

Woe to the Shepherds

by Dave Dugan

Dave Dugan's sermon underscores the vital role of shepherds in the church and the dangers of neglecting their responsibilities towards the congregation.

Duration: 37:02

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Shepherds"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by providing some background information about himself and his experience in the church. He then discusses the importance of understanding the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. The speaker references Ezekiel 34 and encourages the audience to turn to that passage in their Bibles. He also expresses gratitude for the invitation to speak at the congregation and highlights the recent conversion of someone named Tasha, acknowledging the role that the congregation played in her salvation.

Transcript

This is one of the highlights of my year, and I appreciate the invitation every time that is offered for many reasons. One, of course, my closeness with the Rhodes family, and now my closeness with this congregation. It has been doubly made close by the conversion of Tasha, to which you all know about, and to which you know who is related to.

You saw her just a few weeks ago with her husband, and she is doing very well, and so I'm very happy that I could be a part of that. But I also know that you are a great part of that. So in converting somebody, we don't do this alone.

There are many people that actually work in relationship to a conversion, and I am thankful that your example, your help, and your direction is part of lives to be saved. I'm going to approach my lesson this morning with two things you're not supposed to do first as a speaker. Now, Oren's going to be scared, I can tell.

I have to give two introductions. You don't normally do that, right, Oren? The reason is I have to give you some perspective of where I'm coming from and understanding. Some of the things I'm going to talk about are from experience, and there isn't any way that you can know about that unless you just know just a little bit about me and my experience.

So that's the first part of the introduction. The second one, I'm going to deal with the subject of, very quickly, a shepherd and sheep, because it's an important thing. Then, if you would, turn in your Bible to Ezekiel 34, stay there, and I'll get there.

We'll meet on that, all right? First of all, where I'm coming from. Most of you know me as a preacher. You knew me when I was in St. Louis, and I came here many times.

In my background, though, you may not know this. I was raised up in Portland, Oregon. My mother, my dad, my grandparents were all members of the Church.

They came from Illinois as members of the Church and settled in Oregon. So I was raised in the Church, so I have a perspective, and I have to admit that and deal with that as I'm going to reveal some things to you. Now then, since my adulthood, I have worshiped in fourteen different congregations.

Ten of those had elders. Four of them did not. And as you preachers know, looking for a job, as we have to do occasionally--we don't always want to do it, but we have to do it--we run into a myriad of other elderships across the country.

So my impressions that I'm going to give you today has affected me in these ways. And I want to be--and please remember this about me. I try to be the eternal optimist.

Now, please, this gets me into trouble every once in a while, because my optimism runs into reality. And in running into reality, I have to have some conclusions. Number one, I have to look at how things are.

I have to look at how things should be. And I then want to change things to be better in some particular way. And I want to take and give you this lesson with those three realities.

We've got to deal with the present situation. We've got to look at the Scriptures, and we've got to be optimistic that we can do something to help the Lord's body and ourselves go to heaven. And so in looking at that particular aspect, I think it's important.

And I want to make this clear, and I know we might have some elders in the audience. I don't dislike elders. Please do not get that impression from anything that I say today.

I love elders, but I have a reality that I must deal with. Elders are just like members in many ways. There are those that do things wrong.

There are those that do things right. There are those that do things better than others. There are those that try in different ways.

There are those that sometimes are wrong. All of those are familiar to you and I. So that's the first introduction. The second introduction has to look at, number one, Ezekiel for just a second, a prophet, a priest.

He had one of the toughest of ministries that anyone could have, the 70 years' captivity in Babylon. He, first of all, had a great task to assure God's people that captivity would be short in duration. Now, then, I want you to do this as I'm making some of these points.

As a listener, you can do this. Number one, the point is important, but let's think as current application as we go through these things. Now, we need to keep those two lines of thought going in our minds.

Now, that's possible. You can do that. I can do that.

So we can all do that. All right? Let's do that together. First, he's going to ensure the Lord's people the duration is short.

Bring the message of God to really what had become a rather hard-hearted people, in many respects their hard-heartedness. I made a conclusion as I studied for this lesson that was in the back of my mind, but I needed to look at in a way, and that was, our life here on earth is in reality extremely short in comparison to eternity, and we've got to prepare for it. Now, the message of God is there for us to always listen to and understand.

The thoughts that Ezekiel had to bring to them were these. Number one, he had to earnestly regard the people themselves. But as God's spokesman, he had to do something else.

He had to cause them to think about the heathens and the evil aspects of the paganistic world that was around them, and cause them to think they were living in that situation, and they still had to deal with that. What do we live in? Has it changed all that much? We live in a pretty evil world, don't we? And we're trying to maintain ourselves as being Christians and do God's will. Well, they were over in Babylon and they were trying to maintain being God's people.

