

Searching for Shepherds

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of God-given shepherds who feed the flock with knowledge and understanding. It highlights the need for shepherds who are aligned with God's heart, gifted by Him, and focused on feeding the sheep with integrity and skillfulness. The message calls for a revival of true shepherds in the church, praying for God to raise up gifted leaders who will guide and nourish His people.

Scripture: Jeremiah 3:15, 1 Samuel 10:6, Psalms 78:70, Jeremiah 33:12

Topics: "Godly Leadership", "Spiritual Nourishment"

Description

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Transcript

I want you to turn in your Bible here this morning to Jeremiah chapter 3. Jeremiah chapter 3. And last week as we finished our mini-series concerning the preacher, this is a message the Lord laid on my heart last Sunday morning, giving me the title, the text. And I have dealt with this before, but in a different way. But I feel so compelled to deal with a singular verse and to deal with this subject here this morning.

We are going into a three-week Bible school in this room, in this church. We are a church functioning together. In a sense, this message is not for everyone, yet it's for all of us.

And I've got to preach on things that aren't for everyone, but they're specific because God does speak specifically. But yet again, like the three previous messages, this is for all of us. You've all got to understand this.

In fact, what I'm about to deal with has affected each of you in a remarkable way, all of your lives. Doesn't matter whether you're in ministry or whether you're a new convert, whether you would ever think of serving God full-time or whether you're just glad to get to heaven. Do you know what I want to tell you? What I'm about to deal with has so affected everyone in this hour that it's astounding.

My message is searching for shepherds, reading from Jeremiah chapter three and verse 15. I just want to read one verse. And I, this is God speaking, the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that is who

is speaking.

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. My message, searching for shepherds. Let's pray together.

Saints of God, let's join our hearts. Let's beseech the Lord. Let's open our heart.

Let's ask for the living God to prepare our hearts, not just for this morning, but for the coming weeks unitedly as a body of people, that the spirit of God would have his way, that he would break in upon us, that he would do a new work in lives, in individuals, in callings, in ministries, that something would happen in this room in these days that would have eternal consequence, worldwide consequence, national consequence, because the spirit of God is working in the heart. Let's pray. Let's ask him in Jesus' mighty name.

Lord God, we ask you right now that you by the power of your Holy Spirit bear witness under the written word of God. We ask that you speak to hearts, that you would set at liberty, that you revive your church again. We remind you that you have made this promise to us, that you will give us shepherds, that you will give us pastors, that you would give us those that will minister by the power of your Holy Spirit, feeding the sheep, Lord God, giving them knowledge and understanding, wisdom and revelation.

And my God, we're praying for the worldwide body of Christ, every nation that we represent, every town, every village, every community, every nationality, every tongue. We are praying for our nations. We are praying for our world again.

Lord God, send us a revival. Send us an outpouring of the spirit. My God, give it your church again.

Lord God, those that have a shepherd's heart in Jesus' mighty name. Hallelujah. Amen.

Amen. We're coming to this message searching for shepherds. What a strange title to speak about searching for shepherds.

Isn't it shepherds who search for sheep? Isn't it the task, the calling, the job, the ministry, the gifting that a shepherd, an individual, someone called and gifted, goes out seeking, searching for the sheep, looking for the brokenhearted, looking for the lost, looking for those that have gone astray, looking for those that have been wounded and injured by the things of this life. Isn't it the job of a shepherd to go searching, seeking, looking for the lost sheep? Is that not his ministry? And yet my title is back to front, searching for shepherds. You know what I believe in this hour? I believe the mass of sheep.

I mean genuine converts, real born again believers. I believe there's a mass search across our world. I have heard the cry for years.

All through the decades I've heard the cry, but it's intensified. It has got deeper. The cry has got louder.

I have had thousands upon thousands of emails from nations around this world, cities that were big, large, prominent, of people saying, I'm searching for a shepherd. They may not have described it like that, but the cry has been the same. Where is the church? Where are the shepherds? Where are the real preachers? Where are those bringing the word of God? Speak on it, thus saith the Lord in this hour.

You see, I believe we're in the midst of a tragedy that has happened in the church. The church has never been so large, so technical, so professional. It has never had so much money in the entire history of the

church for 2000 years.

We have never had as much ability to reach our world. We have never had as much technology to reach around the globe, and yet the great cry from sheep in every nation and every city in the world is, where are the shepherds? But you see, I believe there's a deeper cry, a bigger cry, an eternal cry. I believe there's a cry from the heart of God and from the Spirit of God, searching for shepherds in this hour.

Can you see that you may not be a shepherd this morning, but we are caught up in this. This is our life. This is what we have just walked through, and what we're going to walk through in the days ahead.

There is a cry. If you can hear the heart of God, if you hear what the Spirit of God is saying, there is a search going on right now across our world for shepherds. I don't mean titles.

I don't mean positions of pastors. They're worth nothing. Titles, positions, ministries of men, they're absolutely no good.

They're not having an effect in this hour, but what I'm talking about is men who God called shepherds, men who God has laid his hand upon. Listen to what it says in Zechariah 13, verse 7. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn my hand upon the little ones.

Notice here, this prophecy, it gives a principle. Smite the shepherd, the sheep get scattered. When you see the sheep scattered, wandering from hill to hill, in danger, no one looking after their soul, without direction, sheep everywhere going, trying to feed themselves, because there's no shepherds anymore.

Do you know why? Because the shepherd has been smitten. Just smite the shepherd, and the sheep scatter. If you actually smite the ministry of a shepherd, if the ministry, the gifting, the calling, if this task of a shepherd gets undermined, confused, lost, manipulated, changed from a gifted ministry into something in man's training, in their colleges, or out of their imagination, then I want to tell you, you get a scattering of the sheep.

