

Shepherds, Wake Up

Ancient Training for Modern Shepherds



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PUBLISHING DESIGNS, INC.

P.O. Box 3241 • Huntsville, Alabama 35810
256-533-4301 • www.publishingdesigns.com

Publishing Designs, Inc.
P.O. Box 3241
Huntsville, Alabama 35810

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Printed in the United States

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

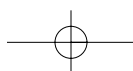
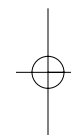
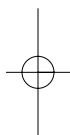
Turner, J. J.
Shepherds, wake up: ancient training for modern shepherds / J. J. Turner.
112 p. 22.86 cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-945127-39-7
1. Elders (Church officers) 2. Christian leadership—Biblical teaching.
I. Title.

BV680.T87 2004
253—dc22

2004021123

To
Clarence Bennett,
Wayne Brown, Milton Kidd,
and Howard Wallace,
elder-shepherds of the
McDonough Church of
Christ.

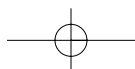
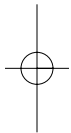
Thank you for caring
and being a positive source of
encouragement.





Contents

Preface	7
Introduction.....	9
Chapters	
1 The Shepherding Model	15
2 The Model Shepherd	23
3 A Wake-Up Call for Shepherds.....	31
4 It Has Always Been about the Sheep.....	37
5 The Road to Shepherding	45
6 God's Expectations of Elder-Shepherds.....	53
7 Lessons from the Chief Shepherd	61
8 Shepherding Sheep Is No Easy Task	69
9 From Sheep to Shepherds.....	77
10 Basic Training for Elder-Shepherds	85
11 How Twenty-First-Century Shepherding Differs from First-Century Shepherding.....	93
12 When Should an Elder-Shepherd Lay Down His Staff?.....	99
13 Application of Elder-Shepherd Study.....	105



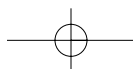
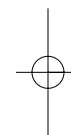
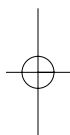


Preface

This book is a request; no, it is a plea for a fresh look at what the Bible reveals about the qualifications, skills, actions, work, and character of elder-shepherds in the body of Christ. Changes will not come easy because of the beliefs, traditions, prejudices, false teachings, and closed minds that exist relative to elders in some congregations.

The hour is late and the sheep are frustrated, hurting, scattered, starving, groping, and lonely on a thousand hills. Where are the shepherds? Where are the men who will cancel their closed-door meetings for a trip into the hedges and byways to look for one lost sheep? Where are the qualified elder-shepherds who are excited about standing before the Chief Shepherd and answering for the sheep entrusted to their care? (Hebrews 13:17).

This book is an attempt to call attention to the need for training elder-shepherds, as well as encouraging men to step up and prepare themselves to become elder-shepherds. If this work helps one man become a better elder-shepherd, or encourages one man to become an elder-shepherd, then my prayer for this book will have been answered. God bless you as you shepherd His sheep!





Introduction

A MEETING OF ELDER-SHEPHERDS

What a meeting! Men from every nation under heaven; wearing white robes; with a glow on their faces and a new song in their hearts. Homecoming! Eternity has begun, just as God promised.

It will not be missed by a single elder-shepherd. Jesus is the central figure in the gathering. All eyes are on Him, the Chief Shepherd, as He calls the names of His elder-shepherds who are safe at last in heaven.

In this gathering, all the men who have served His church as elder-shepherds will be there: "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Peter 5:4). This gathering is the ultimate elder-shepherds' meeting, or should I say celebration meeting.

Get this picture firmly imprinted in your mind. Regardless of how many award ceremonies you have attended, or how important and elaborate they were, this is the award ceremony where Christ awards the unfading crown of glory to the elder-shepherds who have served Him faithfully in His church on earth. This hope should forever raise the motivation for shepherding the Lord's flock as He has prescribed in His word, the Bible.

Just imagine what a group that will be! Shepherds from every church, beginning in the first century and continuing until the Lord returns, each shepherd giving an account of the sheep that were in his fold (Hebrews 13:17). What a joy it will be to see the Chief Shepherd face to face.

If elder-shepherds prepare rather meticulously now for their meetings, how much more shall they prepare for the great and final meeting with the Chief Shepherd. The owner of the sheep, Jesus Christ, will listen intently as His under-shepherds share how they cared for and fed their flocks on earth (Acts 20:28).

