

Toward a Shepherd's Heart

Detailed Outline Part 1 of 2

Introduction (Acts 20:17–38)

Imitation is the best form of learning. Discipleship in the ancient world was dependent upon imitation. A disciple would live with his master, learn from him, watch him, and do as he did. Learn by hearing, watching, and doing. There was no disconnect between the Master's teaching and his life.

Paul discipled people of Ephesus for three whole years (Acts 20:31)! He didn't know how to make lukewarm Christians! His goal was producing fully committed followers of Jesus Christ. To him there wasn't any other kind of Christian.

And as he leaves never to see them again, he meets one last time with the elders. Luke recorded the essentials of Paul's message so all elders and leaders through the centuries can audit the final lesson Paul has for them. In this message he summarizes the model of pastoral ministry he lived while with them.

I recommend every elder/leader memorize this passage. Remind yourselves of it on a regular basis.

We are going to select out a few things from this passage to highlight his pastoral heart. He doesn't get in to details like what's the best time of day to visit someone. I think what he is saying here can be summarized in this way:

I. The Best Pastoral Ministry Begins with Modeling the Kind of Life You Want Others to Lead.

A. Modeling makes your life an open book (Acts 20:19).

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other (1 Cor. 4:6 NASB)

B. Modeling pictures the goal for pastoral care—you lead by example.

1. Spiritual leaders live the kind of life they point people to. You can't influence behavior in others that you do not live yourself.
2. For example, I was speaking with a Muslim man recently, a friendly conversation. He was explaining why in his religion women cover themselves in public. He spoke eloquently on women wanting modesty, and not to encourage men to look with any kind of lustful desire. I asked him if his wife wore one, he said no. Not a good advertisement for his belief!
3. Another example: People see how you handle money, that you are not in debt. You are positioned so that you can counsel people about debt issues with integrity.
4. Shepherding at heart is about leading, influencing people in the Christian life, no matter their circumstances.

C. Modeling provides a foundation for shepherding care.

1. People see your faith, how you apply Scripture to life situations.
 - a) How can people know how to deal with discouragement, for example, if they never see how you deal with discouragement?
 - b) This doesn't mean you have to experience exact thing someone else is going through. But it's the principle of letting people see you dealing with difficulties.
2. Pastoral caring for people is helping them in the midst of their life circumstances to walk with Christ. This may take place through:
 - a) Visiting them.
 - b) Helping them in some way.
 - c) Encouraging or admonishing them.
 - d) Comforting them, listening to them.
 - e) Speaking words of Scripture to them.
 - f) Praying with them.
3. But ultimately, in doing these things, pastoral care is helping people to:
 - a) Fix their eyes on Christ.
 - b) Be comforted by his Spirit.
 - c) Draw their strength from him.
 - d) Follow his lead.
 - e) Bring glory to him—in whatever circumstances they find themselves.
4. We become Christ's hands, his feet, his mouth.
 - a) Our goal is not that people would see us but see Christ.
 - b) We are simply his tools.
 - c) We don't want them to become dependent upon human instruments, but on the one who wields those instruments.
5. He is the "Chief Shepherd" and he knows his sheep. This creates a platform for encouragement care
6. Illustration: I recently met a brother who was discouraged because many in his church were rejecting him and his leadership. It reminded me of a time early in my ministry when I had gone through a time of rejection by the people I was trying to serve. I sought counsel at that time from an older, godly brother. He shared with me that he had a similar experience. (It seems like most men trying to serve the Lord have had some experience with rejection!) I remembered thinking at that time that if he could survive and be used of the Lord, there was hope for me. So I shared my experience with the brother who had

come to me for counsel. We talked about pain, loneliness, and feelings of failure. He was encouraged that I could relate to him, and it gave him hope.

D. Modeling sets the stage for restorative care

1. Restorative care has to do with helping a brother turn from his erring ways.
2. You can't restore someone unless you yourself are living the life of integrity. Nothing will undermine your efforts more than lack of credibility. People will dismiss you as shallow.
3. You must be clear about your goal in restorative care, which is to restore the believer to a Christ-like walk.
4. If your goal is restoring the church's reputation, to banish the trouble-maker or remove an annoyance, then your integrity is lacking. Is that what you want the erring believer to be restored to?

Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. (1 Cor. 11:1)

5. For example, when you want to teach a child how to tie a knot, you might say, "Here, let me show you how to do it." This is not a matter of arrogance, but one of teaching. And in the same way as you need to know how to tie a knot, before you can teach a child how to do it, so to you need to know how to live the way you are trying to help people to live! You must teach and model what you know or you will go stagnant and be ineffective in your pastoral care.

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (Phil. 3:17)

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Phil. 4:9)

6. Peter instructs elders to shepherd in such a way as
*"[not] lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."
(1 Peter 5:3)*
7. So Scripture is drenched with examples of modeling pastoral care.

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Detailed Outline *Part 2 of 2*

II. Paul's Model (Acts 20:17–38)

A. He was humble (v. 19a).

1. Paul had every earthly right to be arrogant or have a sense of entitlement, from a human point of view. He was, after all, a great apostle, wildly “successful” in ministry.
2. But, he reminded the Ephesian elders that while he was with them worked with his own hands, a very humble profession (34). He was a tentmaker by trade.
3. Also, Paul in his ministry at Ephesus submitted himself to the indignity of opposition, the Jews plotting against him (19b).
4. He could have said, “*I don't deserve this.*” He could have left Ephesus, but he submitted to that treatment because he cared for the ones who believed. Often caring for others means you get treated poorly.

B. He was hardworking, diligent, and generous (vv. 33–35).

1. A lack of these qualities renders our efforts to care for others as shallow, surface, perfunctory.
2. Sometimes caring for others means rolling up your sleeves, grabbing a shovel, hammer, wrench, or broom. Paul shared his stuff with others
3. People tend to accept your spiritual interest and counsel when they see you sharing your stuff with them.

C. He was relational (see his tears, vv. 19b, 31, 37).

1. He felt for them; he was empathetic. This possibly refers to the suffering.
2. There was much love between them all (v. 37).
3. Empathy means you make an emotional connection.
4. It is OK to be scholarly, administrative or a “type A” personality—but people won't be changed by the truth if they don't know that you truly care for them.
5. Empathy is capacity to feel for other people in their experiences. To vicariously feel what they are feel.

D. He was need-oriented (v.20a).

1. Paul determined what was needed and profitable, and he didn't avoid any teaching that was necessary for their good. Paul was issue-oriented.
2. He taught doctrine, but always with a purpose.

3. Shepherding at its core is helping people live the life of Christ.
4. Whatever the problem, the solution is related back somehow to what took place on the cross (see 1 Cor. 1:17, 23, 2:22).

E. He was flexible (v. 20b).

1. Some pastoral care takes place in large groups.
2. But you can only know what is going on in peoples live by spending time with them.
3. A shepherd-elder needs to be able to meet others when they are available: visiting, having coffee, one-minute pastoring events on Sunday morning, five-minute pastoring after bible study meetings, etc.

F. He focused on teaching (v. 21). Two things we teach:

1. Repentance toward God, turning from wrong ways
 - a) Common shepherding needs: Anxiety, fear, wisdom, interpersonal conflict, internal conflict, pain, uncertainty, grief.
 - b) In Christ is all . . .
 - 1) Wisdom, and that counters ignorance
 - 2) Love, which casts out fear
 - 3) Hope, which mitigates anxiety—he holds tomorrow, he is the peacemaker.
 - c) Yes, sometimes people need specialized counseling. But, even then they need pastoral/elder counsel on strengthening their spiritual life.
2. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ – the key to all life’s problems
 - 1) Trusting Christ as we go through problems
 - 2) Trusting Christ to lead us through problems
 - 3) He preached the whole purpose of God and how it relates to Christ

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. (Luke 24:27 NASB95)

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. (Acts 8:35)

G. He was prayerful (v. 36).

III. Shepherding is Not Primarily Exercising the Gift of Mercies.

- A. Shepherding is watching over the spiritual well-being of the people.
- B. Being aware of things that weigh people down, oppress them, take their joy away, unsettle their peace.
- C. Shepherding means to care for people’s spiritual well-being—that affects every area of life.

Counseling and problem solving can take place. But if their spirit is not resting in Christ, any help will be at best temporary and superficial.