I have never in my life seen a scattering of real born again Christians like I do now. It is right across the Western world, and it's right across our entire world. The sheep are scattered everywhere.

I see it. I hear it. I feel it.

I know it. The sheep multitudes are scattered everywhere. And you know what? It's a fault with pastoral ministry.

The shepherd has been smitten. Therefore, the sheep are scattered everywhere. In the days of Jehoshaphat and Ahab, when Jehoshaphat, that man of God who sought God, who was a man of prayer, joined in alliance with Ahab, that ecumenical apostate preacher.

And the two of them joined together as if they were brothers to go out to war, to fight the enemy. And prophet arises. Remember how they went seeking for a real prophet? It's very hard to find a prophet.

Very hard to find a preacher who'll preach the truth. You can get preachers, prophets, ministries, but to get a certain kind of prophet is very hard. Finally, they got Micaiah.

And Jehoshaphat said, prophesy unto us. The man of God says, I'm not sure you want me to prophesy the sort of message that I will prophesy unto you. But that man of God couldn't help himself.

When the spirit of God came on him, he began to speak into the whole situation. Here's the two mass armies. Here is leadership in that generation.

Here they are going out to war. Listen to what the prophet said. I saw Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that have no shepherd.

You know the principle of scripture is sheep need shepherds. Without real shepherds, you get a scattering. And the only way to gather sheep is to have real shepherds.

I can tell a man who's a real shepherd. The sheep gather, the sheep get fed, the sheep get led. Just show me a real shepherd and I'll show you people following, feeding, resting, growing, maturing, and bearing little lambs.

I want to tell you there is something about the ministry of a shepherd that's absolutely dynamic. Men like Micaiah prophesied the loss of leadership, the loss of shepherds, all the sheep, the entire nation will be scattered. What I'm seeing in the church of our day is there's been a mass scattering of the sheep.

And the problem is, where are the shepherds? We have lost shepherds in the church. We have never had so many people calling themselves pastor. There's never in all of world history as many pastors as there is right now.

But where are the shepherds? Where are those that gather the flock, unite the flock, and feed the flock? Because one of the signs of judgment in our world is the loss of a shepherd and the scattering of the sheep. It says again in Jeremiah 23 and 1, Woe be to the pastors or the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord. Can you imagine that you have one called a pastor who scatters the flock, that wounds, that damages? A man called to pastor, look after, to lead, to guard, and yet actually he becomes an instrument to do the opposite.

He injures, he leads the sheep into carnality, into strange ways away from the truth of God. Listen to what Jesus Christ says in the New Testament, Matthew 9, 36. But when he, that is Jesus Christ, saw the multitudes, you read this time after time, Christ seeing the multitudes.

You know what he was looking at? Tens and tens of thousands, no one to heal them, no one to save them, no one to feed them with the truth of God. Constantly Christ's heart is moved. He had a heart within him that was moved for the multitude.

He saw them scattered. He saw them forsaken. He saw them lost.

He saw that no one was teaching them. He saw there was no clarity, no open vision. And you know what it done? It actually moved his heart with compassion.

What is compassion? It is love. I assure you, if your heart is broken here this morning, I mean utterly devastated and broken with what I've described, you are feeling what Christ himself felt. He saw the multitudes.

He saw the disaster. And it says, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd, Christ was moved with compassion. When the sheep were scattered, fainted, no direction, no

clarity.

When we go to the Bible, we see that there is a high esteem on the ministry of shepherd. And I don't want you, just because of what I mentioned on Wednesday night, as a church here, to think that I minimize the ministry of a shepherd or a pastor. I do not.

Do not think that I think it's a side issue. I do not. When I speak like I did on Wednesday night, it's because I'm dealing with what is false, what is wrong.

But I want to tell you here this morning, I'm going to deal with the real. God's search for shepherds. Sheep searching for real shepherds.

I have never seen an hour where so many sheep are searching for so few shepherds. And it's hard to find. The Bible emphasizes the ministry of shepherd.

It begins in Genesis chapter four and verse two with Abel, who was one of the two first boys born to Adam and Eve. And you read there right in Genesis two, Abel was a keeper of sheep. What was the ministry of Abel? He was a shepherd.

The first ministry, the first shepherd that we read of in our Bible is Abel, one of the first sons ever born to a man. As you begin to read through the Bible, the greatest of men were shepherds. Abraham was a shepherd.

Isaac was a shepherd. Jacob was a shepherd. Moses was a shepherd.

David was a shepherd. Job was a shepherd. Solomon was a shepherd.

And so you can go through the Bible time and time again. We read about this ministry of shepherds. Job had 14,000 sheep.

Solomon had 120,000 sheep. And so it's no surprise that we see that God has an emphasis on shepherds. Shepherds are vital to the good of God's people.

If shepherds are not rightly functioning, if they're not in their place, if they're not prepared and chosen and set in place, it is disaster for the worldwide body of Christ. I'm going to give you three points here this morning from Jeremiah chapter three and verse 15 that we read in opening. And I want you to begin to understand searching for shepherds.

I, as a preacher, I'm searching for shepherds. My eyes are open. My ears are open.

I preach for it. I actually preach this because I know God is searching for shepherds. But I'll tell you more than that.

He's going to get himself dynamic shepherds in this hour. We are just about to see a whole generation of shepherds arise, the like of which we have lost for a generation. I believe God is sovereignly going to do this.

I believe he's suddenly going to do it. I believe he's mightily going to do is restore the real ministry of shepherds. Number one here this morning, God gives shepherds.

God gives shepherds. Read again with me. Jeremiah three verse 15.

