

Message Ten

Shepherding according to God

Scripture Reading: John 21:15-17; 10:9-17; 1 Pet. 5:2, 4; 2:25; Heb. 13:20

- I. Shepherding is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock; shepherding refers to taking care of all the needs of the sheep—John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28.**
- II. The two basic elements of shepherding are cherishing and nourishing—Eph. 5:29:**
 - A. To shepherd is to comfort, to soothe, to nurture with tender love, and to foster with tender care.
 - B. In shepherding others, we should first cherish them to make them happy, and then we should nourish them.
- III. In the Lord's recovery today there is an urgent need of shepherding—John 21:16; 1 Pet. 5:2, 4:**
 - A. The greatest lack among us is in the matter of shepherding.
 - B. 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—1:3; John 10:11; Rev. 7:17.
 - C. Shepherding the believers is crucial for their growth in the divine life unto maturity for the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:13-16.
 - D. The shepherding that builds up the Body of Christ is a mutual shepherding—1 Cor. 12:23-26:
 1. All believers, regardless of their stage of spiritual growth, need shepherding; we all have defects and shortcomings and need others to shepherd us.
 2. We need to be under the organic shepherding of Christ and to be one with Him to shepherd others—John 10:11, 16; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2:25.
 3. We are both sheep and shepherds, shepherding and being shepherded in mutuality; through this shepherding, the church is built up into the Body of Christ—Heb. 5:14; Eph. 4:12-13.
 - E. The more we are constituted with Christ, the more we will spontaneously live a shepherding life and have the burden to take care of others—Col. 1:27; 3:10-11, 14:
 1. The constitution of Christ in our spiritual life has a shepherding aspect—John 21:15-17.
 2. Shepherding is not a matter of responding to being encouraged by others to shepherd.
 3. Shepherding is the issue of being constituted with Christ—Col. 3:4, 10-11.
 4. The part of our being that has been constituted with Christ is the part that shepherds others.
 5. We cannot shepherd anyone; the Christ constituted into us is the Shepherd—John 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:2, 4; Heb. 13:20.
 - F. We need to shepherd the flock of God according to the loving and tender heart of our Father God and according to the seeking and shepherding Spirit of our Savior Christ—Luke 15:1-32:
 1. We need to shepherd one another in love—1 Cor. 13:1-13.
 2. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything and to do anything—12:31b:

- a. God has given us a spirit of love—2 Tim. 1:7.
- b. Since God is love and since we have been regenerated by God to be His species, we should be love—1 John 4:8; John 3:6.
3. The Body of Christ builds up itself in love—Eph. 4:16.

IV. 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 may have life and may 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—vv. 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—v. 9.
 3. The Lord has formed the Jewish and Gentile believers into one flock (the church, the Body of Christ) under His shepherding—v. 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 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—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.

V. “Shepherd the flock of God...according to God”—5:2:

- A. *According to God* means that we live God—1 Thes. 3:8; 5:10.
- B. When we are one with God, we become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead, and we are God in our shepherding of others—Rom. 11:24.
- C. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to God’s nature, desire, way, and glory, not according to our preference, interest, purpose, and disposition.
- D. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to what God is in His attributes—Eph. 4:18; 1 John 4:8; Rev. 15:3.
- E. In order to shepherd according to God, we need to become God in life, nature, expression, and function:
 1. We need to be filled to the brim with the divine life, enjoying the Triune God as the fountain, the spring, and the river to become a totality of the divine life, even to become the divine life itself—John 4:14; Col. 3:4.
 2. We need to become God in His attributes of love, light, righteousness, and holiness.

3. We need to be the reproduction of Christ, the expression of God, so that in our shepherding we express God, not the self with its disposition and peculiarities.
 4. We need to become God in His function of shepherding the flock of God according to what He is and according to His goal in His economy.
- F. If we would shepherd according to God, we need to become one with God—John 14:20; 1 Cor. 6:17:
1. The basic principle of the Bible is that in His economy God is making Himself one with man and man one with Him—John 15:4; 1 Cor. 6:17.
 2. God desires that the divine life and the human life be joined together to become one life that has one living—John 6:57; Gal. 2:20.
- G. Shepherding according to God requires that we be constituted with God—Eph. 3:17a; Col. 3:10-11:
1. God desires to dispense Himself into our being so that our being may be constituted with His being to be one constitution with His being—Eph. 3:17a; Col. 3:10-11.
 2. As the Divine Being, God infuses us with His element, causing us to be the same as He is in life and nature but not in the Godhead—2 Cor. 13:14.
- H. Only those who live God can shepherd according to God—Phil. 1:21a:
1. God's economy is to work Himself into us so that we may receive Him as our life and life supply in order to live Him—John 11:25; 6:48, 57.
 2. We are participating in the divine life and the divine nature so that we can live God in our humanity—Gal. 2:20.
- I. As those who would shepherd according to God, we need to represent God and function as the acting God:
1. Jehovah made Moses "God to Pharaoh"; in Moses, God had one to represent Him and to execute His will—Exo. 7:1; 3:16-18; 5:1.
 2. As the representative of God, Samuel was the acting God—1 Sam. 1:11; 2:35; 7:3; 8:22:
 - a. Samuel could be the acting God because his being and God's heart were one—2:35.
 - b. Samuel's living and working were for carrying out whatever was in God's heart.
 3. In his ministry Elisha the prophet, as the man of God, behaved himself as God's representative, as the acting God; today we, the believers in Christ, can be the same—2 Kings 4:9; 1 Tim. 6:11.
- J. To shepherd according to God is to minister God to others—2 Cor. 13:14:
1. The Triune God is embodied in Christ and realized as the consummated Spirit; this is the God whom we worship, proclaim, and minister to others—Col. 2:9; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 1:3-4, 12, 15-16; 2:10; 13:14.
 2. If we would minister God to one another, we need to speak words of grace, truth, spirit, and life, ministering the processed God who has been wrought into our being—Eph. 3:16-17a; 4:25, 29; John 6:63.