He looked to them and he painted a picture that they desperately needed of hope so that they could look forward to something. What's your hope? What's my hope? Heaven. That's where we're going.

This is all temporary. And I have to put it in that kind of reality, is that heaven is eternal, this is temporary. They had to think on the same lines.

Now then, the two points that I mentioned about the shepherd and the sheep, let's talk about them for just a second, and then we'll get to Ezekiel 34. I'm told that sheep are some of the dumbest animals. That's what I'm told.

Now, my granddaughter, her daughter, is raising sheep. This is her second year to raise sheep. I have no idea why they selected sheep at all.

I wouldn't have selected them, but that was their selection. My grandson, he selected pigs. So they're raising sheep and pigs.

I'll tell you what, as I was out visiting, they are two different attitudes and caring processes. Sheep spend their lives eating and drinking, but sometimes they eat things that they should not. Wait a minute.

If we think about that just a second, sometimes we're like that, aren't we? Aren't we? Now, I'm not trying to get into the diet frame or anything like that. Now, please, I don't use those four-letter words, but at the same time, we can get caught in those, can't we? They must be led to green pastures or they will continue to eat the stubble, as I'm told, even down into the roots. And then, after they've eaten that and they say, they haven't moved on, there isn't anything to eat, they'll die.

What a dumb animal. The water they have to drink, and I did not know this before I really looked into this carefully, the water they have to drink can't be too cold, can't be too hot, not too deep, not running too fast. And so the shepherd has to actually take them to the right place and watch them eat and drink.

I said, oh man, no wonder the shepherd has a tough job in that he has to do all those things. And if the sheep can't find water on their own, who leads them to the water? It's the shepherd. Remember Psalm 23, in all the difficulties that are mentioned there, he makes me to lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. Shepherd has got to do that. The sheep actually lack the instinct of what is called self-preservation.

Do you know that if a sheep is mistreated, it will actually become discouraged, disheartened, and even possibly die? Wow! Or did you know this one? Now this is one I did not know at all. I knew kind of the other one. Let's say that if a sheep has fully woolled out and you knock it over on its back, it cannot get up and if it doesn't get up, it will die.

Now you say, at least you can roll over a little bit, you know, and try and get up. No, not a sheep. They are defenseless.

They can't kick, scratch, bite, jump, and run. Not really very fast. When they are attacked, they huddle together and then the attack is worse because they don't go anywhere.

They don't fight, but you know, the sheep are meek, they are patient, they have submission. All those things are true. But now then, when you are thinking about those sheep, as I made allusions to the shepherd, please remember, the shepherd has to be concerned of every aspect of that sheep because the sheep is actually their livelihood and they depend upon the sheep.

From the calling in the morning, by the way, they give sheep names. In most herds, now I know that in the thousands they have down in New Zealand and other places they don't, but they have lead sheep that they do. The shepherd determines when it is time to move his sheep, whether they need to be in the shade, whether they can be in the sun, whether they need their shelter at night.

He determines where they are going to eat, how much they are going to eat. He causes them to go to the good water and causes them to drink, and he causes them even to this particular point that they actually line up and when they drink, there is no gulping, they sip and they don't push and they don't shove. Isn't that interesting? The shepherd keeps the predators away and the thieves from his sheep.

He keeps them healthy. Where I come from in the Northwest, the sheep that are there actually have to be taken in every few weeks and every hoof has to be examined meticulously for a particular parasite that the water from the rain causes. They can't take care of themselves.

The shepherd has to do that. Now then, think of this. God has appointed his son as the greatest shepherd for his sheep.

Our Lord calls himself the good shepherd. John 10 verse 11. Peter even makes the point that he is the chief shepherd.

1 Peter 5 and 4. And we are the sheep. Now then, let's go to Ezekiel 34. The shepherds that are mentioned here are the leaders of Israel.

And when we look at this lesson, we begin actually by referencing a New Testament point from Hebrews 13, 17. Obey those who have rule over you and be submissive, for they watch for your souls. As those who must give an account, let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

The shepherds, elders in our congregations, are tasked with the responsibility and care of our souls. In Ezekiel's day, the shepherds, the leaders of the congregation of the children of Israel, were tasked with their care and their actual spiritual life. It seems to me this happened, that when they got into captivity, certain things were not done as they should have been done.

They didn't lose the task of leadership. They didn't lose the task of being the shepherds simply because they were in captivity. They still had those same tasks.

And it was a tragedy that they were in captivity, but part of it was their own fault. And thus, they were in captivity, and they had to live through that, but yet be faithful to God. And in the process, Ezekiel now is tasked with the responsibility of saying, there are some things you're not doing.

A woe is presented, a deep sorrow, a grief, an affliction, an explanation expressing a misfortune upon them simply because they have not measured up to the work that they are doing. Woe to shepherds who become unfaithful, Ezekiel 34, 2. It says there, woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves. What is that? Self-seeking, self-centered? And a shepherd cannot be self-seeking or self-centered because if that shepherd is that way, he's not going to take care of the sheep.