There will be tears shed over the sheep that could not be found when they searched for them and rejoicing over the one who was found (Luke 15:1-7). The heart of each shepherd will be revealed.

Sadly, I know some elder-shepherds who, if they were called to the meeting today, would have sweaty palms and a reluctance to go. Why? They have not been doing their duties as faithful shepherds. This study is a wakeup call for them.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14). He is greater than all other shepherds of God's people, both past and present. Peter wrote: "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). Jesus set the perfect example of what a loving shepherd is and does. All shepherds must follow Him with joy.

DEFINITIONS

Shepherd is used in a metaphorical sense in the Bible to describe a congregational leader of God's flock, and not as a title or office.

Poimnio, a Greek verb, is used to describe the work of shepherds with the flock. It brings to mind the tasks of feeding, pasturing, tending, protecting, and leading. (See 1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28; John 21:16.) *Poimanion*, a Greek noun, is used to refer to the congregation as a flock.

Other Greek words are used in the Bible to describe the qualities of God's shepherds. A *presbuteros* is an elder (1 Peter 5:1; Acts 20:17), and an *episkopos* is an overseer (Acts 20:28). The work of a shepherd, therefore, is to take care of and serve the local congregation of Christ's people (Acts 20:28). Christ's shepherd focuses on souls!

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Poimen (shepherd) and *episkopos* (elder) are closely linked in describing the work of shepherding in the local congregation. Christ is the Chief Shepherd and Bishop (overseer) of all souls; and His work on earth has been assigned to His faithful under-shepherds. That is the reason there will be a final meeting of all shepherds with the Chief Shepherd, Jesus—it will be accounting time.

PURPOSE

Paul wrote about the gifts the Lord gave to the church after He ascended to heaven: "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). The purpose of the gift of elders to the church is "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). A church that is not experiencing these results might not have faithful shepherds in its midst.

Elder-shepherds are stewards, and as such they must give an account to Christ for the sheep in their flocks: "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). This faithfulness must be revealed in every thought, word, action, and attitude of a shepherd toward his congregation. He loves his people!

Jesus is the perfect Shepherd. He knows every need of His sheep. He knows His sheep by name and is the sacrificial Shepherd who is willing to lay down His life for His sheep. The elder-shepherds in the church can only try to emulate His example, “being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3). What a challenge!

Peter, in his first epistle, is writing to churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1). He is exhorting the elders among them (1 Peter 5:1). This exhortation was in light of the suffering being experienced by the church: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Peter 4:12). It was a time when the elder-shepherds needed to watch and care for the flock as never before. Nero was hot on their trail.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The elders were to shepherd the flock. They were pastors. The noun *pastor* or *shepherd* occurs only once in the New Testament with reference to church leaders (Ephesians 4:11), but the verb *to shepherd* occurs several times. It occurs in 1 Peter 5:2: “Shepherd the flock of God.” Jesus used it when He told Peter: “Shepherd my sheep” (John 21:16 NASB). Paul used it when he commanded the elders in the Ephesian church “to shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28). Thus, these are just additional reminders of the awesome responsibilities the shepherds of a local church have to Christ for the caring and feeding of His sheep.

The Lord is not planning any surprises for His elder-shepherds. He has made it clear to them in His word that a day of accounting and rewarding is coming. The writer of Hebrews targets this time as the Judgment: “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). We read in Revelation 11:16 that after the sounding of the seventh trumpet “the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God.” This wonderful symbolism gives credit to the value God places on the elder-shepherds and their faithful shepherding.

It is not easy at any time to shepherd a flock of human sheep, but it becomes even more difficult during a time of “fiery trial,” as Peter is addressing. Those elder-shepherds were obviously facing great problems. As leaders of the flock, shepherds must be among the first to receive persecution. (Read 1 Peter 4:17–18.) Perhaps that is why Peter reminded them that they were not forced to be shepherds, nor were they under compulsion to lead Christ’s flock; they had desired the “position of a bishop” (1 Timothy 3:1). Thus, the dangers and difficulties of shepherding are part of the test that elder-shepherds must pass in order to be pleasing to the Chief Shepherd, who suffered more than any of them will ever be called upon to endure. That is why shepherding must be taken seriously and engaged in with a view toward the Judgment.

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PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

Since elder-shepherds know they are going to have a meeting with the Chief Shepherd, it is wise for them to make proper preparation. In fact, after they leave this life, or after Jesus returns, there will be no time for preparation. Once an elder-shepherd steps into the next world, it will be too late for him to make any changes in his shepherding style or activities.

