

**1 Peter 5:1-5**  
**(John 10:11-18)**  
**“Shepherding God’s People”**

**Introduction**

Please understand that this is not merely a word for pastors and elders. It is a word to every parent who has been entrusted with a child’s life, to every friend who realizes that he is in fact his brother’s and his sister’s keeper. We are relationally connected to one another and responsible for one another. Nothing that you or I choose to do fails to have consequences for those whose lives are touched by ours. There is really nothing that I do that only affects me. The question is whether or not we are willing to take responsibility for helping shepherd the flock of which we are a part: our family, our circle of friends, our congregation and community.

But Peter’s language may raise a problem: Is the role of a shepherd an appropriate model of leadership in a fast-paced, high tech culture like ours? Why cling to rural models when we probably don’t even have a farmer in this congregation? We would do well to remember that the role of shepherd was not even respected by the any of the dominant cultures of the ancient world at the very time that the Bible was promoting it as the supreme picture of godly leadership. The Israelites only had to say that they were shepherds to be given a wide berth by the Egyptians. Yet our magisterial biblical models of godly leadership – Abraham and his sons, Moses, David – all went to shepherding school with real live sheep before God entrusted them with the care of his people. *God chose shepherds to do his greatest work, because his greatest work in every age is shepherding.*

Of course, you may protest that my illustrations fail to make my point: the Israelites were in fact an agrarian and pastoral people, even if the great empires of their day were not. So, it might be argued, the metaphor worked for them but not for others. But what of this: our Lord Jesus – a carpenter by trade – said, “I am the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.” So it should not really surprise us that as he hands his ministry on to others, Simon Peter, who also had not been a shepherd but a fisherman and had first been called by Jesus in terms appropriate to his self-understanding – “I will make you fishers of men” – sums it all up by describing himself as “a shepherd of God’s flock.” Peter, of course, had even deeper and more poignant reasons than these for no longer defining himself as a fisher of men but rather as a shepherd.

This man who had once been so proud and self-confident was haunted, I think, all through his life and ministry by his own awful failure in the greatest hour in human history. At the crucial moment when time turned on its most central hinge, when the deeds of every person involved would be forever remembered, Peter had done what he never dreamed possible: he had turned and run from the one he loved and revered above all others. Although he had promised to stand with Jesus to the very end, when the soldiers appeared Peter’s courage fled and before that awful night

was over he had denied Jesus three times and run away like all the rest. But, following his resurrection, Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to recant his denials, three times asking him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” and each time entrusting the care of his sheep to Peter. *This was the defining moment of Peter’s life: not his failure, but his restoration, when the good shepherd who had changed his name from Simon to Peter now changed his identity from fisherman to shepherd.* Here in our text we see him as an old man passing on his ministry to all of us who have heard the Good Shepherd say, “Do you really love me? Then feed my lambs.”

Please note that the Bible knows nothing of elder boards that meet and do business, but rather of elders and deacons living for Christ and providing godly servant leadership to the people of God. This is what each Christian is called to learn to be and to do and what the elders are called to model and teach. So these verses are for each of us. Our corporate and financial realities require boards of oversight, but that is not the biblical task of the elder.

## **Body**

### **1. If we are shepherds of God’s flock, how are we to understand our calling?**

*Gather the flock: Seek and save the lost!*

*Feed the flock. Study, meditate upon and teach the Scriptures!*

*Lead the flock. Pray and meditate upon God’s truth until you learn to know his voice – then follow him as the people follow you!*

*Protect the flock. Give your life for the sheep, protecting them from false teaching, confronting them in their sin, standing up for them when they are attacked!*

### **2. What should be our attitude toward our calling?**

*Shepherd the flock not because it is your duty, but because it is your desire.*

*Shepherd the flock not because of what you can get, but because of what you can give.*

*Shepherd the flock not by telling them where to go, but by showing them where to go.*

### **3. What is promised to those who faithfully pursue this calling?**

*“The crown of glory that will never fade away.”*

## Conclusion

We are promised a crown of glory that, unlike the fading glory of this world, will never fade away. We seek men's praise, when God has promised a day when he will look upon these little lives that seem so small and insignificant, that so often seem a failure, and he will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your Master's happiness!" (Mat 25:23). Hear the promise of the One who will never leave you nor forsake you: "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

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