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and with understanding. God gives shepherds. You don't have man-made shepherds, college-made shepherds.

You can't train a man to be a shepherd. You cannot do that. You cannot teach shepherding.

What I'm reading about in Jeremiah 3 15, God says, I will give you pastors. And the word pastors there is the same word as shepherds. You know what God is doing here? He is making a promise.

This is a promise most people don't claim. But this generation of sheep needs to begin to claim this. God, you said that you will give us pastors or shepherds.

You need to begin fervently to pray that in this hour. We as the church need to be praying for our nations, our cities, for our tongues. Lord, you said, this is a forgotten promise made by God himself.

He said, I will. What an I will. Can God lie? Can he change his mind? You know, when God says, I will, he's revealing his sovereign, perfect, determined will.

This is not something casual. It's not a suggestion. He's not saying I might do this.

I'll maybe do this. He is promising. It is a sovereign promise.

And you know what? When someone makes a promise, you better look at the character and the person. When someone begins to promise you things, that promise either is weighty and you believe it. Have you ever had someone make a promise to you and you absolutely have no confidence they're going to keep that promise? Have you ever had someone, I will, especially in Ireland.

You see the Irish have a problem with the watch, with the clock. They're called the Africans of Europe, you know? So if they say, if a man comes to your house to work, I'll definitely be there at night. And I've said to them on the phone, I said, you'll definitely be here at night.

Yes, absolutely. I'll see you. He doesn't come.

This doesn't happen once or 10 times. I want to tell you, it's happened so many times. Then you phone them later in the day.

Oh yeah, I'll come tomorrow. Are you sure you'll come? Yes, of course I'll come. Some of those people, I'm still waiting on them coming.

Do you realise that you better know the character, the reputation and the person when they say, yes, I will. But I want to tell you who makes this promise about pastors or shepherds. We can't afford to get this wrong.

You say, I know who made this promise. It is God himself. I will give you pastors or shepherds according to my heart.

Listen to what it says in Jeremiah 23 and verse four. And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them and they shall no more fear nor be dismayed. Neither shall they be lacking saith the Lord.

Do you know when Jeremiah prophesied this, when there were no shepherds in the land, leadership had failed, shepherds had gone astray. The sheep were scattered across the nation. Jeremiah is a real prophet.

Do you know what we need again? We need prophets to arise again in the church who are going to begin prophesying concerning shepherds. They're going to rebuke the sins of shepherds. They're going to deal with God's heart behind us.

But look at this man, a weeping prophet, a broken prophet, a man utterly devastated by what's happened to God's people. You know what he says? He speaks for God. Listen to me closely.

I will set up shepherds over them. So in Jeremiah three and again in Jeremiah 23, what's he talking about? God said, I will raise up shepherds. I will set up over you pastors.

You know what that word set up means? It means to rise or to rise up. It means to establish, to covenant, to confirm, or to ordain. It means to set something up, establish that it cannot be moved.

God is going to so do a work, going to so establish it that all hell will not move what he establishes. What's he saying? I will set up shepherds over you. You know what God says? I'm going to give you pastors after my heart.

This isn't an hour where you can't find a pastor. This isn't an hour where the ministry has been lost. This isn't an hour where the pastors are scattering the sheep.

This isn't an hour where the shepherds are not feeding. They're not preaching the pure, simple word of God anymore. And yet we have the word of God.

Saints, lay a hold of this and let's pray for a multiplication that God says, I'll give you shepherds. You say, I don't want man shepherds. I don't want denominational shepherds.

I don't want those that are proficient or eloquent or expert. You know what? I want shepherds that come from God. God actually says, I will give you shepherds.

In other words, they're from him. They are his gifts. It is him that produces them.

You want to know where a real shepherd comes from? It comes from the hand of God. If you find a real shepherd with a real shepherd's ministry and a real shepherd's heart and the real grace of God on them, do you know what that means? God has actually given him. Let me say more than that.

God has created him. God has molded him. God has prepared him.

God has dealt with him. God has established him. It's not him that has done it.

It's not him inventing things. If you find a real shepherd, it's a miracle in this hour. There are periods in Israel's history and the church's history where Christ looked and he couldn't find a shepherd, where Jeremiah looked and he couldn't find a shepherd.

And yet the nation is filled with men calling themselves pastors, shepherds in ministry. I mean filled. In those hours, it was filled.

And yet the search is for a real pastor or shepherd. In the New Testament in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 11, concerning the ministry that's going to be in the church. Listen again.

It says, and he, that is Christ. Notice it's the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not even the Holy Spirit.

It doesn't say just the Father. It is Jesus who gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. I want you to see that the fourth in this list of five ministries is pastors.

And it says in the New Testament, just like Jeremiah, he, that is Christ, gave some to be pastors or to be shepherds. See this word pastor that is used here is the word shepherd. The Greek word is *poimen*.

And that Greek word is used 17 times in our New Testament. Every time it's translated shepherd, only once is it translated as pastor. And it's actually here in this position.

You know what that tells me? They should have put pastor in there in Ephesians chapter 4, so we understand that. See, we've come to get used to calling a man pastor as a title, as a position. He's over the church.

But that isn't what the Bible teaches. This is one of five unique ministries. And when you call a man a shepherd, you're describing a ministry.

You're describing a task. You're describing a heart. You're describing a message.

It's no longer a title, a position of authority. Now you're talking about a person who functions in a task. Just before Ephesians 4.11, before actually saying that Christ has given these ministries.

And I want you to see this. God gives shepherds. It is God who gives them.

Christ gives them. He gives them and sets them into the body of Christ. Where does a shepherd come from? Does he decide that he's called? Does he decide there's a need and he wants to fill it? Does he decide he's got the ability? Absolutely not.

