

Intro:

We have been looking at the metaphors used of the church in our series this month.

We started with *It's Not Your Church* – it's the Lord's church and we must remember that we are his servants in it.

Then we had *It's a Building: it needs organization*, a message I think I want to redo in two weeks. But the point is this, the church needs structure for proper function. More later.

Next was: *It's a Body: it functions by interdependence [servant-fellowship]*. Here we emphasized the body as a whole and what it is supposed to look like.

Last week: *It's a Growing Body: it grows into the head by the ministry of the parts*. Here we were thinking about *process*, how the church grows and the direction in which it grows.

This week: *It's a Flock: it needs shepherding (not merely leadership)*.

Jesus taught us this metaphor concerning his people. One of the most loved passages of John's Gospel is John 10, where Jesus describes himself as both the door of the sheep, the way in and out and as the Good Shepherd, the one who lays down his life for the sheep.

The metaphor is used again by the Lord in Luke 12, a few weeks after John 10 was preached in Jerusalem. Jesus is in the Judean wilderness, or else across the Jordan in Perea, preparing for the triumphal entry and the passion to come.

I am going to take a section of Luke 12 as a text, I want you to hear the tenderness of the metaphor, then consider the instructions the Lord gives you following it:

Read Lk 12.32-40

Jesus was preparing for the cross; he is urging you to prepare for the Rapture.

So as a flock, what do you need from the Lord?

It is interesting that the word 'flock' is only used 5 times in the New Testament, in three passages. Let's look at the other two:

Read Ac 20.28-31

Read 1 Pt 5.1-4

What do you need as a flock?

Proposition: The flock of God needs shepherding (not merely leadership).

I. The ministry to the sheep

A. Feeding

1. The compassion of Christ for shepherdless sheep (Mt 9.36)
2. The commission of Christ for shepherds to feed the sheep (Jn 21)
 - a. A rebuke of a self-oriented shepherd (Jn 21.15)
 - 1) Peter had jumped into the sea to see Jesus first, leaving the others to drag in the nets
 - 2) Peter may have fancied himself as the 'greatest' lover of Christ among the disciples — remember their arguments?
 - b. A repeated mission: feed my sheep
 - 1) Lambs (Jn 21.15)
 - 2) Sheep (Jn 21.16)
 - 3) Sheep (Jn 21.17)
 - c. The lesson well learned (1 Pt 5.2)

B. Leading (Ps 23.2-3)

Psalm 23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. ³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

1. Requires understanding the sheep
2. Requires patient leadership

Some important aspects of sheep behaviour as it relates to handling and movement include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheep do not like to be enclosed in a tight environment, and will move on their own accord into larger areas • Sheep move toward other sheep willingly • Sheep move away from workers and dogs • Sheep have good long-term memory (relative) especially with respect to unpleasant experiences |
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- If given a choice, sheep prefer to move over flat areas rather than up an incline, and up an incline rather than moving down it
- Sheep prefer to move from a darkened area towards a lighter area, but avoid contrasts in light
- Sheep flow better through facilities if the same paths and flow directions are maintained
- Stationary sheep are motivated to move by the sight of sheep running (away)
- Sheep will balk or stop forward movement when they see sheep moving in the opposite direction
- Sheep will move faster through a long, narrow pen or area than through a square pen
- Sheep move better through the race if they cannot see the operator
- Sheep will more willingly move toward an open area than toward what they perceive as a dead end
- Very young lambs that become separated from their dams will want to return to the area where they first became separated
- Sheep react negatively (as do all livestock) to loud noises, yelling and barking
- Young sheep move through facilities easier when their first move through is with well trained older sheep¹

A couple of other tips from a New Zealand site:

- If you have badly designed handling facilities that cannot be fixed – keep a “Judas” sheep to lead the doubters through.

¹ Anita O’Bryan, “Use Sheep Behaviour to Your Advantage”, Factsheet published by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/sheep/facts/02-059.htm> (Accessed 9/29/07).

- To lead other sheep into the truck, you can train a Judas sheep with some pellets, and pet lambs are useful for this job. Make sure the Judas sheep isn't accidentally loaded into the truck though!²

I am not sure if those last two aren't for false shepherds though!

II. The ministry for the sheep

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.²⁹ For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.³⁰ Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.³¹ Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

1 Samuel 17:34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:³⁵ And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered *it* out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught *him* by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.³⁶ Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.³⁷ David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

A. The ministry of vigilant guardianship

1. False teachers abound
2. Training, diligence, and courage necessary

B. The ministry of preventative discipline

1. To protect against disease

² http://www.lifestyleblock.co.nz/articles/sheep_behaviour/08_sheep_handling.htm (Accessed 9/29/07).

Mulesing – cutting loose skin around the tail to prevent infestation by flies

Crutching – shearing wool in nether regions to prevent soiling (and providing a breeding ground for parasites)

2. To train for productive behaviour (disciplinary use of the rod)

III. The ministry model

A. Jn 10.1-18

B. Ps 23

Conclusion:

Shepherding is leadership, but it is a particular kind of leadership. It is a kind of leadership that is not about the shepherd, it is about the sheep.

Proposition: The flock of God needs shepherding (not merely leadership).

Don't think that I am against learning principles of leadership! But churches and pastors do need to know the nature of the Lord's church – it is like a flock.

Shepherding a flock requires knowledge of the sheep collectively and individually.

Shepherding the flock requires diligence and compassion.

And flocks require such shepherds.

May God always provide for our flock a godly shepherd!