

Message Five

The Normal Way of Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church

Scripture Reading: 1 John 5:16a; John 21:15-17; Isa. 50:4-5; 1 Thes. 1:3; Matt. 7:13-14

1 John 5:16a If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death.

John 21:15-17 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again a second time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

Isa. 50:4-5 The Lord Jehovah has given me / The tongue of the instructed, / That I should know how to sustain the weary with a word. / He awakens *me* morning by morning; / He awakens my ear / To hear as an instructed one. / The Lord Jehovah has opened my ear; / And I was not rebellious, / Nor did I turn back.

1 Thes. 1:3 Remembering unceasingly your work of faith and labor of love and endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father.

Matt. 7:13-14 Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

I. In order to minister life to others and maintain our victory for the building up of the church, we must have a revived living and a labor in shepherding that flow out from our love for the Lord—1 John 5:16a; John 21:15-17:

- A. Day by day we need a fresh consecration and a direct touch with the Lord by which we speak to Him and He speaks to us; every morning we should allow the Lord Jesus, our Sun, to rise up in us so that we can be renewed—Lev. 6:12-13; Mal. 4:2; Psa. 119:147-148; Prov. 4:18.
- B. We need to be dealt with thoroughly by the Lord under His light, having a thorough repentance and confession in His presence; if we listen to the Lord in His dealings with us, we will have a timely word to rescue others and sustain the weary ones—Eph. 5:14; 1 John 1:7, 9; Isa. 50:4-5; Exo. 21:5-6.
- C. We must pick up a burden to care for unbelievers, young believers, new believers, and weaker believers—Matt. 4:19; John 21:15-17; S. S. 1:7-8.
- D. We must have a genuine heart of love and care for others as a nursing mother and an exhorting father; the disposition of our new birth is one that sacrifices our self, our soul, and even our lives for the care of others—John 3:16; Mark 10:45; 1 Thes. 2:7, 11; 2 Cor. 12:14-15; 1 Cor. 9:22.

II. We must build up a habit of contacting people regularly to shepherd them according to the following practical points—Acts 20:28, 31; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:1-4:

- A. We must not be quick; rather, we must be prepared to spend enough time with people.
- B. We must be positive and not sloppy in actively contacting people.
- C. We must learn how to listen to others in order to realize their true need and real situation.
- D. We must learn not to say too much when we visit people.
- E. We must never make decisions for others; this is to consider that we are superior to them.
- F. We must never argue with people, regardless of whether they are right or wrong.
- G. We must never pass on vain knowledge to people—cf. 2 Cor. 3:6.

- H. We must never get into any negative talk with people.
- I. We must be honest with people, never pretending or playing politics with them.
- J. We must minister life to others.
- K. We must take the lead to pray with others and to help them to pray, bringing them into a prayer life.
- L. We must contact people continually with patience.
- M. We must trust and rely upon the ones under our care.
- N. We must never give anyone under our care the sense that we are forcing them to do anything.
- O. We must fellowship with others according to our own experience of Christ.

III. We must shepherd people in the experiences of life for the building up of the church—Rom. 15:16; 12:1; Col. 1:28—2:1:

- A. We must shepherd others through the stages of the experience of life for the testimony of the church; we must know the spiritual stage of the new ones, bringing them into the present flow of the church in a general way and rendering them the help they need in a particular way.
- B. We must build up others in the church life by building them up to function, to have a daily gospel-preaching life, to shepherd others, and to know the church.

IV. The vital groups should press on to shepherd others according to the apostle's prayer in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 concerning the work of faith, the labor of love, and the endurance of hope:

- A. Our faith is in God and in His power, in God's Spirit and in His word, not in our ability, method, or anything else; the work of faith is the foundation of our Christian life and service.
- B. The labor of love is the intrinsic motivation, the inner life, the real strength, and the key of the fruitfulness of our work of faith.
- C. The endurance of hope is the long life of our work of faith:
 1. The endurance of hope subdues all kinds of disappointments, discouragements, and impossibilities; it overcomes all kinds of oppositions, obstacles, and frustrations—1 Cor. 15:10, 58; 2 Thes. 3:5.
 2. Such endurance consummates in gaining sinners, feeding the believers, perfecting the saints, and building up the church, the Body of Christ, for the kingdom of God and of Christ—2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Cor. 15:58.

V. The God-ordained way of shepherding in the vital groups is to have a living and working which are narrow and constricted—Matt. 7:13-14:

- A. Many enter through the wide gate and walk on the broad way according to the worldly systems, satisfying the natural tastes to get the crowd, to maintain a career of man, and to achieve man's enterprise.
- B. We must exercise to be the few who enter through the narrow gate and walk on the constricted way to bring in God's elect, to bear the testimony of Jesus Christ, and to carry out God's economy.