This is a calling. It's a gifting from Christ. Christ takes a hold of a man.

It says in Ephesians 4.8, wherefore he says, having ascended up on high, he has led captivity captive and has given gifts to men. Speaking about these ministries and pastors in particular, God took captivity captive and out of taking captivity captive, he gave gifts to men. Do you know what that means? He took captivity captive.

Men that were sinners like Saul, who's going to become Paul the apostle. Where did he find Saul? He took captivity captive. He found him on a road to Damascus on his way to persecute Christians.

You know, Christ says, I'm going to take captivity captive. I'm going to save you and make you an apostle to the Gentiles. What did he do with Peter? He finds him there fishing at the Lake of Galilee and he finds that rough, vulgar, hardworking, short-tempered man.

He saves him and raises up a fisher of men. He says, I'm going to make you into a fisher of men. So we see it is God who does this.

He saves sinners. Then he gives them as gifts into the body of Christ. Saints, I want you to see this ministry of a shepherd is a gift from Christ.

He actually ascended on high, took captivity captive and out of saving sinners out across our world, he starts raising up shepherds. He says, I'm going to give that one as a shepherd. I'm going to give that one as a shepherd.

This sinner that I've washed in the blood, I'm going to make him a shepherd. I'm going to raise him up out of sin. You've only been here a moment of time.

Your testimony is so short. None of us was saved in a time when God is mightily working in our world and none of us even knew this Christ. We are out wandering in the sin, enjoying our lives of sin, but God is carrying on the work.

Let me just show you something here. Very important that in the local church, God raises up an eldership, a leadership, those that are going to look after the flock. He calls them elders or bishops, which just means overseers.

He raises up those of maturity who are qualified, ordained and set aside to ministry. But all elders are not gifted shepherds. They do not have this unique ministry of shepherd.

Didn't we see in Acts chapter 13 and verse 1 in the church at Antioch, we seen the eldership, the leadership of the church, five men. Do you know what it says of them? They're gifted teachers and prophets and eldership of five over the church. They're gifted as prophets and as teachers.

Who would ever think raising up a teacher over a church? You see our thinking is if a man stands up here and ministers, he is a pastor. We give him that title without any thought or consideration. He is the pastor.

Do you know you need to be very careful. You never learned that from the Bible because you can have a man gifted as a teacher up here. What are you going to do? Call him a pastor.

Then your understanding of being a pastor means nothing. You don't even know what a pastor and a teacher is. You'll call a teacher a pastor and you don't even realize a prophet could be an overseer, an elder in a church.

A man could be gifted supernaturally by God. He could have a divine ministry of a prophet. He could be given by God as a prophet and yet he could be an eldership in the local church, ministering to the local church, but you don't even make a distinction.

You don't even know the difference. You remember I said about Candice once, I asked for an axe. I said, I need an axe.

We didn't have an axe. I married her and she says, you want an axe? I want an axe. I'll get you an axe.

Good. You get me an axe. She went into the town, into the city, come back and she come back with a hatchet.

Now for any of you that don't know, an axe is like this. A hatchet is like this. An axe is for cutting down a tree.

A hatchet is for taking off a few branches. And I said, it's similar. It looks the same, but that's not the same.

And don't get it confused. Never get it confused. Peter in the New Testament, writing in 1 Peter chapter 5 and 1, listen to what he says to elders.

The elders which are among you, I exhort. Who am also an elder. He's an apostle, but he's an elder when he's in the local church.

Listen to what he says. Feed the flock of God, which is among you. Take in the oversight, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.

Neither is being lords over God's heritage, but being in samples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, he shall, you shall receive a crown of glory that feeds not away. It's very important for you to see Peter's talk about the elders over a church.

These are the men raised up to care for the entire body. You know what he tells them to do? Feed the flock, feed the flock. That word feed means to act as a shepherd, do the ministry of a shepherd, function in the task and calling of a shepherd.

But listen to me, all elders are not gifted supernaturally as shepherds, but every elder is to do the job of a shepherd, every single elder. Let me explain further what the Bible says. Do you remember Paul writing to Timothy in 2nd Timothy chapter four and five, writing to Timothy, who's an apostle, a co-labor with Paul.

Listen to what he says. Do the work of an evangelist. He's not an evangelist.

He's not gifted as an evangelist. And yet Paul is saying, Timothy, in your ministry, do the work of an evangelist. We know that you can evangelize and you're not an evangelist, but you could do the work of an evangelist.

We are told that the elders are to be able to teach. That doesn't make them teachers, Bible teachers. It doesn't mean they've got the gifted ministry of a teacher, but what it does mean is they're to do the task of teaching, just like with Timothy, do the task or the job of an evangelist.

Do you know every elder is to do the job, the ministry, the task of looking after the sheep, the flock. They are to function like shepherds, but saints of God, that does not mean that they have the unique gifted ministry of a pastor or of a shepherd. Let me show you further that the task of elder or bishop is different than that of being a shepherd.

It says in 1 Peter chapter 2, 23, for ye were a sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and the bishop of our souls. This is speaking about Jesus Christ. It calls him the shepherd.

That's a gifted ministry. He is the shepherd of our souls, but also the bishop of our souls. That means the elder, the overseer.

So Christ is both an elder and a gifted shepherd. He is both in one. He is the position of looking after the flock, overseeing the flock in leadership, but he also has a gifted dynamic ministry of shepherd.

So shepherd is not the same as elder. Some of you are looking at me blank. I do not want to lose you, but listen, the dynamic thing you need to understand here in point one, God gives shepherds.

It's not a taught ministry. It's not a learned ministry. It's not that you just fit into a position.

