

ELDERS: SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK

When Jesus taught, on many occasions, He would use things that people were familiar with so people would connect with the message. One of the many examples He used was the role of a shepherd. The hills of Galilee, and Judea abounded with flocks along the countryside. The description of a "true" shepherd that Jesus gives (He being the "Great Shepherd of the sheep" Hebrews 13:20) help's us to properly understand what the role, and responsibility of an elder in the Lord's Church involves.

A shepherd is one who:

- Is not selfish and self centered; unlike the hireling he will sacrifice for the flock which he oversees. John 10:11 Jesus said "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." He puts them first.
- Is not one who is unfriendly, or "careth not for the sheep" (Verse 13), but rather is concerned, and highly interested in his sheep. John 10:14 Jesus said "I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." A good shepherd will be out among the flock he is responsible for, knowing their condition, tending to their needs.
- Is a leader. His role is to be out front setting the pace, leading the flock, not driving the flock. Jesus said in John 10:3-4 "...He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them....."
- Is one who conducts himself in such a way that the sheep will follow him. He is respected and trusted by those of the flock. In John 10:3-4 once again we read "To him (the shepherd) the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice.....and the sheep follow him for they knoweth his voice."

In 1st Peter 5:3, Peter who was also an elder (vs. 1) said that the elders (shepherds) are not to be "lord's (dictator's J.S) over God's heritage, but being ensamples (examples) to the flock." Indeed this is not a job for the "hireling", or half hearted, but rather for the dedicated laborer in Christ's Kingdom. Good shepherds do not do what they do for praise, power, or pride, but rather to hear the words "...well done thou good and faithful servant...Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matthew 25:21)

Shepherds do what they do because they:

- Love God!
- Love God's people!
- Love Christ, and His Kingdom!
- Want the Church to be what God intended for it to be!

I believe we can all imagine what kind of shape a flock of sheep can get into without a shepherd. God knew this when by inspiration he applied the term "shepherds" to the office of the eldership. Denominations have a "pastor" (singular) or a preacher who oversees the congregation. God expects His Church to have "Shepherd's", or Elder's (Plural). Pray for them!