

# Shepherding the Flock

*"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."  
(Acts 20:28)*



Shepherds in Scripture

This lesson may be used as a self-study guide or as a discussion lesson within a small group. It is designed to generate discussion about shepherds throughout the Bible and the way in which Scripture uses this metaphor.

The metaphor of shepherd and sheep is one of the most common in Scripture (used over 500 times.) If we are to understand New Testament eldership then we need to see how this metaphor was used in the Old Testament and what role elders filled in the life of Israel.

## 1. God is Shepherd

Read Psalm 23. God is here described as Shepherd. Write below the ways in which God shepherded David according to this Psalm. What do these verses tell us about God and what do they tell us about David.

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What does Isaiah 40:11 say about God as Shepherd?

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## 2. Old Testament Shepherds

In his excellent book, *Biblical Eldership: Mentor's Guide*, Alexander Strauch describes Job as a model for Old Testament eldership. He defines the eldership structure of Old Testament as: *"A collective form of leadership in which the most qualified and respected men shared equally the leadership of the community that is, in position, authority, and responsibility."* To understand New Testament eldership requires us to understand something about Old Testament elders.

Read the verses below and describe the character of Job. Also note those characteristics that show him to be an elder among the people.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Leadership, Mentor's Guide*. Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1996.

Job 1:1, 4, 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Job 4:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

Job 29:7,8 \_\_\_\_\_

Job 29:12-17, 21 \_\_\_\_\_

Job 30:25 \_\_\_\_\_

Job 31:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Describe David as a shepherd after reading Psalm 78:70-72

What type of shepherd is God desire (Jeremiah 3:15)?

### 3. Jesus, the Chief Shepherd

Read John 10:11-14. Describe Jesus as shepherd from this passage.

Why is Jesus called the chief Shepherd in 1 Peter 5:4?

In his book, *They Smell Like Sheep*<sup>2</sup>, Lynn Anderson says that a shepherd has a flock and the relationship they share is based on at least three qualities of spiritual leadership: *availability, commitment, and trust*.

This three-fold description certainly describes God who is always available to speak to us through his Word and who will always listen to us in prayer. His commitment was shown first in his Creation and then in the sending of his Son into this world. If we are to follow him, we must trust him. He inspires this trust because he is always faithful.

Job, the Old Testament prophets, David, and the Old Testament Patriarchs exhibited these qualities though they sometimes failed.

Jesus, our chief Shepherd like God the Father, perfectly demonstrate what it is to be a true Shepherd. As chief Shepherd Jesus is our example.

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<sup>2</sup> Anderson, Lynn. *They Smell Like Sheep*, Vol. 1. New York, NY: Shuster, 1997.

Those who serve among us in the church as elders need to be available to the flock. This requires time and with time comes commitment. No one is capable of serving as an elder if he is distrusted by the flock. Trust must be earned and comes after much time with the sheep.

*Think about spiritual men who are available, committed, and trusted. Why do you think this way about them and how are they different from others?*