

# Feeding and Leading

by Warren Wiersbe

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*Warren Wiersbe emphasizes the vital roles of feeding and leading in ministry, highlighting the need for integrity and character in shepherds of God's people.*

**Duration:** 23:24

**Scripture:** Exodus 14:12, 1 Samuel 16:11, Psalm 78:7-8, Psalm 78:41, Psalm 78:72, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Spiritual Leadership", "Pastoral Ministry"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being a person of integrity and using one's unique gifts and message in preaching. He encourages preachers to not be imitators or echoes, but to teach their own lessons and allow God's truth to flow through them. The speaker also highlights Jesus as the ultimate example of a shepherd who fed and led people. He references the story of David being chosen by God to become a shepherd and how he fed and guided God's people with integrity and skillfulness. The sermon concludes with a story about a vocational guidance test and the importance of embracing one's calling.

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## Transcript

Our commencement speaker hardly needs an introduction. He is the pastor of the famous Moody Memorial Church, the author of many books, the writer of periodical articles such as his column in the Moody Monthly, and a well-known speaker. He's been in Dallas many times before.

He served as special lecturer in our Bible lecture series at the seminary and has spoken on other occasions. He is a man who is a thorough student of church history and of the literature of the church and has a rich background and amazing knowledge of the many books that relate to the Christian movement today as well as in yesteryears. I'm always amazed at the breadth of his learning, his constant research in various areas of church history, but most of all in his facility in expressing great truths simply and pointedly and often with his own humor that is so refreshing.

We're delighted to have him here. He's a very busy man and we appreciate him taking the time to make a special trip from Chicago in order to share this occasion with us. It's my privilege now to introduce Dr. Warren Wiersbe.

Thank you, Dr. Walvoord. To the best of my knowledge, I have never been on candid camera. I used to enjoy watching the program several years ago.

It gave me a bit of a refreshment after the busy services of the day. And one evening while I was watching, I began to commiserate with a young man who was before the camera. Here's what they had done.

They had gone to a prep school out east, a very famous elite school, and they had given to each of these students a vocational guidance examination. Of course, most of the students in this school anticipated being college presidents, bank presidents, famous lawyers. Then they called the young men in one by one to give them the results of the vocational guidance test.

And I can never forget, Alan Funt was sitting behind the desk acting like the vocational guidance instructor. This very fine-looking young man came in and sat down. He was just trembling with excitement because he wanted to know what the result of the examination would be.

And he was quite confident that he would be told, you're supposed to be a great lawyer or a research chemist. There was some bright future for him. And Alan Funt looked at the young man and said, now we've gone over your examination very carefully.

And we have discovered that the best vocation for you is that of a shepherd. Now, I wish I had a photograph of the look on that boy's face. And it was not a sheepish expression either.

He was completely stultified. And he began to laugh and said, surely you're choking a shepherd. Well, I commiserated with him because at that point I reminded myself that I was a shepherd.

And that down through history, God has solved many problems by laying hold of a shepherd. When he wanted to bring salvation into this world, he got a hold of a fellow named Abraham. When he wanted to build a nation out of Abraham's loins, he got a hold of Jacob, and Jacob built a nation.

When he wanted to save that nation, he got a hold of another shepherd, Joseph. When that nation was in terrible, terrible condition and had to be united and strengthened, God got a hold of another shepherd, a young man named David. And when God sent his own son to this world, his own son was not embarrassed to say, I am the good shepherd.

May I read to you what God did with David? I'm reading from Psalm 78. The first 65 verses are terribly discouraging. They tell everything that God did for Israel and everything Israel did to God.

God saved them, they put themselves into bondage. God led them, they deliberately went in the wrong direction. God gave them manna from heaven and they requested to go back to Egypt for the leeks and the onions and the garlic.

There's a menu for you. That's one crowd you wouldn't ask to sing Breathe on Me. God would protect them from their enemies and they would deliberately go back into bondage.

And so when you read these first 60 or 65 verses, you say, if I were God, I would start all over again. But God's answer to problems is to lay hold of a woman, lay hold of a man, lay hold of a young person. Sometimes he even laid hold of a little girl.

