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Balanced Shepherding

*A Contemporary Look at an Ancient Ministry
Metaphor*

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Introduction:

- *The foundation for all Christian leadership and ministry – for all that we are and all that we do – is Jesus Christ!*
- *Upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word, effective Christian leadership expresses itself in five interdependent components: Character, Competency, Chemistry, Context, and Cohesiveness.*

- In order to create the best opportunity for vibrant growth and maximum fruitfulness in a garden, the gardener must give careful attention to five essential factors: air, water, soil, seed, and husbandry.
- In order to create the best opportunity for vibrant growth and maximum fruitfulness in a local church the leader(s) must give attention to five essential factors: *character, competency, chemistry, context, and cohesiveness.*

Biblical Balance

- Character is about heart. Competency is about skill. Chemistry is about personality. Cohesiveness is about oversight. Context is about ministry environment.
- *Shepherding the flock of God in the 21st century requires careful attention to keeping all facets of our calling in balance. It's about character, competency, chemistry, context, and biblical cohesiveness.*

A Clear Destination

- *In order to effectively shepherd God's flock in any generation you need to know where the flock - **the church** - should be going!*
- *We cannot lead the flock to an unknown destination. That is not leading, that is wandering!*



Establishing a Theological Basis

The Church needs to be ...

- Motivated by the **Great Commandment**
 - loving God, loving others, loving one another. (Mt. 22, John 13)
- Moving under the direction of the **Great Commission**
 - Making disciples of others. (Mt. 28:18-20)
- Operating under the authority of the **“Great Empowerment”**
 - the indwelling Holy Spirit. (John 15)
- Organized according to the pattern of the **“Great Involvement.”**
 - Pastors Equip – Every member a minister. (Eph. 4:1-16)



A Biblical Job Description

- *In order to effectively shepherd God's flock in any generation you need to know what **you** (as a shepherd/pastor/leader) should be doing!*

*Balanced Shepherding in the 21st Century
Church (Ezekiel 34)*

Historical Context

- *Nebuchadnezzar returned to Judah a second time in 597 B.C. in response to Jehoiachin's rebellion. In this incursion Jerusalem was brought in subjection to Babylon, and 10,000 captives were taken to Babylon, among whom was the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1–3; 2 Kings 24:8–20; 2 Chron. 36:6–10). (Bible Knowledge Commentary Volume 1, Page 1327)*

- *1:1–2. When God appeared to Ezekiel to inaugurate his prophetic ministry, it was **in the 30th year, in the fourth month on the fifth day**; it was also **the 5th year of the exile of King Jehoiachin**.... this was July 31, 593 b.c. “The 30th year” probably referred to Ezekiel’s age. As a priest (v. 3) this was the age he would normally have entered the Lord’s service.*
- *Ezekiel had been taken into captivity with King Jehoiachin in March of 597. He was one of **the exiles** who had been resettled by **the Kebar River**—a canal off the Euphrates River that flowed to the east of Babylon (Bible Knowledge Commentary)*

- Ezekiel's task was to announce an indictment against the leaders of Israel for their failure as shepherds of the nation.
- God then announces through the prophet that He will be taking over the Shepherding of Israel and in so doing, defines the role of a righteous shepherd.

The indictment – how not to shepherd.

- *34:1 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? 3 You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock...*
 - *Self centered*
 - *Viewing the “flock” as a means to personal ends*

• 4 You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. 5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. 6 My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them...

- Neglect of individual and corporate needs*
- Failure to pursue the wandering*

- *7 “ ‘Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 8 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, 9 therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 10 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.*

The Righteous Remedy

- *11 “ ‘For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. 12 As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. 13 I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land.*

- *14 I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. 16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.*

The Effective 21st century Shepherd possesses...

- An Assurance of His Call (Lk. 4:18-21)
- A Clear Understanding of His Biblical Role and Identity (Jn. 10:30; Jn. 14:6)
- A clear sense and understanding of His Mission (Mk. 10:45; Lk. 19:10)



Our Calling

- *“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers -- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”* (I Pet. 5:2-3)



Our Task Ezekial 34

- **Leading**
 - *“I will bring them into their own land...”* (13)
- **Feeding**
 - *“I will tend them in good pasture...”* (14)
- **Guarding/Protecting/Tending**
 - *“I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.”* (16)



- *The challenge for many 21st century shepherds is not a rejection of shepherding, but a misunderstanding of the responsibilities of a shepherd.*
- *Most 20th century shepherds were trained to feed and to tend. We were not taught to lead, nor were we taught how to keep the responsibilities of our calling in balance. mdg*



Maintaining the Shepherding Balance

- **Feeding without Leading...**
 - results in *apathy* -- a fold full of fat sheep going nowhere!
- **Leading without Feeding...**
 - results in *anarchy* -- starving sheep scattered along the trail, eating anything they can find, wherever they can find it.
- **Tending without Feeding or Leading...**
 - results in *anxiety* -- hunger, boredom, discontent, and eventual mutiny in the “*fold*.”



