

Developing A Shepherding Strategy

Intro:

Paul to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28 - 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.

Shepherding the flock well takes:

1. Conviction
2. A deep love for people
3. A Plan
4. A Team
5. Hard work empowered by the Holy Spirit

******Shepherding the flock well is more difficult as you grow!***

Putting Together an Effective Shepherding Strategy: 5 Steps

Step #1: Prioritize the seven key elements to an effective shepherding strategy.

1. *The strategy must be Biblical.*
 - As shepherds, we take our cues from God and His Word, not a CEO and the world of secular business. God's Word gives us the instruction and guidance we need to shepherd for His glory in His way.
2. *The strategy must be systematic.*
 - It must be intentional and purposeful.
3. *The strategy must be comprehensive.*
 - In order to be effective, the model must be inclusive of all the sheep. This includes each and every individual within a congregation.

4. *The strategy must include the four shepherding functions.*
 - These functions are: knowing, feeding, leading, and protecting the flock.

5. *The strategy must be relational.*
 - The strategy must be committed to personal, incarnational relationships with each member of the flock.

6. *The strategy must include accountability.*
 - Here we are talking about shepherds lovingly holding one another accountable in their joint efforts of caring for the flock.

7. *The strategy must prioritize prayer.*
 - Shepherds must be committed to seeking the Lord in prayer on behalf of the sheep and on behalf of one another.

Step #2: Understand the difference between Macro and Micro-level shepherding.

Macro-level (Congregational Level):

Micro-level (Individual Level):

Step #3: Delegate the care of the flock among the shepherds.

- 1) *Biblically, the primary spiritual shepherds are **pastor-elders**.*
 - Shepherding should also happen in the leadership of deacons, Sunday School teachers, small group leaders, youth and children's ministry leaders, etc.

- 2) *As **pastor-shepherds**, we are called by God, and charged in Scripture, to love and serve the sheep within a congregation individually.*

- Each sheep must be known and cared for on a **micro-level**.
- This is why it so vital for individual shepherds to know the particular sheep for whom they are responsible.
- *As leaders, we must be intentional in our delegation of the flock among the shepherds of the congregation.*

3) There are several **different ways** that a church can go about delegating the members among the shepherds.

3 popular approaches include:

- Delegation by geographical location.
- Delegation according to small group communities within the body.
- Delegation by draft.

Step #4: Developing AND Practicing the four Biblical-functions of shepherding (knowing, feeding, leading, and protecting) the flock.

Biblical Function #1: The Shepherd KNOWS the Flock.

- 1) The most basic function and responsibility of the shepherd is to know his sheep.
 - In the words of Dr. Tim Witmer, *"Before a shepherd can provide proper care he must know the identification of the sheep for whom he is responsible. Jesus not only identifies himself as the good shepherd, but also says, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14).¹*
- 2) As shepherds, it is our responsibility to get to know our flock, one sheep at a time. This is why it is so critical for shepherds to establish regular personal contact with each individual sheep.

****Where it started at Calvary – Is it really too much to create a church culture where sheep are contacted by a pastor-elder once a week?****

¹ Tim Witmer, *Like Sheep Without A Shepherd*, 103.

****Not only must we KNOW the sheep, they must KNOW their shepherds.*

There are two key practices for carrying this out:

1. Pastor-shepherds will keep track of worship attendance weekly.
When an individual misses a weekend worship gathering, shepherds will give a call or send a note to those under their care who have been absent...***to encourage them and let them know they are praying for them.***
2. Pastor-shepherds will make contact with **each household** under their care by email, phone, or visit once a month for the purpose of personal pastoral care, prayer and encouragement.

Biblical Function #2: The Shepherd FEEDS the Flock.

1) God's people need shepherd-leaders who will teach them rightly, feeding them and helping them find nourishment for their souls from God's Word.

When those we lead are without knowledge and understanding of God's Word, their spiritual lives will suffer great harm. As we read in Hosea 4:5-6...

"You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you. So I will destroy your mother— my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children."

2) It is vital that shepherds seek to FEED each individual sheep under their care with the spiritual food they need.

Along with encouraging people to be part of the corporate worship gathering on a weekly basis, shepherds should seek to help feed the sheep on a micro-level by:

1. Connecting individuals to appropriate Sunday School classes, small groups, discipleship groups, Bible studies, and other learning opportunities.

2. Meet with them for life-on life discipleship.
3. Teaming them up with an individual who can serve as their spiritual mentor or biblical counselor if needed or desired.

Biblical Function #3: The Shepherd LEADS the Flock

1) Sheep need a shepherd or they will wander.

God's people need leaders. They need shepherds to guide them and lead them in the ways of Jesus and God's Word, or they will wander.

They will wander away from the pasture of God's truth and into dangerous pastures of deceit and darkness, which lead to death.

2) This is why an effective shepherding model intentionally includes three key leadership strategies to help guide the sheep.

1. **Seeking to lead the sheep through life example** in the areas of personal godliness, family life, life in the church body, and living on mission.
2. **Counseling individuals,** couples, and families, helping them to discern God's leading in their lives.
3. Looking for opportunities to cast the vision and strategy of the church to individuals, helping them to see **1) how they fit** and **2) how they can grow and develop into leaders themselves.**

Biblical Function #4: The Shepherd PROTECTS the Flock

- 1) Along with knowing the flock, feeding the flock, and leading the flock, the shepherd must also protect the flock.

Sheep are in constant need of protection. In Acts 20:28-30, we read these important words for shepherd leaders:

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseer. Be shepherds of the church of God,

which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them."

- 2) **Sheep cannot protect themselves.** They won't work together like other herd animals to protect each other. They will allow the wolf to come and take and kill. Wolves are cunning and can cause tremendous damage to the flock.
- People who continually cause division, teach false doctrine, or foster sin, are often wolves who work to destroy the flock of God.

It is for this reason that shepherds should seek to protect the sheep individually. How?

1. On a macro-level, our preaching should help our people understand and identify various types of false teaching in our world, in our culture, and in the church.
2. Shepherds follow the instruction of Matthew 18:15-16 when the need arises to confront wandering sheep. The hope is that these wandering sheep will be restored through this process, while healthy sheep are protected from those who would potentially lead them astray.
3. Shepherds should seek to be aware of life decisions and situations in which private instruction and warning from the Scriptures are appropriate.

Step #5: Discussing the health of the flock on a regular basis.

In order to be effective over the long haul, a weekly or bi-weekly shepherding meeting for the purpose of consistent discussion, follow-up, and prayer will be vital.

7 Key Components To An Effective Shepherding Meeting

1. Review new contacts and note prayer concerns for the flock, praying together for them.

2. Update information on individuals, including changes in address, phone, e-mail, etc.
3. Note any drift toward inactivity among members and regular attenders.
4. Rejoice in the spiritual growth you are seeing in individuals.
5. Assign new members and regular attenders to individual shepherds.
6. Assign new visitors to be followed up on by individual shepherds.
7. "Joy Bomb" those who need extra encouragement and love.

NOTE: Once or twice a year, do an annual review of your flock. During this review, celebrate what God is doing through the shepherding ministry and recommit yourselves to pursue the weak, wandering, and stray sheep. Also evaluate where each of your sheep in the congregation are in regards to their personal spiritual health. This will include an evaluation of worship attendance, small group/Sunday School commitment, and ministry involvement.

REVIEW: Putting Together an Effective Shepherding Strategy: 5 Steps

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Step #4: *Developing AND Practicing the four Biblical-functions of shepherding (knowing, feeding, leading, and protecting) the flock.*

Step #5: *Discussing the health of the flock on a regular basis.*