



Editor's Note

This issue marks the beginning of our third year of publication. We give a big welcome to all you new comers. We pray this small ministry will help you shepherd God's flock under your care.

If you are receiving this by snail-mail, you will notice an index of articles for all previous issues of ESN included. For those of you on our e-mail sub-

scription list, look for an extra attachment.

We now have a new home for ESN Online. Go to <http://www.bible-equip.com/esn>. All of our back issues are now back online and we have plenty of space for expansion. In the future, we will be adding other resources to bible-equip.com and we will keep you posted as they become available. 

Leadership Principles Developing A Shepherd's Heart

by Chuck Gianotti

In order to develop a shepherd's heart, we must first understand why an elder needs a shepherd's heart? The answer is quite simple: God's people need to be shepherded. It is axiomatic to our ecclesiology. What I mean is that if this were not true, there would be no horizontal dimension to the doctrine of the church. Anything we had to say would have to do purely with the vertical dimension of the body of Christ—namely our collective interaction with God as His bride. Our teaching about spiritual needs would consist of telling Christians to look to the Lord, period. But, the Lord Himself recognizes that His people need shepherding--and that involves more than just telling people about God.

God has always had a concern for providing men with His Shepherding heart. He declared to straying Israel just prior to their deportation into captivity: "Then [i.e. after you return to the land] I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding." (Jeremiah 3:15 NIV). God was going to provide men who would shepherd the people from the heart. What a needed message!

And he did ... with the likes of Ezra and Nehemiah during the return to the land. But, unfortunately, the people strayed from God and found themselves with poor shepherds again. Then, 75 years after Jeremiah, the Lord spoke through Zechariah: "... The people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd" (Zech 10:2). So, in judgment, the Lord declared: "... I am going to raise up a shepherd over the land who will not care for the lost, or seek the young, or heal the injured, or feed the healthy, but will eat the meat of the choice sheep, tearing off their hoofs." (11:16). Finally, to those shepherds, he warns: "Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock." (11:17)

In order to know how to develop a shepherd's heart, we need to first determine what such a heart is like. From the above passages we gain some insights:

A shepherd/elder is one who has God's heart.

He has a divine infusion of God's heart. This refers to the inner man, the inner affections (see Jer 3:15). The NT elder has the mind of Christ,

as do all Christians (1 Cor 2:16). But, he has actively embraced God's heart for people and puts their needs above his own: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..." (Phil 2:15 NKJV).

The shepherd emulates the Lord Jesus who often saw people through divinely compassionate eyes (see Matt 9:38, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34). The Greek word for "compassion" refers to the "seat of emotions" and can be translated as "sympathy." It means to share in another's feelings, a uniting in pathos. Jesus cared for those that came to Him, He felt for their needs. Indeed, the Father himself is a God of compassion (Rom 9:5, 2 Cor 1:3). The elder/shepherd has the desire for God's people that Paul had: "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:8)

Compassion should be a hallmark of Christian fellowship (Phil 2:1), and in this the elders play a crucial role. The flock learns from that which is exemplified in the shepherds.

Show me a congregation that can be described as compassionate, and I will show you a congregation whose elders are compassionate. As this heart from God is at work in the lead-

ers, the believers begin to see the need and value of it—and begin to imitate it.

A shepherd/elder is one who has knowledge.

God's desire for shepherds with knowledge (Jer 3:15) is reminiscent of King Solomon's desire: "So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" (1 Kings 3:9) By asking for discernment, Solomon was not only concerned with the truth, but also with it's application to overseeing the people of God. The early example of wisdom he demonstrated concerning the two mothers and the disput-

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God has always had a concern for providing men with His shepherding heart.

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Biblical Foundations Priorities in the Church

by Jack Spender

Did you ever wonder where church meetings came from? Searching through the New Testament may give us glimpses of how the early church conducted itself when gathered and we can find principles to help us decide how we should meet, but there are no schedules, programs or agendas to be found. Where then did all the meetings come from? What responsibilities do elders have to make sure an assembly has enough (but not too many) meetings, and that the content is Biblical and profitable?

