

#1 SHEPHERD LEADERS (Ezekiel 34)

A. How would you describe a great leader?

1. Handsome: easy or pleasant on the eyes. Calm, Cool, Collected under fire. Speak well (strings together words like pearls). John F Kennedy not Richard Nixon; Barak Obama not John McCain. Heart of a lion. Gentleness of a lamb. Good pedigree (education, family heritage)

B. God's portrait of a great leader very different.

1. Smells of that which he leads. Covered in dirt & wool. Blood on his garments. Shepherd.

C. Shepherd metaphor used over 500 times.

1. Dominant Biblical model of spiritual leadership.
2. So to understand spiritual leadership we must understand shepherds.
3. Hard for us to visualize (explain).

[If God's dominant picture of kingdom leadership is the lowly shepherd, then it is imperative that we spend some time in the shepherd's sandals.

Let's begin by considering how often God's leaders are described as shepherds.]

I. SHEPHERD LEADERSHIP IN SCRIPTURE

A. Patriarchs Were Shepherd Leaders.

1. "Abel was a keeper of sheep" (Gen 4:2).
2. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Heb 11:9, 13; Gen 13).
 - a. More than just common in their culture.
 - b. Essential to their calling.
3. Rachel "was a shepherdess" (Gen 29:9).
4. Moses the archetype of godly leadership.
 - a. Chosen not when young, wealthy, powerful.
 - b. Called after 40 years of shepherding (Exo 3:1).
 - 1) Shepherding was God's prerequisite.

B. Prophets & Priests Were Shepherd Leaders.

1. Amos.

Amos 7:14-15 – Then Amos answered, & said to Amaziah: “I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but **I was a sheepbreeder** & a tender of sycamore fruit. 15 Then **the Lord took me as I followed the flock**, & the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’”

2. Priest.

Jer 50:6 – “My people have been lost sheep. **Their shepherds have led them astray**; they have turned them away on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place. **25:34** – **“Wail, shepherds, & cry! Roll about in the ashes, you leaders of the flock!** For the days of your slaughter & your dispersions are fulfilled; you shall fall like a precious vessel.”

C. The Judges & Kings Of Israel Were Shepherd Leaders.

1. David.

2 Sam 5:2 – Also, in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out & brought them in; & the Lord said to you, **‘You [David] shall shepherd My people Israel, & be ruler over Israel.’**”

2 Sam 7:7 – Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, **have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd [Moses, Joshua, Judges, Saul] My people Israel**, saying, ‘Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?’”

Psa 78:70-72 – **He also chose David His servant, & took him from the sheepfolds; 71 from following the ewes that had young He brought him, to shepherd Jacob His people, & Israel His inheritance. 72 So he shepherded them** according to the integrity of his heart, & guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

[The three roles of Israelite leadership were prophet, priest, & king, & it is significant that the word shepherd described all three roles – so *there are skills of godly leadership to be learned in the work of a shepherd, & God’s leaders will learn those skills & apply them.*

In addition, it is significant to note that it doesn’t matter what level of success, position or power a man may achieve, to be a godly leader he must be a shepherd.]

D. The Apostles Were Shepherd Leaders.

1. Peter.

John 21:15-17 – ...Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, 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.”** 16 He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, **“Tend My sheep.”** 17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” & he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, **“Feed My sheep”**.

- a. Not what they expected (**Mark 10:35-45**).
- b. Not elected officials with political power.
- c. Feeding, leading, protecting & serving sheep.
- d. Motive: a love for Christ.

E. Elders Were/Are Shepherds.

- 1. As the church grew, leadership style remained.
- 2. Even in metropolitan cities like Ephesus.

Acts 20:28 – Therefore **take heed to yourselves & to all the flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **shepherd the church of God** which He purchased with His own blood.

- 3. Shepherds were not just for small beginnings, but for all times.
- 4. Their leadership style came from Christ.

1 Peter 5:1-4 – The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder & a witness of the sufferings of Christ, & also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 & when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**

[The shepherd leadership model has centuries of meaning behind it.

So the men who would lead God’s people today must be thoroughly familiar with the leadership of a shepherd.]

F. God Is A Shepherd Leader.

- 1. What astounding humility God possesses.

Psa 23:1 – **The Lord is my shepherd**; I shall not want.

Psa 100:3 – Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, & not we ourselves; **we are** His people & **the sheep of His pasture**.

- 2. Evidently, it is the highest form of leadership!
- 3. Sheep are dumb, aimless & irritating.
- 4. A shepherd loves (sacrifices for) His sheep anyway.

G. Jesus Is A Shepherd Leader.

- 1. Pinnacle expression of shepherd leadership.

John 10:11 – **“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”**

Isa 53:6 – All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; & **the Lord has laid on Him [the Chief Shepherd] the iniquity of us all.**

Luke 15:4-6 – “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, & go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends & neighbors, saying to them, ‘**Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!**’

[Jesus, in the form of God, left the comforts of Heaven, came to this earth & deprived Himself of even the earthy comforts to get close enough to the sheep to help them & finally even to die for them – *That is what shepherd leaders do!*

There is no question but that the “shepherd” is God’s primary model of kingdom leadership, but why did God choose shepherds to be such a powerful example of leadership?]

II. TRAITS OF THE SHEPHERD

A. Humble.

1. Pride & Position lead to temptation (1 Tim 3:6).

2. In business one may aspire to be the top dog.
3. In the kingdom that mindset has no place.
4. Shepherds are part of the working class.
5. Their position is about people not power.
6. They are not cowboys (prodding, lassoing).
7. They lead by example not force (1 Peter 5:3).
8. They lead like Jesus, the Chief Shepherd:
 - a. Took the form of a servant (Phil 2:5-8).
 - b. Washed feet (John 13:5).
 - c. Touched the sick (Mark 1:40-42).
 - d. Talked with the outcast (Matt 9:10-13).

Shepherds are humble men, they don’t love popularity. They don’t crave to hand down rulings. They rejoice in helping the weak. They have enough confidence in their faith to say “follow me as I follow Christ.”]

B. Sacrificial.

1. People often want position for the perks.
2. Shepherds give up more than those they lead.
3. Work harder, give more, & take fewer liberties.
4. They make sacrifices few can understand.

John 10:11-13 – “I am the good shepherd. **The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.** 12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming & leaves the sheep & flees; & the wolf catches the sheep & scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling & does not care about the sheep.

[Not only is our faith proven through testing (1 Pet 1:7), but also the shepherd's motives are proven by the same.]

C. Caring.

1. Cowboys view cattle as a business venture.
2. Cattle are ultimately butchered.
3. Shepherds view sheep as children.
4. Sheep are protected/preserved for their wool.
5. Shepherds take special care of sheep.

2 Sam 12:3 – But **the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb** which he had bought & nourished; & it grew up together with him & with his children. It ate of his own food & drank from his own cup & lay in his bosom; & it was like a daughter to him.

CLOSING

A. Kingdom leadership is a people business!!

1. It is not about the bottom line.
2. It is about people & each one important.
3. It is an intimate job; it's about closeness.

B. The good shepherd knows His sheep by name (John 10:2-4).

1. When He calls, they follow him because He has spent hours getting to know them & planning for their good.

[The motivation for kingdom leadership is love for others!]

What is best for others?

What is needed for their spiritual growth & security?

Kingdom leadership is simply about the souls of God's people!]