

Message Six

Shepherding according to God

(2)

**The Organic Shepherding of Christ
in the Vital Groups for the Building Up of the Body of Christ**

Scripture Reading: John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:4; Eph. 4:12-16

I. To shepherd is to take all-inclusive, tender care of the flock—John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28:

- A. Shepherding refers to caring for all the needs of the sheep.
- B. All the sheep need to be well provided for and well tended to.

II. Christ is the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, and the Shepherd of our souls—John 10:9-17; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2:25:

- A. As the good Shepherd the Lord Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly—John 10:10-11:
 - 1. He laid down His soul-life, His human life, to accomplish redemption for His sheep that they may share His *zoe* life, His divine life—John 10:11, 15, 17.
 - 2. He leads His sheep out of the fold into Himself as the pasture, the feeding place, where they may eat freely of Him and be nourished by Him—John 10:9.
 - 3. The Lord has formed the Jewish and Gentile believers into one flock (the church, the Body of Christ) under His shepherding—John 10:16.
- B. God raised up from the dead “our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant”—Heb. 13:20:
 - 1. The eternal covenant is to consummate the New Jerusalem by shepherding.
 - 2. The eternal covenant is the covenant of the new testament to gain a flock, which is the church issuing in the Body of Christ and consummating in the New Jerusalem.
- C. As the Chief Shepherd, Christ shepherds His flock through the elders of the churches—1 Pet. 5:4:
 - 1. Without the elders’ shepherding, the church cannot be built up.
 - 2. The elders’ shepherding should be Christ’s shepherding through them.
- D. As the Shepherd of our souls, the pneumatic Christ oversees our inward condition, caring for the situation of our inner being—1 Pet. 2:25:
 - 1. He shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our soul and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our inner being.
 - 2. Because our soul is very complicated, we need Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, to shepherd us in our soul, to take care of our mind, emotion, and will and of our problems, needs, and wounds.

III. In the Lord’s recovery today, there is an urgent need of shepherding:

- A. In His organic salvation God the Father first regenerates us by God the Spirit and then shepherds us in God the Son as our Shepherd that we may exist and grow in His life for eternity—1 Pet. 1:3; John 10:11; Rev. 7:17:
 - 1. Regeneration is to bring forth the children of God.
 - 2. Shepherding is to take care of the children of God by feeding them.
- B. To shepherd the believers is crucial to their growth in the divine life unto maturity for the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12-16.

IV. Peter charged the elders to shepherd the flock of God according to God—1 Pet. 5:2:

- A. *According to God* means that we must live God.
- B. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to God's nature, desire, way, and glory and according to what God is in His attributes, not according to our preference, interest, purpose, and disposition.
- C. In order to shepherd according to God, we need to become God in life, nature, expression, and function.

V. The shepherding that builds up the Body of Christ is a mutual shepherding—1 Cor. 12:23-26:

- A. All of us need to be under the organic shepherding of Christ and be one with Him to shepherd others—John 21:15-17.
- B. All believers, regardless of their growth in life, need shepherding.
- C. We all have defects and shortcomings and need others to shepherd us.
- D. We are both sheep and shepherds, shepherding and being shepherded in mutuality.
- E. Through this mutual shepherding the Body builds itself up in love—Eph. 4:16.

VI. Shepherding is crucial for the practice of the vital groups:

- A. "The greater part of the function of today's vital groups is...feeding and shepherding" (*The God-man Living*, p. 18).
- B. "I hope that in theses next few years we will practice anew the vital groups with the elements of feeding and shepherding. If we do not know how to feed and shepherd others, we cannot have the vital groups" (p. 15).
- C. "Every one in this small vital group must be a shepherd....No other way is more prevailing than this shepherding way" (*Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John*, p. 136).
- D. "I hope that we would pray, 'Lord, I want to be revived. From today I want to be a shepherd. I want to go to feed people, to shepherd people, and to flock people together'" (p. 137).
- E. "If we practice these things, there will be a real revival in the Lord's recovery. We all must be shepherds with the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God in His divinity and the shepherding and finding spirit of our Savior Christ in His humanity. We also must have the heavenly vision of all the divine and mystical teachings of Christ. Shepherding and teaching are the obligation of the vital groups and the basic way ordained by God to build up the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem" (*The Vital Groups*, pp. 55-56).