As we study the earliest churches in Acts, we note that the Christians met frequently and letters written by the apostles assumed such gatherings to be a normal part of the life of a separated or "called out company." Statements like "preach the Word" and "feed the flock" assume the assembling of people in one place for a common purpose. When the Lord Jesus said "This do in remembrance of me," the gathering of believers is just as much a part of the instruction as the taking of the bread and cup. In fact Hebrews 10:25 admonishes Christians not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.

Probably the best summary statement of the conduct of the earliest Christians is found in Acts 2:42 (KJV): "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

While it is an overstatement to assert that this is a formal list of the meetings of the churches, it is at least a statement of the priorities to which those believers addressed their time together as indicated by the phrase "they continued steadfastly." These were the priorities of their gathering. When we discover from history that the items mentioned above may have all been parts of a single meeting or coming together, we see how important it was that principles rather than schedules and agendas were preserved in Scripture. Let's think briefly about the

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:42 (KJV)

four items mentioned in Acts 2:42.

First is the apostles' doctrine. Everything depends on the great truth that God speaks to His people. Any true church must assemble to hear the Word of God, and God's Word builds the church. There is an authority attached to it—not the authority of the church or the preacher, but of the voice of God. Elders must be sure that the ministry of the Word in the church reflects the idea: "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God..." (1 Pet. 4:11).

Second is fellowship because the imme-

diated effect of hearing God speak is concern for our brother. This is the "and thy neighbor as thyself" part of the greatest commandment. The word of God removes the darkness and the barriers that separate people. Love for one another and ministry to one another are expressed in both formal and informal fellowship among the saints. Our communion or fellowship reflects communion with the heavenly Father.

Third is the breaking of bread. Precious as this meeting is with worship as the inevitable result of remembering the Lord, it must be third because the Lord Jesus laid down the principle that relationships must be clear before worship could be genuine (Matt. 5:23,24). John asks "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 5:20)

Fourth is prayer, an opportunity to give thanks for blessings received and to make requests for God's help as believers prepare to return to the world to shine as lights for the Lord.

Each local fellowship will build these great priorities into its schedule of meetings as best meets the needs of its people. No two will be just alike. Elders must be vigilant as the assembly grows to be certain that the meetings of the church are Biblical and relevant, and do not become simply the whirl of religious machinery.

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Shepherd's Heart (continued from page 1)

ed child shows this clearly.

The elder must be rooted in the foundational areas of spiritual life, like a child nourished on the milk of the word. He must also have considerable experience like a young man walking in spiritual victory amidst the many spiritual battles common to Christian living. Finally, he must have a maturing insight into things of God like an older man seasoned through the years (see 1 John 2:12-14).

A shepherd/elder is one who had understanding

Following on knowledge, the godly shepherd has understanding, that is, he has learned to be prudent and wise in handling practical matters, exercising good judgment. There is world of difference between proclaiming truth and applying truth. One takes courage, the other discernment. It means taking God's word and taking peo-

ple's situations—and bringing the two together. There is a time for declaring the "whole counsel of God." But, an understanding shepherd brings the "particular" counsel of God to bear on the situation.

Some have said we don't make the Bible relevant—it IS relevant. That is true. But, the shepherd's job is to help people SEE the relevancy of God's word in their circumstances. This is more than just throwing bible verses at a problem. A wise shepherd takes the time to explain carefully, thoughtfully and gently the truth, as it applies.

This requires much more listening than most of us are accustomed to doing. It is a poor shepherd who arrogantly and prematurely decides on a quick "answer" and then reaches into his "gospel bag" to bring a quick remedy. An understanding or wise shepherd exemplifies James' admonition: "Be quick to listen, slow to speak ..." Indeed, Proverbs 18:13 admonishes, "He who

gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him."

If Israel needed shepherds with God's heart, knowledge and understanding, then so does the church. Blessed is the church that has such men.

