

Dealing with Sheep. 1

N 10:1

*"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but
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climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate
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is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep
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listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has
brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because
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they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away
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from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of
speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.*

JN 10:7

*Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the
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sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not
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listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come
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in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I
have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

JN 10:11

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the
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sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the
wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock
13
and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing
for the sheep.*

JN 10:14

*"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--
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just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the
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sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.
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They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The
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reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No
one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it
down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."*

Many times in scripture the imagery of the shepherd is used to give the reader a clearer picture of the requirements of a Christians towards the people they are responsible for. The concept depicted in the picture of a shepherd is a logical one as the original readers knew the work of the shepherd and the relationship he had to his sheep. The other aspect is that Israel's leaders came from shepherding stock as Tidball states, pp1 "The shepherd was a natural figure to choose for a people whose roots lay in nomadic life and whose greatest leaders, Moses (Isa 63:11) and David (Psalm 78:70-72), had been shepherds." (Tidball, 1999, 45) Furthering this concept the metaphor was used to describe kingly leadership. Pp2. "Among the peoples of the Ancient Near East the title 'shepherd' was commonly applied to their kings and rulers." (Tidball, 1999, 134)

Comment [1]:

Comment [2]:

Comment [3]:

These images have been distorted as they have transferred to our present understanding. This is due to the difference in cultural understanding of the shepherd's role in the west. This is particularly true here in Australia where we see a remarkably different way in which sheep are managed. The management of the sheep affects the role of the shepherd and thus creates for us a different vision of the role of a pastor when the metaphor is used. Pp3 "Unlike Western shepherds who drive their sheep, often using a sheep dog, the shepherds of the Near East, both now and in Jesus' day lead their flocks, their voice calling them on." (Carson, 1991, 383)

Comment [4]:

One of the common denominators, both in the Near East and in the West, is that the job is not easy and has definite risks, "the shepherd's job was tiring, manly and sometimes dangerous." (Carson, 1991, 386) Some things don't change with culture or time.

Tidball places a perspective on the shepherd's role that is worth noting by saying "it is right to stress that the work of the shepherd involved as much toughness as tenderness, as much courage as comfort. The shepherd today must still be a man of courage, for that is what it takes to enter the darkness of another man's lostness and pain, to share with him his bewilderment, his anguish and suffering." (Tidball, 1999, 48) The toughness and courage is a great image for what is needed in the care of others in a christian context.. Perhaps this is why the imagery of the shepherd is so appropriate.

The bible's use of the shepherd example goes further than this though. It contains elements of the whole experience of the shepherd and indeed includes the experience of the flock also. "The Bible and the church through the ages have used the image of the shepherd and flock to describe God and his people, and church (or synagogue) leaders and their congregations." (Pamplin, 2002, 1)

The concept of the pastoral carer taking on a 'shepherding' role is both helpful and logical as "A Pastor is really a shepherd. A shepherd is someone who looks after sheep. This image is used in both the Old and New Testaments to describe the way God looks after his people and the way God wants us to look after each other." (intelligentchristian, 2003, 2) This is not just though a description of the Pastor of a church but anyone who is in leadership within God's church. **Pastoral care is the responsibility of all, not just the Pastor.** Sure the Pastor has a different role within that care but all are responsible. For a church to be a safe church, a caring church and a loving church all are to be involved in pastoral care so these images of a shepherd applies to me, you, them every body, (sounds like a line out of the blues brothers) pp4 Part do discipleship learning to pastorally care for others.

Comment [5]:

The implications of biblical usage of the metaphor of the christian carer being seen as a shepherd give us many images and much instruction on effective caring for people in need. John10:1-17, has a number of images that relate to being a complete carer. The logic of the image used to communicate the principles of care would have been clear to the original readers, but unfortunately much of the image is lost on contemporary Christians. Martin Thornton states pp5 "A flock without a shepherd is tragic, a shepherd without a flock is ridiculous." (Thornton, 1964, 46) There is a real sense of belonging in Jesus' concept of shepherd and flock. Within this passage in John, the image of the shepherd is clarified and expanded to the analogies that flow from the shepherd's work. The shepherd is described as the gate, or the position that stops intruders breaking in to disrupt or destroy the flock. In the early section of the passage the shepherd enters through the gate, (v1-5)

Comment [6]:

pp6 10:1

*"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate,
but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the
gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the
sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When
he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him
because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will
run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."*

Comment [7]:

Notice a couple of things here.

1. It is about care and safety. That is why we talk about this building being a safe place. But the church is people so the people need to be kept safe.

2. Notice v3 about a watchman. Pastoral care is not just left to Jesus, but includes pastors and elders, actually from my reading of scripture pastoral care is a responsibility of every christian. I may visit someone if someone rings up and says they need a visit, but I will also ask you what you have done to help that person, just as the watchman opens the door in teamwork, so to I have the expectation we will all care for each other. I have a regular visitation process, yet I expect others to be involved in visitation, contacting, checking on people.
3. The sheep's job is to follow. Too often in contemporary church we have so many leaders we have forgotten the art of following. Our primary task is to follow Jesus. That also means following those He places in leadership. (More about this during the year)

then in verses seven and eight, Jesus becomes the gate. "Some scholars suppose that in v7 Jesus is the gate to the sheep, deciding which putative shepherd may gain access to the sheep, while in v9 he becomes the gate for the sheep, allowing them ready entrance and egress." (Carson, 1991, 384)

JN 10:7
Pp7. 8 *Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*

Comment [8]:

This spells out Jesus aim in our lives! Salvation then care!

We see that Jesus furthers the imagery by explaining the ideal of a good shepherd. This of course has messianic overtones due to the fact that Jesus himself achieved what he described to be the characteristics of a good shepherd, that being laying down one's life.

"The good shepherd stands ready to sacrifice his total self for the sake of the sheep." (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1998) Jesus shows us here that his death is a fulfillment of this but also a standard set for our care of others.

We see in the following verses a real concept of commitment to the sheep.

JN 10:11
Pp8. 12 *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*

Sure some hired hands may stick it out, but often, the hireling does not put as much into his work as the owner. If Jesus has the commitment to his people enough even to go to His death for Him, what does He expect of us. The same. Sometimes, not often today. But He does expect a commitment to each other that does the best for the sheep. No running away when we don't like things, no leaving people in the lurch when they need us etc.

Comment [9]:

Pp8 care for people is shown by the commitment we have to them in the hard bits of relationship.

Pp 9 do we care enough to be honest with people?

Pp10 Do we care enough to hang in even when we disagree with them?

Comment [10]:

Listen to this!!!

JN 10:14 15
Pp11. *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the*
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sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.
17
They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The
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reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Comment [11]:

The big picture – sheep in other pens. Other places other churches, other denominations. They too are obedient.

But too notice Jesus comment about giving His life.

Pp12 He put His life on the line.

Comment [12]:

He chose to die for us!!

Comment [13]:

If we follow His example –

Pp13 we choose to be involved in people's lives. To give, to give beyond expectation.

Comment [14]:

What is our response?