

Guidelines for the Exercise of the Lord's Day Prophesying

Message Six : Shepherding according to God

I. Overview:

To shepherd is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock. All the sheep need to be well provided for and well tended to. To shepherd the believers is crucial for their growth in the divine life unto maturity for the building up of the Body of Christ. Shepherding depends on teaching; if we cannot teach, we cannot shepherd. As the Shepherd of our souls, Christ oversees our inward condition, caring for the situation of our inner being. Because our soul is very complicated, we need Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, to shepherd us in our soul. According to God in 1 Peter 5:2 means that we live God; only those who live God can shepherd according to God. When we are one with God, we become God in life and nature and are God in our shepherding of others. In order to have a shepherding life, we need an enlarged heart, a heart to embrace all of God's people. A shepherding life is a life that warms up others by cherishing them in the humanity of Jesus to nourish them in the divinity of Christ with the riches of Christ. The shepherding that builds up the Body of Christ is mutual shepherding.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Expound the Lord's shepherding being in His earthly ministry.

First, the Lord's shepherding was in His earthly ministry. The Lord saw the Israelites as sheep harassed by their leaders; they were cast away like sheep not having a shepherd. The Lord as the Shepherd of God's elect prayed, and God told His sent One to appoint twelve apostles that they might take care of the sheep of God.

B. Explain the shepherding with the Lord's heavenly ministry.

When the Lord stayed with His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension, in one of His appearances, He commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep in His absence, while He is in the heavens. To shepherd is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock. This is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, which is the church.

Day 2 —

A. Explain that in order to shepherd the saints, the elders must be apt to teach.

In order to shepherd the saints, the elders must be apt to teach. In shepherding others by teaching, we do not give them lectures or messages. Rather, we give them edifying and nourishing instructions. According to Ephesians 4, the shepherds and the teachers are one category. This indicates that anyone who would be a shepherd must also be a teacher. Likewise, a good teacher is also a shepherd.

B. Illustrates the application of the shepherding and teaching.

We teach others by what we do. Suppose a new one sitting next to you in a meeting cannot find the book of Haggai. By helping him find this book, you teach him. Perhaps someone else is not familiar with a certain term that is used. By having fellowship with him, you may help him understand the significance of this term. This is shepherding.

Day 3 —

A. Briefly state how Christ is our soul's Shepherd and Overseer.

Christ was our Redeemer in His death on the tree. Now He is our soul's Shepherd and Overseer in the resurrection life within us. Therefore, He is able to guide us and supply us with life. Our soul is our inner being, our real person. Our Lord, as the Shepherd and Overseer of our soul, shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our real person.

B. Expound that Christ our Shepherd takes care of the needs of our soul.

A shepherd takes care of the physical needs of his flock, and Christ our Shepherd takes care of the needs of our soul. He is not the Shepherd of our body; He is the Shepherd of our soul, our inner being. He takes care of our mind, emotion, and will. No doubt, the body does give us many problems. Nevertheless, our real problem is in our soul. But our situation is different in that we have a Shepherd who takes care of our soul.

Day 4 —

A. Explain shepherding the flock of God in 1 Peter 5:2.

To shepherd the flock of God requires suffering for the Body of Christ, as Christ suffered. Literally, the Greek word rendered “flock” is “little flock.” This refers to the church of God, which is small in number compared to the world. According to 1 Peter 5:2, elders are not rulers; they are shepherds. Sometimes a shepherd may have to rule the flock, but that is not the ruling of a king.

B. Expound the word overseeing in 1 Peter 5:2.

The word overseeing in 1 Peter 5:2 means “taking the oversight, looking diligently to be aware of the situation.” To oversee is mainly a matter of overseeing the need. A shepherd is concerned with the need of the flock. His oversight is related to protecting the flock, leading the flock, and feeding the flock. The shepherd exercises oversight in order to supply the flock with whatever is needed.

Day 5 —

A. Explain the word in 2 Corinthians 6:11.

The apostles, all-mature and all-fitting, as depicted in 2 Corinthians 6:11, had their mouths opened and their hearts enlarged to the believers. With an enlarged heart they were able to embrace all believers regardless of their condition, and with an opened mouth they were free to speak to all believers frankly concerning the real situation into which they had been misled.

B. Expound the type of Joseph in the Old Testament.

No doubt, Joseph is the perfect type of Christ because he portrays the constituted aspect of a mature saint. This perfect aspect is a shepherd. Joseph was a shepherd. This typifies the aspect of the constitution of Christ in the mature life that is the shepherding life to take care of others.

Day 6 —

A. Expound that we have to minister life to them as we shepherd others.

We must learn to minister life to others. In order to do this, we ourselves must have life. We must learn the lessons of life. Then we will know how to minister to others. In fact, if we have life, there is no need to purposely minister life to others. Life will already be ministered to them. When visiting others to take care of them, the proper principle is to minister life to them.

B. Explain how to take care of someone who is newly saved or recovered.

We should not expect that someone who is newly saved or recovered will immediately be in a proper condition. A weaker one may require our patience to contact him again and again. This kind of continual, patient contact will shepherd people. This takes time. The church grows through shepherding. Everyone must pick up the burden to take care of others. This requires our patience.

III. Conclusion:

We need the Lord Jesus as Shepherd, and as a result of His shepherding, our minds will be directed and set in the right way. Our emotions are very complicated, and easily disturbed. We need the Lord to shepherd and comfort our emotions. We often find it difficult to make the right decision. The Lord is the living Shepherd who continually directs our will. The Lord is indeed the shepherd of our souls, who directs our minds, comforts our affections, and guides our wills. Shepherding according to God means that we must live God. We must have God everywhere and at all times. When we are one with God, we become God. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to what God's attributes are; God is love, light, holiness, righteousness; According to God, or at least according to these four attributes of God, we must shepherd the young, the weak, and the backslidden. In this way we are good shepherds.