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From the Q-Files

From probably the greatest college basketball coach ever, John Wooden, who led the UCLA Bruins to 10 US national championships (1966-73):

"I always tried to make clear that basketball is not the ultimate. It is of small importance in comparison to the total life we live. There is only one kind of life that truly wins, and that is the one that places faith in the hands of the Savior. Until that is done, we are on an aimless course that runs in circles and goes nowhere ..." ESN

Leadership Principles

Leading in Music

by Chuck Gianotti

Music comprises much of our time together as believers, particularly in our regular meeting times. And rightly so, for singing involves the wonderful medium of communication that engages not only the mind, but the emotions as well. Certainly, the prominence of the book of Psalms and the evidence of hymns throughout scripture testifies to the importance of lyrical expressions of truth (e.g. Phil 2:6-11)

Although, the subject of content, musical style and instrumentation is fodder for much debate, I would rather consider another topic instead: what takes place “around” the singing of music. In particular, I would like to suggest some ideas that could help song leaders become more effective in leading the congregation during this time. As elders, you may want to pass on some of these ideas to the song leaders of your group.

It's more about attitude than hand movements.

As a young believer I attended countless “training” sessions on how to move my hand/arm in time with the music. While this

“mechanical” aspect may be important, I believe the attitude or demeanor of the leader has a greater impact on this ministry of music.

As in all “leadership” roles, the qualities found in the first “proto-deacons” should apply: song leaders should be individuals “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.” (Acts 6:3). This affects the selection and character of the songs and hymns chosen as well as the overall presentation.

Plan Ahead

An effective song leader will plan the selection of songs ahead of time. This involves contacting the speaker well ahead of time. In turn, the selections should be communicated to the musicians in ample time for practice. Never should the pianist be “surprised” Sunday morning with the slate of songs! Some musicians need more preparation time than others, depending on skill level.

Music should support the message

The songs should first of all include ones that turn our hearts to the Lord. Since

the preaching of the word is God’s communication to His people through the speaker, they need to get in tune with the ultimate speaker -- God Himself!

Remember that people are often harried for one reason or another as they come to church services, finally sitting down at the “appointed hour.” Switching gears mentally and emotionally can be difficult for many. A well planned selection of music can help in the transition.

Some songs should be selected that turn our thoughts to themes that support the message about to be preached. Someone once said a good song service is like preparing the trough for the flowing of the word of God. This requires that the song leader contact the speaker ahead of time for the main thrust of the message.

Don’t overlook the the end of the service as an opportunity for people to respond to God with a well chosen hymn. The selection should be picked carefully so that it fits well the closing idea of the message. The speaker may have a selection (again, find this out a head of time).

Be sure to inform the speaker if there
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Wives’ Corner

Overcoming Misconceptions

by Maria Forcucci

Here I sit, contemplating the New Year and all the hopes and dreams it has to offer. A new year always offers fresh opportunities to grow where last year’s ran out. In fact, I’d like to suggest that we exchange the word resolution for the word “vision”. After all, God doesn’t need our help renewing our inner man, we need His! So we can certainly concur with Paul in Philippians 4:13 when he says, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (KJV)

I can hear the question, “So what is it this year?” Well, speaking from observation and experience, I can assert that one of our greatest challenges as women is to resist the temptation to take things too personally. Part of the problem may stem from our role as elders’ wives and how others might react to us. Part of it may just be another aspect of a fallen nature. Either way, our service to God, our husbands, and the saints would be enhanced by the honest effort to become unoffendable. “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them”. (Psalm 119:165)

I would like to suggest a way we can emulate the Lord Jesus Christ when He faced similar challenges. Understand that people will not always get to know the real you.

Here He was, God Incarnate, and people’s perception of Him ranged from Elijah to John the Baptist to Beelzebub. Even Peter, who correctly identified Him as, “the Christ, Son of the Living God” in Mt 16:16, incorrectly puts the Lord on the same par as Moses and Elijah in Mt 17:4. (That would have down right depressed me, but our Lord marched onward in the wake of mistaken identity.)

Accepting the fact that many people will only get to know us superficially is a necessity for elders’ wives. If you are a people person like me, it can cause despair! But when we look at the Lord Jesus’ life, and He was the ULTIMATE people person, we can appreciate His example at keeping it all in perspective.