***It is difficult
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This study material is designed to help elder-shepherds to do a better job in their ministry of shepherding Christ's flock and, at the same time, to make adequate preparation for the great meeting where rewards will be given by the Chief Shepherd.

Shepherding the flock of God is a responsibility with eternal consequences that must not be taken lightly. It is not a work for a hireling or for someone who wants to be the CEO of a small "church company." It is difficult for men who live in concrete pastures to relate to the work of shepherds as set forth in the Bible. That is the reason much study and prayer must be given to this position in the church.

The Bible contains vital information for any man who desires to learn about the nature and work of shepherds, as well as information about the nature and needs of human sheep. The task of elder-shepherds and aspiring elder-shepherds is to transfer this knowledge into application of shepherding the local church-flock.

FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. How often have you thought about meeting the Chief Shepherd in the Judgment? How does that thought make you feel?

2. Give your imagined version of what you think the meeting will be like. Be creative.

3. If Jesus attended one of your business meetings, what would impress Him most?

Introduction

13

4. If your meeting with Jesus took place tomorrow, how prepared would you be? Give reason for your answer.

5. List and define the words used in New Testament that describe the world of elders.

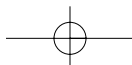
6. Why is it difficult for modern-day elders to relate to the shepherding model in the Bible?

7. In what areas do you personally need to improve as an elder-shepherd? Why?

8. What is the “unfading crown of glory” mentioned by Peter in his first epistle?

9. What additional thoughts do you have about this lesson?

10. How do you plan to use this lesson in your life and ministry?

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CHAPTER

1

The Shepherding Model

LEADERS TO FOLLOW THE MANUAL

Any time people are formed into a group situation for the achieving of specific objectives, leaders are needed. The kind of leaders needed will depend on the objectives of the group. It has been said that great causes call for great leadership. In certain contexts that statement is definitely true.

What kind of leadership does a group of people need who has been called out of darkness to a worldwide mission? (2 Thessalonians 2:14; Colossians 1:13; Mark 16:15–16). Will just any old leadership model do? How about taking a little leadership from various aspects of life—business, military, sports, politics—and applying them in God’s kingdom? Is the church just another business in need of great management and marketing techniques? How do you lead people who have as their major purpose the glorification of God? (Ephesians 3:21). What models of leadership shall we impose on Christ’s church? The answer is found in the manual—the Holy Bible—given to the church by its founder, Jesus Christ, who has “given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). The Scriptures are inspired and will judge us in the last day, the day of the elder-shepherds’ meeting with the Chief Shepherd (2 Timothy 3:15–17; John 12:48).

TRADITION TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

When Jesus came into the world, He turned the traditional leadership models upside down. He began His work as a leader from heaven after emerging from a job in a carpenter’s shop. He had been born in a stable, taking on the very nature of a servant (cf. Matthew 1; Philippians 2:5–8). He knew at age twelve what His mission was: to be about His “Father’s business” (Luke 2:49).

When Jesus set His feet on the dusty hills of Palestine to become the leader and Savior of the world, He was introduced, not in a royal palace or at a fancy dinner, but by an unlikely character who may have been considered somewhat of a radical, John the Baptist. Read Matthew 3:1–12 for a description of that introduction. John’s work set the tone for Jesus’ leader-

ship model of being a shepherd. He cared for all sheep and associated with all kinds of sheep (cf. Luke 15:1–3). He was a leader sent from God.

Jesus' unique methods were a clear sign to the people, or should have been, that He was going to be a different kind of leader, not modeled after the traditions and standards of the world (cf. Mark 7:6, 9; 1 John 5:19). The Father's business must be conducted by the Father's rules, which included leadership methods. He did not use the contemporary Roman, Greek, or Jewish models of leadership:

✧ Models Not Chosen ✧

- ◆ The conquering Roman general was not the model of leadership needed by the servants of the Most High God.
- ◆ The Greek orators or debaters were not chosen as leadership models of communication for God's followers.
- ◆ The successful merchants and businessmen were not the chosen leadership models.
- ◆ The Senators or Governors of the Roman Empire were not chosen as models of kingdom leadership.
- ◆ The Jewish model of leadership was not chosen but, in fact, rejected. (Read Matthew 23.)
- ◆ The success guru model was not chosen by the King of kings to serve as a leadership model.
- ◆ The democratic-political model of leadership was not the choice of the Master.
- ◆ The dictator model of leadership was not chosen by Jesus.
- ◆ The savvy financial management model was not selected by Jesus for His followers to imitate.
- ◆ The great strategist model of leadership was not chosen by our Lord.
- ◆ The "most popular person" model of leadership was not the Lord's choice.
- ◆ The CEO, boss, motivator, or manager model was not chosen by Jesus.

