

# **Shepherding 101**

Acts 19:1-10

## **All we like sheep...**

An interesting fact of Scripture: it often refers to people, including and sometimes especially God's people, as sheep—it's an analogy. Sometimes it's negative, as in Isaiah 53:6, in the context of the Suffering Servant being crushed for our iniquities: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way" (6).

Sometimes the analogy is tender and sweet, as in John 10, where Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd" (14). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life" (27-28). Sometimes in Scripture, being likened to sheep is a very negative thing—sheep are really dumb and obstinate creatures. But at other times, being likened to sheep is a very positive thing—as the Lord's sheep we are immensely valued and loved by our Good and Great Shepherd.

Phillip Keller, in his classic book, **A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23**: "A serious misconception about sheep is that they can just get along anywhere. The truth is quite the reverse. No other class of livestock requires more careful handling, more detailed direction, than do sheep. [In order to thrive,] the sheep have to be constantly under [the shepherd's] meticulous control and guidance." You know why, don't you? Because sheep are stupid! Without our Good Shepherd, Jesus, we go astray; we turn to our own way; and that only results in spiritual danger or even death. How desperately do sheep need the Shepherd!

And Jesus, knowing our frailties as human sheep, poured out grace upon grace by also giving us human shepherds, who are His under-shepherds. He is the Chief Shepherd, and we elder-pastors are shepherds under His authority and power. So some of us sheep in the Lord's flock are shepherds under Him but over the sheep. But there's a problem. In and of myself, I am stupid just like all the other sheep who are walking in their sheeply flesh. And the last thing you need from your human shepherds is human stupidity. What we really need in them is spiritual maturity, and the mind and heart of our Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

I say all that, because as I was initially thinking through and praying about the first ten verses of Acts 19, I began to see in the apostle Paul a first-rate Christian shepherd—a true pastor—of Christian sheep. But he wasn't always that. Early in his Christian walk, even though he was called to be an apostle, he was not mature enough, ready enough, wise enough to shepherd the Lord's flock.

In today's text, we will see **four essential pastoral ministries**—essentials that the flock of God needs in order to grow in Christ. But before we get to those four essential ministries, I am reminded that there are **two essential qualities** that have to take place in a man's life before he is qualified to be an elder/overseer/shepherd of God's flock.

## Two essential qualities in a human shepherd:

### 1. He must be \_\_\_\_\_ to it (20:28).

Notice who made them overseers: the Holy Spirit. I am convinced that the office of elder/overseer is an office one is called to by the Holy Spirit. He made me and the other elders here elders. It's a calling. Without a calling, there isn't going to be *competence*.

### 2. He must have the \_\_\_\_\_ for it (20:28).

It's certainly possible, and too often occurs, that a man may be called to pastoral ministry, but as time bears out, he doesn't have the character for it. He's not qualified in character according to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. He's not above reproach—he's got disqualifying character issues. And the flock in which he serves pays a dear price for his character flaws.

These are **the essential qualities of godly under-shepherds**: *Calling* with competence, and *character* that exemplifies the character of our Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Before we can even think about **essential pastoral ministries**, we need to make sure we have men with these essential qualities, men who are constantly paying careful attention to themselves, so they can carefully care for the flock.

Now, at the halfway mark, we're ready to focus on **the four essential pastoral ministries** that God's flock needs in order to grow in Christ.

## Four essential pastoral ministries:

### 1. The ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ (1-7).

Last Sunday, in the previous passage, Casey pointed out in 18:26, that a married ministry team, Priscilla and Aquila, pulled to the side Apollos, and corrected that which was lacking in his knowledge of Jesus. **And as an aside**, notice in 18:26 the order of the names. When the couple was first introduced in verse 2, it was Aquila and Priscilla. But here Priscilla's name precedes Aquila's name. When we saw that with Paul and Barnabas, the most prominent of the team was always named first. So as Paul established himself, he was typically first in order. Does this mean that Priscilla was more gifted and prominent than her husband Aquila? Probably. Aquila was no doubt the head of his wife, but he was humble and wise, and allowed his wife's giftedness to shine.

**Verses 1-4:** Paul discovered that these twelve or so men (7) were *disciples* of \_\_\_\_\_ the Baptist, which means they were baptized with John's baptism, in that in repentance, they began looking for the soon coming Messiah. They were *disciples*—saved in the OT sense of the Word, but they had an incomplete picture of the Messiah that John had announced. Most likely they knew of Jesus, and acted on the limited knowledge they had of Him, but they lacked a full understanding of His death, burial, and victorious resurrection. Consequently, they weren't yet true Christians, because the evidence that one is truly saved, is he or she has been baptized by the Spirit upon saving faith in Jesus Christ. And Paul, being the mature, qualified shepherd that he was, set about to correct their flawed theology.

**Verses 5-6:** This was like Samaria *and* Cornelius all over again. Because of this most unusual situation, it took an apostle gifted with the keys of the kingdom to verify that these disciples are now Jesus followers.

One of the most important pastoral ministries is the ministry of correction. We cannot allow God's beloved flock, purchased by the precious blood of Christ, to continue to believe a false doctrine or to be lacking in their understanding of God's Word. So, a qualified human shepherd loves to pull one aside and lovingly instruct. Paul's word to Timothy: "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, *with gentleness correcting* those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

## 2. The ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ (8-10).

Paul was consistent and persistent in the work of evangelizing. Always boldly reasoning and persuading. He was a shepherd to saved sheep. But he was also an evangelist to lost sheep, calling them to come to Jesus. I don't have the gift of evangelism. However, that doesn't mean I can't evangelize. So when God opens the door of opportunity, I speak the gospel into a life. That's what elders do. That's what we all should do. You may not have the gift of evangelism, but that doesn't mean you can't be a witness when God opens the door of opportunity.

## 3. The ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ (9-10).

Paul didn't have the luxury of staying in one place for 33 ½ years. He did his best to strongly establish a church, then he moved on. But Ephesus was a strategic location that offered him a unique opportunity. So, Paul rented the Hall of Tyrannus, and *continued* reasoning and teaching there for two years. Paul's ministry included *staying—continuing* in Ephesus way past normal for an apostle. In contrast, I can *stay*. Your elders *continue to stay*. We understand here the power of long obedience in the same \_\_\_\_\_.

## 4. The ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ (9-10).

**Verse 9:** Some manuscripts add, "from the fifth hour to the tenth hour," that is, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The result: God richly blessed Paul's tireless pastoral ministry efforts so that many churches in the outlying cities were established. Some scholars suggest that perhaps all seven churches of Revelation 2-3 were started at this time: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and in addition, Colossae. What an exciting time! Paul's *continuing, preaching, discipling* is having amazing results.

## Your elders care...

We only \_\_\_\_\_ about our calling as competent shepherds who fulfill our essential pastoral ministries. We only care about looking like, acting like, *and actually being* human shepherds under our Chief Shepherd who effectively care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood! So grow up in Christ with us! And don't be afraid!