

Study 28

THE REQUIREMENTS OF AN ELDER

First Peter 5:1-4

Sheep are interesting creatures. Their most outstanding attribute is their intelligence. Not their vast amount of it- but actually their general lack of it! To put it another way: sheep are dumb! And this is the analogy that God uses of people. Not just His people, but all people.

1. What do all sheep need? (Num. 27:16-17; 1Ki. 22:17; Ezek. 34:12; Zech. 10:2; Mtt. 9:36)

As people are continually referred to as *sheep* in the Bible, God is repeatedly referred to as a *Shepherd*. The concept of a shepherd with his sheep is a warm and friendly one. Generally we think of shepherds, who hang around cute fluffy sheep all day, as being gentle and caring. It was their responsibility to watch over the sheep. Jesus gave the illustration of two types of shepherds in John 10.

2. Note the descriptions of the two types of shepherds in John 10:11-14. How could these two types of shepherds be described?

The irony of God being *the Great Shepherd*, is that He became *the Lamb of God*! He became one of *us*. This shows something of the heart of God. The one who would be a shepherd, would do well to remember that he too is a *sheep*. (Many shepherds today develop a proud heart and forget that they too, are actually sheep.)

3. What was Peter's instructions to the elders about their attitude toward sheep in 5:3?

To follow Christ is to follow The Shepherd. To become like Christ is to become like the Shepherd. Therefore, the more we hang around Jesus, the more we will develop a shepherd's heart. So to ignore the heart of Christ, and try to lead His people, will cause us to become sheep-herders rather than shepherds. The difference is where we stand in relation to the sheep:

4. What does verse three say that the shepherd should be to the flock?

Ultimately a believer's relationship with the LORD is determined by their relationship with the LORD. They are accountable to the Shepherd who has promised to tend and care for them as His own sheep (Psalm 23:1-6). No believer can hold another believer responsible for their poor relationship with God. But God has placed within His Church, people that He has called to be "under-shepherds". These are people that He has gifted with the capacity to lead other sheep. They are not replacements for God. They are not the priests of the flock, but they are given shepherd-like responsibilities.

5. According Peter, a shepherd's first task is to:
- (a) serve as masters over the flock
 - (b) be employed as spiritual guides to the busy among the flock
 - (c) serve as overseers (exercise oversight)
 - (d) fleece the sheep.

As Christians we are all called to be shepherds by virtue of wanting to imitate Christ (1Pet. 2:21). Yet, God calls people into leadership, who are especially called to be shepherds. God yearns for His people to be shepherded (Mark 6:34; Acts 20:28;

Ezek. 34:5). But throughout history, there have been times when God's shepherds have either abused or taken advantage of their sheep. On one occasion God expressed His disappointment with these shepherds through the prophet Ezekiel.

6. Based on Ezekiel 34:1-16, what can we observe as God's expectations of His shepherds?

7. According to 1Peter 5:2, what should not be the motivation of shepherds?

What should be their motivation? _____

The New Testament refers to shepherds as elders. In our modern language, we use the word "Pastor" in the same that the New Testament uses the word "elder". But the word pastor actually means "shepherd". A shepherd was one who watched over sheep, tended to sheep (cleaned them, carried them when they were weary, mended their sick), led them to secure pasture, protected them from wolves and attackers, sheared them (to make them fruitful, and comfortable), and most importantly fed them.

8. Shepherds/elders/pastors are not to be motivated by material gain. Instead, they should be motivated by the knowledge that they will be rewarded in a special way by whom? (1Pt. 5:4)

Amen.