A NEW LEADERSHIP MODEL

How simple! The radical leadership concept introduced by Jesus: shepherding sheep. He cut across all models of leadership in His day. The norms and expectations for leaders who would be world changers were radical to observers, and even in our day by those who don't understand the Father's business.

Jesus chose the shepherd model for Himself and for those who would be His followers. These under-shepherds would change the world with this simple but demanding model of leadership. The kingdom would be perpetuated by no other means. The shepherd model would lead Christ's church to victory,

not the oppressive, bossy, dictatorial leadership models of Rome. His was the way of the towel, not of the sword or human wisdom or power. Church leaders would be shepherd-servants like their Master; they would be known by their love for Him and for one another (John 14:15; 13:34–35). That approach was radically different from the norm of society in the first century. Jesus capsize the leadership boat!

MODELS OF THE PAST

The shepherd model of leadership for the church is the comprehensive form desired by Christ, the head and Savior of the church, until His return at an undisclosed hour. As someone has said: “The shepherding model is so profoundly simple that it is simply profound—timeless and always relevant for mankind.”

In our steel, concrete, asphalt, brick skyscraper world, the shepherding model is in danger of being lost, that is, if it hasn’t been already.

Throughout Bible history, God has always chosen the models of leadership for His people:

✦ Leadership Models for God’s People ✦

Priests. One of the earliest forms of leadership was the priesthood, among whom was Melchizedek, the priest who blessed Abram. The book of Leviticus is a formal record of the guidelines for and duties of the Levitical priests.

Patriarchs. There was an era in which the leaders were known as patriarchs (Hebrews 1:1; Acts 2:29; “father rule”).

Judges. The book of Judges gives accounts of how God used judges to govern and lead His people.

Prophets. Woven into the fabric of Jewish society and history is the work of the prophets. Men like Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Elijah, and Daniel are models of leadership in tough times.

Rabbis, Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Others. As we transition into the New Testament, we find numerous positions of leadership within Israel: rabbis, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and others. Splinter groups were striving for power over people. Everybody was jockeying for first place.

JESUS’ PATTERN

These models served purposes for their times, sometimes positive and at other times negative. But none of them—or any other secular model—was used by Jesus as the model for leadership in His church.

Jesus cut a new pattern for leadership in the kingdom. He made it clear by His teachings and actions that the model of new covenant ministry and leadership would be Him, a person, rather than an office or an elected or self-appointed position patterned after the traditions of men and secular models. Kingdom business was different!

In Christ all members are equally important. Paul so taught in 1 Corinthians 1:2. True greatness comes only through serving others (Matthew 18:1–7). That is the reason Paul admonished us to have the attitude of Christ (Philippians 2:5–9), an attitude manifested in humble service and sacrifice (Mark 10:45).

RESTORING THE SHEPHERD MODEL

There is no biblical evidence that God has ever intended for the church to abandon the shepherding model of leadership. Some say that we should abandon it because of cultural changes; others say we should not abandon it; a few haven't even thought about the model. God wants shepherds over His flock!

The emphasis on shepherding is part of the teachings in the new covenant, which was purchased by the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28). That covenant is everlasting (Hebrews 13:20) and is part of what will be in the words that judge us in the last day (John 12:48). That is the reason we must

teach and observe the things He has commanded (Matthew 28:18–20).

***Jesus cut
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Today's church is in serious need of shepherds. We need men who have evolved from the ranks of the sheep to become under-shepherds to the Chief Shepherd. In many congregations, if not in most, the work of shepherding has been lost in the word *elder*. This Bible word that emphasizes the older age of the men who serve as shepherds has become the official title of those men appointed by the Holy Spirit to serve as shepherds of the flock (Acts 20:28).

Randomly ask a member of the church who the leaders are with authority in the church, and they will nine-times-out-of-ten say, "The elders." Rarely will they answer with one of the other Bible designations for these men, such as bishops, pastors, presbyters, overseers, or shepherds. I am not saying "elders" is a wrong answer; rather, I'm trying to call to our attention that we are neglecting the Bible emphasis on the shepherding ministry of elders in local congregations. If we are not careful, we will make the word *elder* the exclusive title for shepherds.