You may be an elder and you must fulfill the tasks of shepherd. Look after the flock, lead the flock, feed the flock, but you may not have this ministry. Only God can give the gifted supernatural ministry of a shepherd and it's not just giving a gift to a man.

God does not give this gift to a man. You know what he does? He makes a man this ministry and then he takes that man who becomes a shepherd. He has made him a shepherd and he gifts that man into the

body of Christ.

I'm sorry to tell you, but biblically and scripturally, I am a gift to this church and that could be taken out of context in the wrong circles, but God makes a man. He doesn't simply give you gifts to minister. He makes the man himself a gift.

That's why you see people in eldership. They may go into eldership. They may leave eldership.

If they're really functioning ministry, they wouldn't do that. They would be gifted ministries into the body of Christ. I've seen some churches, they vote the elders in and vote the elders out and then they get a new batch of elders in.

What a disaster that you've got these hirelings, men who fill the task then they leave it. One minute they feel it's their responsibility. The next minute it's not my job anymore.

Don't send me all the troublesome letters. Send brother so-and-so. He's the elder.

I stop as of this point. I got voted out. No more emails to me.

Do you know what that is? That's a hireling ministry. That is not God-given ministry and so we need to see and understand. God gives shepherds.

It's a promise. It is a prophecy. It is a bind and obligation of God's plan.

Number two, the heart of a shepherd. The heart of a shepherd. God gives shepherds but I want you to see in this verse, the heart of a shepherd.

Verse 15 again, and I will give you pastors according to mine heart which shall feed you with knowledge and with understanding. Do you see that God says I will give you pastors according to mine heart? That means that pastors cannot look any way, act any way, speak any way, be any way, think any way, decide any way, organize any way. A real shepherd cannot be like that because what God says is I will give you shepherds and notice this.

Look this way. You don't need to be distracted here this morning. You're going to have to get locked in over these three weeks.

There's going to be a lot of coming and going. Do you know God says I will give you pastors according to mine heart. There's going to be a molding of pastors.

God's going to give them but when he does give them they look like something. It's not them claiming it. He says according to my heart.

That means his will, his purpose, his plan, his promise. God has literally given you pastors or shepherds according to his heart. That isn't left in the hands of men.

That means the shepherds that are really gifted into the church, really given by God, they're going to look like something. They can't be a thing of this world. They can't be carnal.

They can't be filled with worldly wisdom. They're not going to move away from the written scripture. Find a shepherd who does not speak according to this.

He is not sent from the heart of God. You see a real shepherd you can identify them. They're according or in line with God's heart.

What sort of heart is God's heart? God's heart is the heart of a shepherd. I'm only an under shepherd. I'm a temporary shepherd.

I'm going to be held accountable for how I have shepherded, how I've looked after your soul. One day I'm going to stand in judgment and my works, my ministry, my preaching, every sermon, every decision, every bit of counsel to you, every conversation is going to be tested by fire. I live in the reality of that constantly every day.

Everything is going to come under the fire of God. You know what God is going to say on that day? We're going to test your pastoral ministry. We're going to test what was called your shepherd ministry by fire.

And if there's anything left, then you'll get a crown from the great shepherd when he comes because he will reward you on that day. And so we see that God is going to give shepherds according to his heart, in line with his heart. That means there's a plan or a model or a divine design.

The pastor has to be according to God's heart, how God feels, his impulse, the beat of his heart. A real pastor from God is perfectly in line with the heart of God. If you get a pastor out of step with the heart of God, he does not represent God.

And if that pastor is functioning, I don't care how great he is, how famous, what a wide influence he has, if that heart of God is not coming through, he was not sent from God or position. You see, what is this heart of God that every pastor has to be in line with? We see this manifest in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was the great shepherd of the sheep.

That's what the Bible tells us. We're told in John 10 verse 11, Christ is called the good shepherd. He is utterly unique and good in every way.

He is right in every way. He is the pattern of what a shepherd is. You want to know what the heart of a shepherd is? Look to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or what about 1 Peter chapter 5 and 4? We read about Christ being the chief shepherd, which means the supreme one, the utmost one, the foremost one, the exalted one. There's no higher shepherd than that. He is the model.

He is the pattern. He is the example. You want to know what a real shepherd is? Look to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You want to be a real shepherd? Look to the Lord Jesus Christ. Every shepherd needs to conform to Christ. If I want to understand pastoral ministry, I'm not going to train programs to do business courses.

I'm not sitting here looking at all the finance of this church. Believe me, you've never seen anyone who tries to avoid all those things. I'm not being involved in any building program.

I'm not going to sit there working out the accounts of this church. I never look at them. I'm not going to sit there trying to learn all of these things.

Since I am a shepherd, I care for your soul. I could care less what's in the bank. I could care less what the buildings like we're in.

Although if those toilets get dirty, I'm going to preach to you on it because you're backslidden far from God. If we can't even keep the toilets clean, it reflects on us spiritually and it reflects on you. You don't care about a bit of paper on the floor.

That's a reflection of your heart and your spiritual condition. You don't worry about the toilet or something hanging off the wall. That is a reflection of your spiritual condition.

And so we see here in this second point, the heart of a shepherd. If you want to see the heart of a shepherd, look to the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd.

Why is it we have so emphasized men as pastors and we haven't emphasized what Christ is as a pastor or a shepherd? He is the gifted ministry. It's revealed in him perfectly. But saints, can I ask you, how do you receive this heart? How do you receive this gift? How do you receive this burden as an individual? I believe Saul, King Saul in the Old Testament, being anointed, set into ministry, begins to reveal to you how a man receives this heart.

Listen to what it says in 1 Samuel chapter 10. And this is the story of young Saul, a rather tall young man searching for his father's asses or donkeys. What's he searching for? What's the height of his vision? What's the burden of his heart? I've got to find my father's lost asses.

I've got to find them. This is what's driving him. This is uppermost.

This consumes his time. This is his calling. This is his job.

This is his task. This is what he gives his life to and his service to. I've got to find my dad's lost donkeys.

That's my calling. That's what I've been commissioned to. You know what? There's a lot of people in the church and they're faithfully doing things like that, but God can suddenly break in upon it.

And you know what? When God brings in a different heart, you'll find you'll radically change overnight. I mean, in one day you could be changed. If God gets ahold of you and puts his heart within you, it can happen in one day.

Your life, the way you think, what you're doing, how you speak could change in one day, even in this church. When you begin to see this from the Bible, it ought to create faith that God gives shepherds, not men, not training, not natural ability. Let me just read something here, and I never do this normally.

Let me read an email from two days ago sent to me by a man. I haven't had contact with him before. I won't give his name or his details.

Listen to this very carefully. I am 41. I have felt the call of God in me at first in 2008, 15 years ago, but faced with my own lacking in every way and suffering from major social fears, I couldn't see how it was possible.

After years of struggle and interpoling and prodding, I started to step out under my pastor and preaching occasionally. I'm extremely awkward in style, but God always comes through in power. It is the strangest thing.

Your messages on approved preachers, only from the past two weeks, your messages on approved preachers have really encouraged me as I walk this out. God spoke to my heart two years ago and put a burning, a burden within me to give me place to move. Not a place, a place, but place to move.

This burning is back stronger than ever, and my wife and I are going to start this, whatever it is, in the next coming weeks in our home. I think prayer, preaching, fellowship, breaking of bread for now, and then he's going to see where it goes from there. This is a man who's so awkward, unable, hindered by his own social personality that he's the least likely to be called to be a shepherd or a preacher, but these two weeks of preaching on approved preachers has stirred him and affected him again, and here he is very carefully stepping out.

There's a call on his life, but he goes, I'm disqualified because of my personality. You know what I'm telling you? There is a heart here. We think it's eloquence.

We think it's ability. We think it's strategy. It's not.

It's a heart coming into a man. God doesn't care if you can put your words together. Oh, I'm disqualified for a minister.

I can't put words together. Join the club. I'm the most scared preacher you've ever met.

I'm the most disqualified preacher naturally. I'm overwhelmed by my own inability and lack of gifting, but I do have a heart, and that heart consumes me for the sheep. I am utterly burdened, and so listen here for a second.

1 Samuel chapter 10. You've got Saul searching for donkeys. Then Samuel, the prophet, comes and announces him with oil and says, you're going to be the next king of Israel, and he announced them with oil.

Then listen to what happens straight after this. Verse six, And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy, and shalt be turned into another man. Here's a man looking for donkeys, but God's prophetic will is revealed.

You're to be the king of an entire nation. Have you ever seen anything so radical and contradictory? A man looking for his daddy's donkeys, and he can't find them, but the prophet of God revealing God's sovereign will. You know what? Just when you leave me today on this day, and I'll give you signs and prophecies to prove that this is true, and when you leave me, you're going to meet certain folk, and the Spirit of God's going to come on you, and when the Spirit of God comes on you, you're going to be turned into a different man.

So you've just been anointed for a task, a calling, and when the Spirit of God moves on you, you're literally going to change into a totally different person. Yes, you're the same man. Yes, you're the same person.

Yes, you're in the same family. And then listen to what happens in verse nine. And it was so that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart, and all these signs came to pass that day.

So you have here Saul in one day, the call of God revealed. His heart is changed, and a different heart comes into him. What sort of heart do you think that was? Straight after this, the enemy comes in against

Israel.

Armies are marching against. And when Saul hears about it, he gets a trumpet, and he blows it, and calls the nation to war, and he raises up an entire army. Now you tell me, how can the same man who was trundling around looking for donkeys, hillside to valley, looking around, urgent, this is his calling.

How can he overnight, the same man, the same person, how can he overnight suddenly become a king of a nation who calls the entire nation to war, and he does it naturally? How does that happen? It's the Spirit of God. I'm telling you, saints, this is more than a learned ministry of pastor in a church. It's not.

It's far greater. Do you know that this ministry is given by God? It comes by the anointing. It comes as the gift of God.

It was many years ago. I was 22 years old, and I know I've told this before, but I want to emphasize this. I know I've dealt with these verses before, but I'm so compelled to preach this this morning.

When I was 22 years old, I was part of an evangelistic team, a new church. There's no leadership. We're just on the streets evangelizing, raising up this new work.

We're all young. I'm 22, and we're there evangelizing, seeking to see a church raised up, and suddenly a spirit of prayer comes on me for a period of three weeks. I am consumed with prayer.

I actually can't pray for sinners. I thought I was backslidden. Three days into this, I go, have I backslidden? I'm not praying for sinners because I was fervently praying for sinners every day.

I mean spending quality time. After three days, I think I'm backslidden. Have I grown cold? Have I lost the burden? Has something happened to me? This intensified.

I couldn't pray for the lost. I couldn't pray for the world. I couldn't pray for sinners.

All I could do is pray for the birthing of a church, the establishing of a church, the raising up of the body of Christ, that the sheep would begin to gather. All I can see is the church. Do you realize at 22 years old, in three weeks of prayer, God put a shepherd's heart in me.

It came by the Holy Spirit as a burden from God. I didn't create it. I didn't even know what was happening.

God literally redesigned me. God literally brought in his gift. God literally done something that his heart came into me.

I'd never felt this before. I never understood it before. I begin to see things and know things and understand.

You know, in that time of prayer, I suddenly understood how the church functioned. I didn't know it three weeks ago. Suddenly, I knew how everything operates in the church, how you deal with people, what needs dealt with, what's wrong and what's an issue.

I have lived to see men 30, 40 years of ministry that don't even know what I received in that three weeks. What I come out of that time of prayer, knowing innately, naturally. You ask, well, how do you know that? I don't know.

And you know what? I don't function any different in this church than I did in that one at 22 years old. Do you hear me? Something came into me that was from God. Since this ought to encourage you that the gifts, the callings, the ministries are not of you.

This is supernatural. This is from the heart of God. This is by his grace.

He can make you a different man in one day. He can put a different heart within you. This is supernatural.

No wonder the church is suffering because men have learned how to minister. They do it with their eyes, their ears, their natural understanding. Third and finally, let me finish.

The priority in feeding. Jeremiah 3 verse 15, and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and with understanding. Notice that God will give pastors or shepherds according to his heart, according to the ministry of Christ.

They are going to literally experience his heart. They're going to receive the heart of a shepherd. How can you be a gifted shepherd without the heart of a shepherd that comes directly from God? You cannot.

How do you recognize that this has happened? They will feed you with knowledge and understanding. And this is my third and final point, the priority on feeding. Pastoral ministry, shepherding ministry is one of feeding the sheep above all else.

Why is there a diminution of the ministry of God's word in the church of this hour? People go to churches for the worship, for the kids' work. They come in. What's your kid's work? Where's the kids? Within 12 hours, they'll come in going, what's the worship like? Is that why you go to a church? Do you know what? You don't even know what a church is.

If you come in looking for the worship, and I love good worship. I love to sing. I'd sing two hours if you allowed me on a Sunday morning, but you don't allow me.

But saints of God, I love to worship. I love to praise God. I could tarry around the Lord's table.

I'm not in any rush today. But do you know what? The priority of shepherding is ministry. It is feeding the sheep.

Why is there such an absence of preach the word in this hour? Why is it the leaders, the pastors, the preachers, they are not dominating on feed the sheep with the word of God. Give them the word of God. They are so eloquent, so brilliant, they won't even expound the scripture.

That's why sin doesn't get dealt with in the church. That's why issues do not get revealed, because they're not preaching the word of God, expounding it. Do you know preaching the word makes you a prophet? I've seen this time after time after time.

You know, God has made me look like a prophet of times, purely because you preach the word of God. I don't want to preach my opinions. I want to preach the truth of God.

And this book reveals everything. This book is alive. This book is working.

It is vital. The Holy Spirit bears witness. You see, neglecting the word of God or feeding the sheep is unforgivable.

If you find the ministry of a real pastor, the sheep are well fed. They're not starving. They're not ignorant.

How is it you can go into a church? They don't know what the new birth is. They don't know what sanctification is. They haven't even been grounded in the truth of the blood of the lamb.

They don't even know what it is for God to make you righteous. Why is it we've got churches and pastors and the sheep, they're perishing for lack of knowledge. They're struggling over basic issues.

They haven't even been taught the ABCs. How can you have dynamic teaching seminars and they do not know justification by faith? There's something terribly wrong gone wrong with the church in this hour. This is more than preaching, more than teaching, more than sermons.

It is an utter focus on feeding. If you find a real shepherd, he wants to feed you. He wants to care for you.

He wants you nourished up. I want to know why you're looking gaunt this morning. I want to know why you're fainting this morning.

I want to know why you don't have stamina this morning. That's a shepherd's heart. I want to know why your cheeks are sunken in.

You're not eating. You could sit here and you're not eating. If you were eating, you couldn't be like that this morning.

You say, I'm a shepherd. Let me see your feet. Is there any foot rot there? Do you have any creepy crawlies in your hair this morning? Some of you will get worried if I really move into a pastoral mode.

Oh, I won't do that physically. But if I'm in pastoral ministry, I've got a priority on feeding the sheep. It says here, they will feed you with knowledge.

How do I know a gifted pastor given by God, he'll feed you with knowledge. A real pastor goes, I want to feed you. I want to provide food for you.

And it's going to be pure knowledge. It'll be knowledge of God, the character of God. That means a shepherd has to know God, has to know the character of God, has to know the heart of God.

But more than that, it's a knowledge of the Bible. When you find a shepherd, he doesn't know his Bible. I knew a pastor in England.

I'd helped him start the church. He was in ministry, turned against me, wouldn't even come preach for us here. But do you know what? I sat in his living room with Candice, and we start talking about eldership and leadership.

He's been a pastor 10 years. And he says, he actually admitted, he says, actually, I've never studied. Because he was getting on the ground.

He had never studied. He's in ministry. He's been in ministry for 40 years.

He's been a pastor for 10 years. And he begins to tell me, actually, I've never studied it. I've never even went into the Bible and studied what eldership is.

And he drew right back. I'm going, this man preaches boldly and criticizes everything and anything in the church. But here he is, he's never studied what an elder is.

How dare you be in ministry and you haven't even studied the subject. We are in an hour of ignorant ministry. You know, the Bible only gives two or three verses to older women in the Bible specifically.

You older women ought to study those two or three verses. Men, there's only one or two verses about older men specifically. Do you even know where it's written? Do you know what it says about young men in my Bible? They must be grave or serious.

There's nothing wrong with the joke. I'm not doing away with that. You know that.

But the Bible says one particular thing to young men. There ought to be a gravity, a seriousness. Why do our young men in our churches not even know that? One simple statement.

Don't tell me the churches in sickness are. Don't tell me that there's not utter ignorance. You've got shepherds over young men and they don't even deal with that.

They don't even think it's wrong. They don't even know their Bible. You see, you know real shepherds because they feed the flock.

They give them knowledge of the Bible, knowledge of men's hearts, knowledge of the character of God. Notice what else it says, and understanding. Real shepherds want to feed the flock and give them understanding.

What's the difference between knowledge and understanding? Knowledge is facts. It's information. It's determined, settled, definite elements of truth.

I mean portions of fact. It's not debatable. Do you know what understanding is? It's taking those bits of knowledge and fitting it all together like a jigsaw into the right place.

That's what the word understanding means. And so these shepherds feed the sheep with understanding. Do you know what they're doing with the sheep? They're not just giving them definite facts of truth in the Bible.

They start to bring all the truths of Scripture together and the sheep start going, I understand the plan of God. The sheep under a good shepherd go, I'm now understanding how the church functions. I understand what the Lord's table is.

I begin to understand what evangelism is. I'm understanding God's plan through the ages. I begin to understand providence and how God is working in every generation.

It says in Psalm 78 verse 70, God's speaking about David. He chose David, also his servant, took him from the sheepfold. He's talking about a young boy, a natural shepherd in a natural sheepfold with real sheep.

And God says, that's my man for a nation. You see, you don't know what God could be preparing you for in this church or in your situation, wherever you are. You could be in a natural situation, small, secluded, isolated, and yet God is preparing you for a task.

And if you're not aware, God watches you in that environment. Are you faithful in the small things? Oh, but it doesn't matter. It's not important.

God will never use you in the big. See the small, hidden, isolated, unimportant things. If you're not emphasizing them, God will never use you in the big or the important.

He'll never promote you. Remember what the Bible says, promotion comes from the Lord. It comes straight from the Lord.

Why would he promote you when you can't even be honest? Say if I was in a workplace and you're a Christian and you don't even tell the truth, you scoundrel. Do you know what that reflects on your Christian life? Honesty, purity, uprightness, those qualities of life. Where did God find David? In the small sheepfold, in the wilderness.

His father forgets about him. His brothers think he's proud and they isolate him. Yet God chooses him.

And listen, from following the ewes, great was young. He brought them to feed Jacob, his people, and Israel, his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart.

And he guided them by the skillfulness of his hands. Where did David learn to lead an entire nation? Where did God choose him? Where did God prepare him? In a small, isolated sheepfold. And look at his heart.

He fed them according to the integrity of his heart. We need shepherds again. They'll feed his sheep with integrity of heart.

That means in a complete way, a mature way, a prepared way, with simplicity, with innocence, with purity. We're the shepherds who have no motive in their ministry, no agenda in how they look after the flock. It also says he guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

The word skillfulness means intelligence or the ability to reason with your mind, to make sharp, clear biblical judgments. You use the brain. So you're guiding the sheep.

You're using all of your intelligence. You're weighing all of the evidence and you're guiding these sheeps. Do you realize I deal with your eternity, with your kids? This shepherd standing here making decision, I better have a pure heart.

I better have the skill of the Holy Spirit. I better be more than a man-made ministry. This better be more than me wanting to vent my opinions and ideas.

There better be a heart of God. There better be the grace of God. There better be a gift from God.

There better be knowledge coming out of eternity. There better be the wisdom of divinity coming through because you know what? We're going to stake an awful lot on it. In Jeremiah's day, he spoke prophesying of a day.

He said, this is what God is saying in this hour. I will give you shepherds according to my heart and they will feed you with knowledge and with understanding. It says in Jeremiah 33 and 12, thus saith the Lord of hosts, again in this place, and listen to this, which is now desolate, utterly desolate.

But he says, now in this very place, again in this place, which is desolate, without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be a habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down. In other words, again, God is prophesying through Jeremiah. So in this place that's utterly desolate, this city, this town, you can't find a shepherd.

You can't find a church. There's no leaders. In this spot where you can't find a real shepherd to care for your soul, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to raise up a dwelling place, a habitation filled with a whole bunch of shepherds dwelling together and all of them are going to be responsible for flocks.

And it's all going to be within this one region. And I'm going to do it since we need to begin to believe the word of God. We need to begin to pray again for our cities and our towns and our nations, because you know what? We have lost real shepherds and it's disaster across the church, but we need to begin again to believe God.

God, give us shepherds after your heart. Give us a certain kind of gifted shepherd. Raise up ministry across our nations.

All it takes is for one revival, one outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and God will change all these individuals into shepherds. Give them a new heart. Raise them up as gifted, knowing vessels that he can use.

Please stand with me. Lord Jesus, thank you, our God. Oh, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Let's just lift our hands. Let's pray here this morning. We need, again, this God of the Bible to move.

We need the great Christ of our salvation to grant unto the church gifted shepherds again. We need real ministry, a real feeding of the church, and even those online who may listen later. I tell you, it's time we begin to fast and pray.

Do not believe or accept the baroness. It's the devil that has stolen us, but again, we need to pray. We need to believe.

We need a labor. Lord God, we're praying that you open up your heart sovereignly again. We're asking that you restore unto the church the gifted ministry of pastor.

We're asking that by the anointing of the Holy Spirit that you're going to change men, that you're going to impart the heart of the shepherd, that you're going to gift them and equip them and raise them up. We're praying for our towns and our cities and our nations. My God, multiply shepherds on the mountain.

Lord God, satisfy our desire. Lord God, we are searching for shepherds. My God, we are on a task here, and we're not looking for donkeys.

We are looking for shepherds, leaders of men again, that you're going to raise up again across our nations by the work of your Holy Spirit. My God, we're tired of man-made ministry. We're tired of the barrenness of this hour.

We're tired of the false shepherds, but oh God, we're asking revive your work again. Restore your work again in Jesus' mighty name. Hallelujah.

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