It can be difficult when some see us as the “untouchable” elders’ wives. Intimate laughter over a cup of flavored coffee or long distance phone conversations might be

reserved for TV commercials while the elders’ wives are busy dealing with a plethora of impersonal issues. We are the sender of cards and those expected by some to have answers, not problems. Who we are as people may never enter other people’s thoughts. How thankful we can be that we find in Scripture One who can relate.

Out of twelve men, Jesus took only three up the mountain of transfiguration. But by the crucifixion, the gap narrows to only one (John 19:26). What was His reaction to all this? He continued to love even the disciples who didn’t go up the mountain or to the cross. He selflessly served those in His flock (and out) who had no idea who He really was. In short, He remained available to people that needed Him.

As elder’s wives, can we do less, regardless of others’ misconceptions or inability to reciprocate our friendship? “For if ye love them who love you, what reward have ye?” (Mt 5:46a). We can rest in the confidence that our Lord knows the real us, will work with us in this new year, and loves us in spite of ourselves.

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Leading in Music

(continued from page 3)

will be a closing hymn. I have been at places as a visiting speaker, where I have finished my message and sat down, unaware that I was expected to provide and lead a closing hymn. The song leaders should communicate carefully.

Avoid using the opportunity to give out your "old favorites." Your role as leader is that of a servant, to lead in ways that are beneficial to others, rather than yourself.

Make appropriate connecting comments

The music leader's comments before and in between songs can make a significant impact on the overall song time. Comments such as

"That wasn't bad, let's try number 534 now" are distracting and counter to a thoughtful atmosphere. Singing the "1st, 3rd and 5th verses of number 822, may miss crucial parts of the song's message. If people are actually making melody in their hearts to the Lord, the mind must be engaged in a meaningful way. Be careful about disassociating verses that belong together.

Thoughtful comments before and between songs (and sometimes between verses) can be very helpful in engaging people in the message of the songs. Your comments reflect whether you are really praising the Lord through the music, or just "waving your arm" up front.

Announcements

Consider the placement of announce-

ments. If placed indiscriminately at some arbitrary point in the service, they can interrupt the flow and spiritual expression of praise. Consider putting them on an overhead projector or place them very early in the service, so that the rest of the service may go uninterrupted. Put all the details in the bulletin, and don't repeat them from the pulpit. Announcements should be used only for special emphasis, not to rehash what people can read for themselves.

NOTE: consider turning someone loose to design and implement an attractive, well worded bulletin. Take the time and money to do this up well and it will save much time

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord ...
Ephesians 5:19 (NIV)

on Sunday mornings. But, you may say, hardly anyone reads the bulletin. I make it a practice to never (well, rarely) answer people's questions about

event details, when the information is in the bulletin. I simply point them to read it for themselves. After awhile, people begin to take the bulletins a bit more seriously.

Pray

Back to the song leading. Most importantly, pray the Lord would use you powerfully as you lead the believers in singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord (Ephesians 4:19). This is not just a job to be "filled", but a ministry leadership role that can make a huge difference.

As elders, let me encourage you to instill in your song leaders the spiritual importance of leading God's people in song. 

Financial Statement

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In being a faithful steward of this ministry we are publishing the financial summary.

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Elders' SHOPNOTES

Editor: Chuck Gianotti
Editorial Assistance:
Jim Mayer, Mary Gianotti

HOW TO REACH US

Elders' SHOPNOTES
c/o Chuck Gianotti
27 Watchman Court
Rochester, NY 14624 U.S.A.
Email: elderssn@rochester.rr.com
Voice: 585.429.5435 or 585.429.6299
FAX: 413.581.8535
Web: <http://bible-equip.com/esn>
Circulation: 732

CONTRIBUTORS

Jack Spender
Bible teacher, church planting

Chuck Gianotti
Bible teacher, church planting

Maria Forcucci
Elder's Wife

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers ..."
1 Peter 5:2a

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