Something's going to happen to the sheep. You can just imagine. They're out in the place where they keep sheep, whatever place that is, and the shepherd has to be there.

OK. Suppose he says, OK, I want a night off. I want to go to town.

I want to have a good time. What does he have to do? He cannot in reality leave the sheep alone because of all these factors I mentioned. He has got to either find somebody to care for them because if he leaves them alone in that particular circumstance, they could have a problem.

And so he doesn't do that. Some elders fall into self-seeking situations. In the past few weeks, an elder that had fallen away from the Lord's Church in Lawton was buried.

Sadly, he died in sin. It was a situation that was absolutely amazing to me. Been faithful, Bible student, Bible teacher, even preached a little.

But 35 years ago, something happened in his life and no one could actually put their finger on it that caused him to go into alcoholism, deep depression. And apostate from the church, how can that happen? But sadly, it does. Sometimes elders lose sight of what they should be doing.

And that is not only taking care of themselves, but others. Therefore, take heed to yourselves. Acts 20, 28 says the elder missed eternity.

But sadly, so did his wife. A tragedy occurred, members of the body told me we tried to talk to him over the years, we tried to persuade him, we even tried to cause him to think about what was right and true on occasion after occasion. But nothing worked.

Sadly, it happens. Woe to the shepherds who neglect their duties. Verse three, you eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.

Neglect to fit the flock is one of the difficulties that we have today. The work of a shepherd is tending that flock 24 seven, as our common terminology is today, and yet it is sometimes missed by certain individuals. Elders have a responsibility to see that the congregation is spiritually fed.

I understand and you understand that some need some milk, some need some meat, some need in between, and thus we have to provide that. But here's from my own experience. What happens sometimes, sometimes the shepherds of our congregations.

Say nothing positive or give direction to those that are working in the teaching and the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to the actual needs of the congregation, to which sometimes they do know as any of our preachers in here, mind readers. Do we have any preachers that are mind readers, please raise your hand. No, we don't have any.

How do I know what to preach unless I have an indication of some things to that are needed now, some I can see and we can readily see those. Absolutely. But you walk into a congregation, you don't know zip.

Excuse the common terminology, but that's true. A good brother to which some, you know, went to a congregation several years ago, he gives his first sermon, really had worked hard on that sermon. Oh, just honed it because he wanted to give the very best sermon he could.

He gives a sermon, offers the invitation and half the congregation walks out the back door. He says, what do I do? The elder said this to him, oh, we forgot to tell you something. Yeah, you really didn't forget to tell me something.

There's a big problem here. Yeah, we do have a big problem. I talked to the fella just 10 days after this happened and I said, what are you going to do? I want to stick it out.

I want to try and work with these men. I said, boy, you got a lot of work to do. And one was honesty about certain situations that needed to be handled in the congregation.

You see, and I say this with all kindness, we can become so complacent in a congregational setting that we actually miss the real problems that are there because we become all friends, don't we? We don't want to offend anybody. But the soul of the individual is at stake in relationship to their eternal life, and you know that they need to help. This is not I want to say something, but this is not to be argumentative.

This is not to be hurtful to the other person. It is in actuality trying to help the other person. And sometimes we're shut out.

We know. In our own brotherhood that we hear a lot of junk from the pulpits of the Lord's church, which is really sad, but I must say sometimes it is because elders have not taken hold of the situation and caused right preaching to be done. Some elderships have allowed translations to come into their congregations that are actually undermining the good work that is done.

Some elderships are not even promoting daily Bible reading. Some elderships are not even causing the study of the Bible to occur in worship. And Bible classes sometimes are only a fraction of Bible is touched upon.

Here's an old truth that I've heard years and years. Dusty Bibles make dirty lives and empty hearts. The shepherds needed to feed their flocks.

And it's the same today in the Lord's church as it was in that day. Ezekiel, 34, verse four, makes the point in two ways that there is a neglect of the sick and the weak, that neglect is caused by a lack of concern for the weak. Notice what is written.

The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back that was driven away, nor sought what was lost. But with force and cruelty, you have ruled them. Sometimes I get the impression that some folks want to rule certain situations.

Who's in charge in every congregation of the Lord's church? Jesus, not you nor I, but Jesus Christ, who works under Jesus Christ, the elders, the preacher, the deacons and all the members of the body of Christ. Jesus Christ is in charge. Jesus gives us the view that as the chief shepherd, he is even concerned about one chief.

The care of those in the body of Christ is given to the shepherds of each body. If there are not shepherds in that body, in that local congregation, there is still a function that you are under Jesus Christ and he is still leading you and the scriptures are controlling your life. The desire to have elders should be in every congregation and men should actually be working to become elders in a right and proper way with the attitude that I will shape my life, first of all, to be a good Christian, second of all, to lead souls to Christ and third of all, lead my brethren.