How can the local church restore the shepherding model of leadership? That challenging question cannot be ignored. Here are a few suggested answers:

✧How to Restore the Shepherd Model✧

- ◆ Emphasize the work and place of elders in the church and thus begin the restoration of the shepherding model.
- ◆ Return to a thorough study of the work, character, qualifications, and skills required of shepherds.
- ◆ Make an in-depth study of Jesus as a shepherd. He is the perfect model and an understanding of His role is vital to understanding shepherding.
- ◆ Develop elders with a shepherd's mindset, out of which flows proper leadership actions.
- ◆ Keep constantly before the congregation Bible doctrine about shepherding—not just when it's time to select new elder-shepherds.
- ◆ Educate the congregation about the nature of sheep. Members are sheep who must follow shepherds, but that can happen only if the sheep know who and what shepherds are in God's sight.
- ◆ Give attention to the Old Testament's emphasis on the nature of wayward sheep. That knowledge will enhance the congregation's understanding of sheep and shepherding.
- ◆ Interchange freely the various names used to describe shepherds: pastors, bishops, elders. Make none of these words an exclusive title.
- ◆ Encourage men who serve as elders to examine themselves constantly relative to their work as shepherds. Each must ask himself: Am I truly doing the work of a shepherd? What are the evidences that I am? How can I become a more Christ-like shepherd?

CRUCIFY SELF AND BECOME A SERVANT

In many congregations, the restoration of the biblical model of shepherding will not come easy. Existing mindsets too often fear change, and there is a belief in too many congregations that things are all right the way they are. Many elders love the chief seats in the synagogue and are not willing to move to the end of the line and become servants. It is difficult to lay aside the CEO hat they wear at work and become least of all. These problems can be dealt with only through the crucifixion of self (Matthew 16:24) and by obeying Jesus from a heart of true and honoring love (John 14:15; 15:14). You can recognize leaders who have become Christ-like because they smell like sheep!

FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. What role did John the Baptist have in Jesus' leadership?

2. What kind of leader-Messiah was Israel looking for when Jesus came?

3. List some of the leadership models Jesus could have chosen for His followers?

4. Why were secular models of leadership not chosen by Jesus?

5. How was the shepherd model of leadership different from the secular model of leadership in the first century?

6. Discuss the various forms of leadership God has chosen in history.

7. How has the twenty-first-century church lost the shepherding model of leadership? Why?

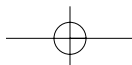
The Shepherding Model

21

8. How has elder become the exclusive title for men serving the church as shepherds?

9. List three ways we can restore the shepherd model of leadership in the local church.

10. Why is the kind of leadership chosen in the church important?

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CHAPTER

2

The Model Shepherd

FIND A MODEL IN THE PASTURE

I once heard a motivational speaker say, “If you want to be successful, go and find a model of success and imitate him or her!” Through the years I have basically agreed with this statement. However, one thought must be added: The model must be doing things right both in character and in actions.

The elder-shepherds in the twenty-first-century church are, as a whole, far removed from the rural areas where shepherding is practiced. They must study the nature of sheep, shepherds, and shepherding in order to get a clearer understanding of what God is expecting of them as under-shepherds.

BIBLE EXAMPLE

There are a few shepherd models in the Bible. David is one of the most famous. He knew what was required to tend sheep. He was a keeper of sheep until the day he killed Goliath, the giant of the Philistines (cf. 1 Samuel 17:15–58).

Called by God to be the new king of Israel, he was to replace King Saul, who had fallen out of favor with God. When Saul heard that David was to replace him, he launched a plan to kill the shepherd-king appointee.

When David learned that King Saul was planning to kill him, he did what any sane person would have done; he ran for his life. Most scholars believe that it was during his hiding from Saul that he wrote the grand Twenty-Third Psalm, the masterpiece of Jewish literature that has been adored and quoted by untold millions as a source of comfort and hope.

The Twenty-Third Psalm is the most popular and often-quoted portion of Old Testament Scripture. Many devotionals, exegetical commentaries, and inspirational works have been based on this unique psalm. It is the first portion of Scripture many of us memorized when we were children. Rarely is it omitted from funerals; it is a source of comfort for the sick, hurting, and lonely. Soldiers going into battle have been heard saying, “The Lord is my Shepherd!”

The Lord was David’s Shepherd, and the Lord is our model Shepherd, too: