

Class 5–Chs. 6-7

Ch. 6–The Role of Under-Shepherds

The Problem—It seems as though the position of elder is seen more as a professional preacher or administrator rather than as shepherd. (108) [In contrast,] Pastors are to be stewards—shepherding the flock of God by imitating how Christ shepherds his people. (109)

There are two basic ways elders neglect shepherding the weaknesses of the sheep. The first is that elders practically accept culturally preferable ways as means of strength. We do this by promoting the empty philosophies of humanistic psychology, which advocate for the strengthening of the self as a primary means for health. A second way is the simple neglect to promote trust, hope, and obedience in the Word of God as the primary means for our soul's delight. The silence of elders on these destructive worldly strategies does not strengthen the sheep, but makes them vulnerable to drift toward the empty deceptions of the world. In these cases, elders are not strengthening the weak, but leading them to glory in their own strength. Trusting in ourselves is our greatest human weakness, yet we have been deceived into believing it is our means to strength. Human hearts and human flesh will fail (Ps. 73:25-26). Elders must consistently remind God's people that God is their true strength...(116)

If the shepherds aren't shepherding, then how will the sheep understand their role in soul care for one another?

The Biblical Model—Acts 20:28-32; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4

The preached Word is a ministry of care for our souls. The elders labor to minister these words of comfort and conviction, and the Spirit of God applies it appropriately to the ear that hears...The Word ministers to our hearts at various points of need to care for our souls. As the Bible is faithfully preached, the hearts of God's people are not only encouraged but exposed. Those things once hidden become evident; our thoughts and intentions thriving in deception are discerned and brought to light (Jeremiah 17:9-10; Hebrews 4:12-13). This effect of preaching demands more intimate ministry of the Word. Shepherding certainly happens corporately in pulpit ministry, but it must not end there. Sheep need individual care. (120)

Personal ministry of the Word makes sense for pastors who believe in expository ministry. If elders believe that the preaching of the Word, even though foolish to the world, is effectual in the hearts of the hearers by the Holy Spirit, then it makes sense that we would also believe the same about the personal ministry of the Word of God. These settings bring greater opportunity for more specific application of the Word than can usually be shared in a corporate setting. When you are speaking one-to-one with someone, you are hearing their specific story, their specific hurts or burdens. The Holy Spirit is present in those situations as well-giving you compassion, insight, and just the right words from the Bible for the need of the moment. (121)

The Church as a Culture of Care – Sunday School (Fall 2024)

Ch. 7–The Role of Sheep

Summary–While pastors should be leading and modeling this type of ministry among their people, every Christian is called to minister to each other and bear the burdens of one another as we are conformed to the image of Christ. How does that happen? The under-shepherds are called to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. This is one primary way to build a culture of care in your church.(108)

Ministry Mindsets:

Sin marred the image in thousands of ways--not taking away our intrinsic value as the pinnacle of God's creation, but marring our ability to reflect his character and nature. That inability manifests itself in hostile minds--distressed emotions, selfish thoughts, and evil deeds. We can categorize this as unstable or disordered in our ways. (133)

Until the day [of Christ's return,] God has ordained that we become like Jesus through the ministry of the Word of God in the fellowship of believers. The church is one way the Lord works all things for his glory and for our good. We gather to worship, and as we become worshippers [in all of life], through the ministry of the Word and the one anothering of the body, our souls are cared for and we grow to be like Christ. (131-132)

Ministry Mandates:

Worship–Rom. 12:1-2; Php. 3:3

As our hearts are conformed more and more to Christ, we see that worship becomes the constant disposition and glorious opportunity of our days. (137)

Personal Holiness–1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 2:20-22

Holiness builds into our hearts a dependence upon God for our own needs and a tenderness that moves outward to care for others. The only way to care for others like Christ is to be conformed to the image of Christ. (138)

Care for One Another–Rom. 12:9-13; 1 Pet. 4:7-11

The "one anothers" in the Bible are specific ways God has given us to be cared for and to care for others. Several of them have a teaching component. We are to teach and admonish, instruct, speak truthfully in love, encourage, build up, and stir up one another... We [also] care by comforting, bearing burdens, serving, being hospitable pursuing genuine fellowship, and seeking the good of one another, We are also called to maintain the unity that has been given to us by the Spirit so that we live at peace with all as far as it depends on us, We do this by forgiving, bearing with, not grumbling or speaking against, and seeking to be at peace with one another. These commands are active pursuits of the ministry of soul care. The brilliant part of God's design is that to obey these commands we must die to self and be conformed to his image. Then, as we grow in maturity and reflection of his character, we are also growing in giving intentional care for the good of others. (140-141)