

Shepherdology 101
Lesson Fourteen

Shepherdology 101 Outline

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XI. Response to Elders

In our passages that speak to shepherds/overseers/leaders/elders, we find several statements that define how the congregation should relate to its leaders.

A. Promote Peace

Shepherds and sheep need to work at maintaining a harmonious relationship.

Paul exhorts both leaders and those led to “live in peace with one another” (1 Thessalonians 5:13).

The term translated “live in peace” (*eirēneuō*, εἰρηνεύω) is a present imperative.

When sheep and shepherds enjoy a harmonious and peaceful relationship, both doing their part to make it so, benefit will freely flow between them.

B. Value

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13).

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages' (1 Timothy 5:17–18).

“Appreciate” means to know or acknowledge. It involves recognizing someone or what someone does.

To “esteem them very highly” means to hold them in highest respect.

“In love” indicates the currency to be used.

Practically, this means that members of the flock would recognize their shepherds as a precious gift. Their presence is not a burden or bother but a benefit.

In 1 Timothy 5:17, elders who rule well are to be “considered worthy of double honor.”

There is a connection between this response and benefit to the sheep. When a shepherd is considered an asset, his counsel will be sought out. When sheep view their shepherd as a liability, they will avoid him and miss out on the benefits he could offer them.

C. **Obey and Submit**

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

The congregation is to obey (*peithō, πείθω*) and submit (*hupeikō, ὑπέικω*) to its leaders.

“Obey” can denote surrendering to another’s will, as a horse is controlled by a bit (James 3:3), but it can also be used of persuasion.

But he said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:31).

“Obey” is in the middle voice, which means the recipient of the command acts upon himself.

The second command is “submit.” In this context, it means to follow someone’s direction.

The dual commands in Hebrews 13:17 call the members of a flock to respond to their leaders in two ways: (1) invite them to challenge and change your thinking and (2) then do what they propose.

A reason for this response follows in the explanatory clause, “for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account” (Hebrews 13:17).

D. Remember and Imitate

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith (Hebrews 13:7).

The two commands in this passage are addressed to the flock and complement what we said about shepherds who are “proving to be examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3).

(1) They are called “leaders” (from the verb *hēgeomai*, ἡγεόμαι). As we have noted previously, this means these men governed by assessing and deciding what is best.

(2) Further, they “spoke the word of God.” When these men talked, you heard what God says. They were truth brokers.

(3) The writer proposes that “considering the result of their conduct” makes them worth remembering and emulating. “Result of their conduct” denotes the conclusion of their way of life. This suggests that the lives of these leaders had ended.

4) “Considering” denotes careful ongoing examination.

The second command in this verse, “imitate their faith,” indicates that these men are well-known personal illustrations of prevailing faith.

Others can well imitate the faith of leaders of whom they can say this: “I know these men. They led me. They taught me the truth. They finished strong. They demonstrated the kind of prevailing faith I long to develop.”

For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard (Hebrews 4:2).

Faith unleashes the power of the word to work profound good in those and through those who believe.

Hebrews 13:7 instructs sheep to find senior shepherds who are finishing well, whose joy in the Lord has not diminished with age, who are embracing costly faith, and whose eyes are on their future in Christ.

Summary

Sheep can go solo, but it won't turn out well. When the flock will do four things, they maximize the benefit they receive from their shepherds.

(1) **Promote Peace.** When sheep and shepherds cultivate a harmonious and peaceful relationship, benefit will freely flow between them.

(2) **Value.** When a shepherd is considered a wisdom asset, his counsel will be sought out and effectively applied.

(3) *Obey and Submit.* When the flock views its shepherd as a fitness coach for the soul, they will get stronger (and their shepherd will experience joy).

(4) *Remember and Imitate.* When the flock recalls how shepherds finished well and then follows their lead, their faith will flourish.

XII. **Reward for Under-Shepherds**

In Hebrews 13:17, local church leaders are described as “those who will give an account.”

In Titus 1:7, the overseer is described as “God’s steward.”

Both of these phrases indicate that a shepherd’s accountability, ultimately, is to the Lord.

All that we have studied in Shepherdology 101 orbits around His definition. If we will do what we have studied, we will do exceedingly well.

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Peter 5:1–4).

“And” links a reward to the previous: This reward is promised to those who have shepherded well by shepherding voluntarily, eagerly, and as examples.

The adjective “unfading” only shows up here in the New Testament. A related verb is used in James 1:11 to describe the rich who “fade away” like grass that withers.

In contrast, what is promised to shepherds is a reward that will never fade away.

The “crown of glory” is a metaphorical expression for “to be crowned with glory.”

Shepherds who shepherd well will be crowned with glory that will never wither like grass.

The crowning will happen when the Chief Shepherd returns.

If you will shepherd well those entrusted to your care, in your family and beyond, Jesus extends to you the rock-solid promise of unfading glory for the ages.