepherd:**
1. Throughout the O.T. the care of God Himself is described as shepherding: (**Is. 40:11**)
 - a. Can't you just see the awkward and delicate lamb, ears askew, one gangly leg dangling near the shepherd's elbow? The shepherd tilts his head so that his beard nuzzles the lambs cheek and his resonant voice murmurs gently to the lamb as they move toward the safety of the sheepfold.

- b. From a young age children are taught & can quote Psalms 23
- 2. As we turn to the N.T. we have the picture of Jesus as our Shepherd (**John 10:3-5**)
 - a. He left the comforts of Heaven & came to our pasture, to smell like sheep!
 - b. He sweated like we do, walked our pathways, braved our wolves, faced our temptations, and shared our struggles! He is our Good Shepherd!
 - c. He knows us personally – He calls us by NAME! He leads by relationship!
 - d. Jesus, as a good shepherd would, ultimately gave His life for His sheep! (**vs. 11**)

D. Considering these things, it should be of no surprise that when God looked for a type of person to lead His people in the Christian age, He looked again to shepherds!

- 1. Earlier we noted that one of the terms used to refer to elders is the term “Pastor” – This word literally means “Shepherd”
 - a. The shepherd metaphor was not passed down to us accidentally!
 - b. It’s not just a figure of speech but is descriptive of type of heart in leadership!
- 2. Paul, writing to the Ephesian elders, describes their work as shepherding (**Acts 20:28-29**)
 - a. The different aspects are given: Leading, Feeding, and Protecting the sheep
 - b. They’d battle spiritual wolves that would seek to destroy the sheep spiritually!
- 3. Peter continues this metaphor: (**I Peter 5:1-4**)
 - a. If you want to know what it means to be a shepherd – Look at how Jesus dealt with people and led them → Jesus is the “Chief Shepherd!”
 - b. Again, they’re seen feeding and leading sheep! They cut a path through this world and in serving the Lord that the sheep can easily see and follow!
- 4. The elders work is that of a shepherd! In being a shepherd, he’s got to smell like sheep!
 - a. The point is that he has to develop a relationship with the sheep by being actively involved in their lives! He has to know them in order to lead them!
 - b. The sheep will see him and his care and concern for their souls – They will grow to trust him with spiritual matters and willingly follow him!

III. Having The Wrong Conception Of The Work Can Cause Great Destruction!

A. There is the “HIRED-HAND” conception of the work: (John 10:11-13**)**

- 1. In ancient times a “hireling” shepherd was in it only for the paycheck and had no deep feelings of love and devotion for the sheep!
 - a. Some “hireling” elders may desire the position only to gain power of visibility
 - b. Some hireling elders may desire the position due to the status that comes with it
 - c. Being an elder is not just a job or a position attained – you must care!
- 2. Think about Jesus’ example as “the Chief Shepherd”
 - a. We were lost and He came to find us! He bought us with a ransom so He has something invested in us → His own life!
 - b. He cares for us every day! He looks out for us, feeds us, & keeps us from danger
 - c. It pains Him to see us wander from Him... why? Because we’re HIS sheep!
- 3. One with the heart of the hired-hand runs away when pressures rise!
 - a. When great amounts of time is need or unwanted criticism comes – they run
 - b. When wolves creep in, gain acceptance, and push false doctrines – they run
 - c. When problems arise where a difficult decision has to be made (especially one that is unpopular) – they take the easy way out! (i.e. – divorce & remarriage)
- 4. He is in because of what he can get out of it – he doesn’t care for the sheep!

B. There is the “COWBOY” conception of the work:

- 1. **Illustration:** Picture the cowboys of western movies on a horse driving their herds along
 - a. They shout, crack the whips, and sting the stubborn cattle with sticks and prods
 - b. Cowboys FORCE the herd to go the direction they want to go!
 - c. Some want to confuse the work of an elder with the work of a cowboy; however one with a shepherd’s heart doesn’t drive... he leads!
- 2. Consider the example of Jesus as “The Chief Shepherd!” (**Matthew 4:18-22**)
 - a. Notice the phrase: “Follow Me” → Jesus never stopped using this phrase!

- b. Do you serve Jesus because He's behind you with glaring eyes, cracking a whip, and shouting orders? Of course we don't!
 - c. Wherever He asks me to go, He goes there first paving the way! All Jesus needs to say to us is the simple words "Follow Me" and we follow!
3. If you lead like a cowboy, no one will follow you! You'll turn around & have no sheep!

C. There is the "SHERIFF" conception of the work:

- 1. Again, recall the cowboy – In the same setting picture the town sheriff (not Andy Griffith!)
 - a. He flashes a badge and gun and demands respect and obedience!
 - b. He doesn't seek input or cares what you think – He demands that you do as he says! Why? "Because I'm the sheriff!" → He's the law & what he says goes!
- 2. Elders are admonished to not LORD their rule over their sheep (**I Peter 5:1-4**)
 - a. One who does this is likely arrogant, domineering, forceful, and coercive
 - b. One who "lords" would likely have the "It's my way or the highway" mentality
 - c. **Ezekiel 34:1-4** → With force and cruelty... that's the sheriff mentality!
- 3. The use of coercion to gain cooperation at best gets compliance; however, often all that results from this type of leadership is rebellion!
- 4. As Peter said, elder's with a shepherd's heart doesn't lead by lording but by example:
 - a. An example like here is a pattern that's left behind – an imprint made
 - b. He makes an impression on our hearts and our lives that we'll never forget!
 - c. Long after his death, he's still ruling in the lives of those he touched! (**Heb 13:7, 17**)

D. There is the "Chief Executive Officer" conception of the work:

- 1. **Illustration:** A group of CEO's ruling around a fancy table & behind closed doors
 - a. The typical CEO seems cold, distant, and hard to work for
 - b. You'd be surprised to find him spending time with the "lower ladder" workers informally and carrying on personal conversations
 - c. They may accept input from those lower than them but in the long run it matters very little what others think because they're the CEO's!
- 2. Sadly, it's too common to find elders with the CEO mentality:
 - a. They meet together to make decisions without seeking input from the congregation
 - b. They stay aloof from the congregation: When there's social gatherings or even spiritual gatherings only one or even none may show!
 - c. They don't get involved in people's lives because they're the CEO's!
- 3. Jesus as "The Chief Shepherd" got involved in people's lives, spent time formally and informally with His sheep, and developed relationships with them!
- 4. The CEO model will not for one serving as a shepherd because his voice becomes one of a stranger! (**John 10:5**)

Conclusion: What work should a man be desiring when he looks to become an elder? It's the work of a shepherd! Shepherd's smell like sheep because they have a relationship with them! He's involved in their lives, their struggles, and gently leads them toward the Lord!