The fall of God, have you noticed this over the years that members of the Lord's body sometimes leave a congregation and nothing is ever done nor said in relationship to those that leave. Now, a person leaves the body of Christ in these ways. They can leave by their indifference, they can leave by their laziness, they can leave by their unproductability in the body of Christ, or they can leave and never attend ever again in that congregation.

Now, you notice the first three that I mentioned, I didn't say anything about leaving the congregation yet. I want to make that clear so we can actually leave Christ and still be here physically. We ought to be cautious of that.

It is true of every preacher and every member of the body, Christ and every eldership. We have to deal with these situations at times, and it causes us great difficulty. But let's remember something, and this is another old saying that I have used.

In fact, if you come into my office, you'll see some of these as you sit down and as you talk to me, you'll see some of these. And one of these is, sin plus time does not equal repentance. Haven't we started practicing that, though? And that's one of the problems.

We had a sweet family come to us and place membership with us, and they had been worshiping in Atlanta for several years, a large congregation, and it was a black congregation, good, solid. Folks, and you know how children are, they observe things that nothing misses them, they see everything. Three services.

The child, young man, very astute, says to his mom and dad, and he says. Don't white people ever repent? I said, yeah, we do. Yeah, we do.

He said, well, I haven't seen anybody repent. He's got a point, and I appreciated his point because he's right. Sometimes we don't repent when we're supposed to repent.

Why? Because remember the situation we talk about? We're all friends. We don't want to hurt each other's feelings, but at the same time, we don't want to admit that we're wrong or that we have anything to repent about. I want you to think just very carefully about some of the problems in the Brotherhood that have went on in the last 30 years.

Oh, my. I'll pray about that and go on. If you think for a minute some of our problems aren't a direct result of what transpired in relationship to elders, then think carefully with me.

I'm going to mention some names. Crossroadism. Boston and the current Holy Spirit movement.

Strong elderships are needed in each of those cases, I am confident. That at the beginning of the problem in relationship with crossroadism, if strong elderships had not stood up, had have stood up and said this is unscriptural and we know they're unscriptural and we identify them and we do not want to associate with them because of the unscripturality of the situation, we want to come out of sin and cause them to repent. I think we would have been in a better situation, that's my opinion now, I'm just looking at history and saying what happened and what didn't happen, and I see what didn't happen.

The same thing with Boston. We had got burned with crossroadism terribly, but then Boston came along, which is actually worse than crossroads and has actually continued to cause a festering in our brotherhood. And yet we have people that are acquiescing to them and offering them the olive branch of peace with no repentance nor change in doctrine.

What is going on? Strong elderships are not standing up. And saying that, woe to the shepherds who will have a misconception of their role versus four and five, I understood got about two minutes, I think. Is that right? OK.

There's two concepts about leadership that are prevalent. One of the concepts of leadership is this, you're born with it and if you got it, you got it. There's the second concept that is this, leadership can be learned.

I think General Patton held the other one, but I think the other one is what can really be done right with that leadership can be learned and understood and then carried out in a person's life. Leading involves these things, not leading is a sin. Leading, though, is not driving.

Leading is more demanding than doing the work yourself in reality. In the last few days, I've talked to individuals about this, and one of the things that I pointed out was that sometimes a leader has to go through a situation where people have to be given responsibilities. Those persons has to be watched.

They have to be cared for. And occasionally the leader actually has to watch somebody fail in order to cause them to learn. But if we don't ever involve the membership in trying to do the work of our Lord and trying to reach out in the community and trying to do some things, then we've missed the point of leadership.

Leading and leadership involves fellowship. We've got to know each other. We've got to communicate and we have got to be together in things.

Leading and leadership means that we go in the right direction. That direction is shown by God. Moses knew the right direction because he had been given direction by God.

Noah had been given direction by God in making of the ark, and he did not violate it. What difference is it for us? It is the same thing. Many have a misconception of being an elder or shepherd, not being a CEO, that's for sure.

And I'll tell you what, if Donald Trump runs his businesses like he does on the show Apprentice, it's a wonder he has a dime at all. One is not above doing the actual work, though, when needed as a leader.

One is not to make exceptions for himself and his family as a leader.

One is not to be used as the dog is used. Sick him. So as we think about these things, I want you to read now because my time is up very quickly, the last few verses.

But I don't want you to forget the last part of it, because there are some interesting things there that will help every leader to know what is right and true. And Kevin is going to talk to us about some things that will help us. Remember the perspective, though, we have to deal with reality.

But we can be optimistic and we can look for the good in all of these things and we can do better in the future than we have in the past.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23801.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dave-dugan/woe-to-the-shepherds/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net