

Shepherding the Young People according to the Lord's Heart

Scripture Reading: John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Luke 15:4-24, 32; 2 Cor. 7:2-3

- I. In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people; without shepherding, our work for the Lord cannot be effective—Heb. 13:20-21; John 21:15-17.**
- II. Shepherding is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock; shepherding refers to taking care of all the needs of the sheep—vv. 15-17; Acts 20:28.**
- III. Peter charged the elders to shepherd the flock of God according to God; according to God means to live God —1 Pet. 5:1-3:**
 - A. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to what God is in His attributes—Rom. 9:15-16; 11:22, 33; Eph. 2:7; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:12:
 - B. 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.
 - C. In order to shepherd according to God, we need to become God in life, nature, expression, and function—John 1:12-13; 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:4:
 1. 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—John 1:18; Heb. 1:3; 2:10; Rom. 8:29.
 2. We need to become God in His function of shepherding the flock according to what He is and according to His goal in His economy—Eph. 4:16; Rev. 21:2.
 3. When we are one with God, we become God and are God in our shepherding of others.
- IV. We need to shepherd the flock of God according to the Father's loving and forgiving heart and according to the Son's seeking, finding, and shepherding spirit—Luke 15:4-24, 32:**
 - A. We should follow the steps of the processed Triune God in His seeking and gaining fallen people—vv. 4-6, 8-9, 18-24, 32.
 - B. Our natural tendency is not to shepherd others but to criticize them and regulate them:
 1. Whenever we criticize someone, we lose the position to take care of that one.
 2. Our natural tendency is to regulate others and place demands on them according to ourselves, not to cherish and nourish them according to God.
 - C. We need to have a change of concept through being disciplined to have the divine concept, the concept that is according to the Father's loving heart and the Son's shepherding spirit.
 - D. Our shepherding should be according to God's love toward the fallen human race; the fallen human race is joined with Satan to be his world in his system, but God has a heart of love toward these people—John 3:16.
 - E. We need to be shepherds having the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God in His divinity and the seeking, finding, and shepherding spirit of our Savior Christ in His humanity.
 - F. "If this kind of fellowship is received by us, I believe there will be a big revival on the earth, not by a few spiritual giants but by the many members of Christ's Body being shepherds who follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people." (*The Vital Groups*, p. 40)

V. We need to stir up an atmosphere so that we would receive a burden to restore the dormant saints; to seek out our brothers and sisters who have not been meeting and those with whom we have lost contact—Gal. 6:1; cf. Luke 15:3-6, 8-10:

- A. These saints are the harvest from our past labor and hard work; they were baptized, and they are our family members, but they have all disappeared; therefore, we must take this matter seriously—Matt. 18:11-13.
- B. Now is the time to put the affairs of our household in order, and the first matter we should address is to find these saints in order to bring them back; if we would do this thoroughly by the Lord's grace, we could recover two-thirds of them within two to three years:
 - 1. We need to begin by recovering the brothers and sisters who seldom attend meetings but whose whereabouts are known; this involves a work of visitation and restoration.
 - 2. We also need to locate the saints whose whereabouts are unknown; this is very time consuming, and we are in the process of looking for a way that the churches can coordinate with each other in order to find these saints.
- C. The key to recovering these saints is for the brothers and sisters who regularly meet in the small groups to receive a burden; without a burden, it will be difficult to move but with a burden, there will be grace—1 Cor. 15:10:
 - 1. The saints who are wandering outside are scattered and not enjoying the riches of our family; they are truly like the prodigal son who could not find even carob pods to eat—Luke 15:13-16.
 - 2. But in the Father's house, in God's house, which is the church, the food is plentiful; therefore, we must be compassionate toward them and bring them home to enjoy the riches in the Father's house with us—vv. 20-24.
- D. Visiting dormant saints needs much consideration; if we do not do it properly, we will drive them further away:
- E. As we seek out the saints, we must rely on the work of the Holy Spirit; the work of the Spirit is likened in Luke 15 to a woman who lights a lamp to seek a lost coin; the Holy Spirit is able to shine upon the saints with the Lord's word and is willing to search for them until they are found—vv. 8-9.
- F. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything and to do anything for the building up of the Body of Christ—2 Tim. 1:7; 1 Cor. 8:1; 12:31b:
 - 1. We must have the kind of love to go and tell the dormant ones who think that the church condemns them that the church does not condemn anyone; rather, the church wants to see all the dormant ones come back—Prov. 10:12b.
 - 2. Because the church is a home, a hospital, and a school, we must be one with the Lord to raise up, to heal, to recover, and to teach others in love—2 Cor. 11:28-29; 12:15; 1 Cor. 9:22; cf. Matt. 12:20.
 - 3. Love is not jealous, is not provoked, does not take account of evil, covers all things, endures all things, never falls away, and is the greatest—1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13.