Feeding without Leading...

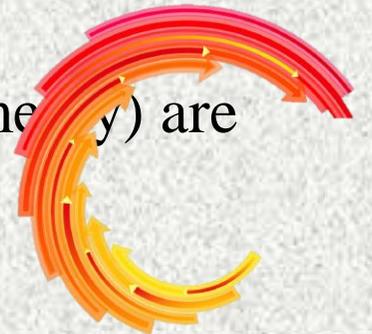
- The Peril of gifted teachers...
 - *“If I just keep the flock well fed through preaching and teaching the flock will flourish.”*
 - *NO it won't. **Apathy** will descend and the flock will begin to act like bored retirees at an endless buffet. Demands for greater variety on the menu will escalate. The lost will remain lost. The church will gradually become immobile.*
 - *There is a significant difference between describing the destination from the pulpit and leading them to it.*

Leading without Feeding...

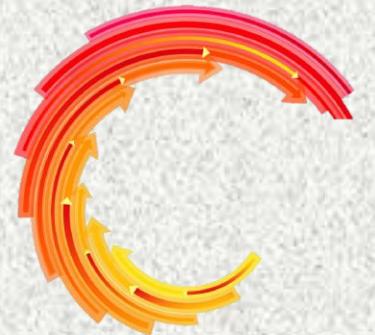
- The peril of gifted Administrators
 - *“If we get adequately organized, systematized, and programmed the church will flourish.”*
 - *NO it won't. Without adequate spiritual nourishment the flock will quickly become exhausted by the activity, detach from it, and begin seeking nourishment from any source available.*
 - Ultimately results in ***anarchy*** -- starving sheep scattered along the trail, eating anything they can find, wherever they can find it.

Tending without Feeding or Leading...

- The Peril of gifted caregivers.
 - *“If I just keep on caring tenderly for the needs of people the church will thrive.”*
 - *NO, it won't. It will become self-absorbed, toxic, **anxious**, and terminal. ex. “Do you want to get well?” (John 5:6b) (There are a number of tempting advantages to remaining “sick.”)*
- Caution from the Health-care industry:
 - Without a clear sense of purpose, excellent organization, and healthful nutrition a hospital would, in time, become a mortuary.
 - All over America tender-hearted shepherds (many with the gift of mercy) are busy creating “ecclesiastical mortuaries.”



- *The **most neglected** element of the three tasks of the Shepherd in most long-established smaller churches (and nearly all rural churches) is **Leading**.*



Understanding the Pastor's Identity/Role

- *Equipper* (Ephesians 4)
- *Servant/Leader* (Mark 10)
 - Leadership with out service will destroy credibility.
 - Service without leadership will destroy authority.
- A **clear understanding** (on the part of both Pastor and church) **of the Pastor's role** as an equipper and servant/leader is a vital component of overcoming Inertia – reestablishing biblical momentum.



Imbalance -- **Leader** / Servant

- The current favorite “alternate” identity within larger churches is **Corporate “CEO”**
 - Caution: **Reducing Pastoral Identity** to that of a corporate CEO may gradually result in an unbiblical separation between leader(s) and congregation and will, in time, change church identity from organism to organization.



Imbalance -- **Servant** / Leader

- An alternative identity for pastors of smaller churches -- “**parish servant**”
 - Caution: In rural culture a pastor who embraces the identity of parish servant while neglecting leadership will be cast in the role of “**hired hand**” in the eyes of his congregational “employers.”
 - If this happens, virtually all future potential for effective pastoral leadership is forfeit.



- *What tends to be the most emphasized element of the Shepherd's task in your ministry?*
- *What tends to be the most neglected element in your ministry?*
- *What steps are you going to take to restore biblical balance?*



- The larger the church, the greater the potential to maintain balance through staffing – the greater the potential to utilize specialists.
- The accompanying danger is that the congregation may abdicate their responsibility and opportunity to be engaged in personal ministry. “*We hired them. Let them handle it.*”

- The smaller the church the greater the need for the senior leader(s) to operate as generalists with special attention to maintaining a balanced approach in shepherding.
 - The accompanying danger lies in personal limits of time, talent, and energy – and the tendency to “default” to our personal strength and preference.

- Expect criticisms of leadership to arise from individual preferences and giftedness.
 - *“If I was the pastor of a church I would see to it that there was a lot more ...”*
- Utilize criticism as a measure of ministry balance.
 - Who is doing the criticizing?
 - What are their primary gifts?
 - Are their concerns supported?
 - What aspect of shepherding needs greater attention?

Questions?