He laid hold of a little boy. He laid hold of a little baby. He chose David also, his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds, from following the ewes great with young.

He brought him to feed Jacob, his people, and Israel, his inheritance. Now listen to this. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

He said to David, David, I want you to become a shepherd. And David didn't get a startled look on his face. David said, well, Lord, I've always been a shepherd.

If you want to promote me from the flock to the nation, here I am. I'll do what you've called me to do. Now I say to the graduating class and I say to myself and to these esteemed faculty and administration people behind me, I say this to each of us that God is looking today for people to solve problems.

He's looking today for men and women who will make a difference. Anybody can go into a ministry and wreck it. Anybody can walk into a problem and make it a bigger problem.

There are some people gifted this way. But I think the Lord has called us to be a part of the answer and not a part of the problem. And I want to suggest to you from these verses in Psalm 78 that if you and I will realize three basic needs and then do something about meeting these needs, we're going to have the time of our lives making a difference.

You can make a difference in that school or that church or that mission field, that home, that neighborhood. Now what are these needs? Well, first there's the need of God's people. What do God's people need? What do churches need today? Well, found in two words, feeding and leading.

So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands. The people that we minister to have these basic needs. They need feeding and they need leading.

Now God's people today desperately need feeding. I suppose it's a mark of getting older and there's nothing much I can do about that. I prefer to call it maturity.

I had my annual autopsy a couple of weeks ago and the doctor said to me, he said, you have the blood pressure of a 15-year-old boy. So I proudly announced this at home and God always has someone to deflate you a little bit. And my son said, well, that's great, but you've got the scalp of a 90-year-old man.

The problem in our churches today is that we have this thing that Amos talked about, a famine of the word of God. Our Lord Jesus said, take heed what you hear. And I fear, and perhaps once again, I'm speaking as one who gets older and maybe critical.

I trust not. I trust this is an evaluation from some perspective and some experience. Our churches today and our Christian people today desperately need feeding.

They're living on substitutes. Entertainment has been substituted for exposition. Activity has been substituted for ministry.

Competition has been substituted for cooperation. Human glory has been substituted for glorifying God. And we've lost this thing called worship.

And you can go from church to church and from body to body and meet starved people and they don't know what's wrong. And God said to David, now David, the reason these people act the way they act is because they haven't been fed. The need of God's people is for feeding.

This is why one of the characteristics and one of the essentials for ministry is apt to teach. And of course, apt to teach means apt to learn. This is why Paul said to those Ephesian elders, I want you to shepherd, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood.

God's people need feeding. And God's people need leading, not driving. The shepherd does not get behind the flock and whip them.

He goes before the flock and sets the example. That's why Paul was able to say, you examine my ministry during these three years. You'll find out that I set the right example.

God's people need feeding and God's people need leading. They don't need exploiting. A mature person uses his authority to build up people.

An immature person uses people to build up his authority. And I would warn these graduates as I would warn myself in the ministry, God did not call us to be slave drivers. God called us to be shepherds.

God called us to lead and to feed. That's what God's people need today. And I can assure you, brothers and sisters, that when you feed God's people and lead God's people, it starts to solve problems.

They start to love each other and reproduce. When you don't feed the sheep, they start nipping at each other. When you don't lead the sheep, they start wandering off.

And so God has called us to meet these needs. Now, a second need is found in this passage. The need of God's people is for feeding and leading.

God has a need. That may sound strange, but it's true. God has a need.

God needs a person to be the shepherd, but not just any person. Whether we like it or not, we have here in verse 70 the grace of God, the sovereign grace of God. He chose David.

He chose David to be a shepherd. Now, what is there that God's looking for? He's looking at the heart and he's looking at the hands. Listen to it.

So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and he guided them by the skillfulness of his hands. David was a man after God's own heart. He was a man with a believing heart.

He trusted God. He was a man with a servant's heart. David didn't get his start by being a king.

He got his start by carrying care packages to his brothers in the army. He got his start by being a shepherd in the wilderness. And when he killed that lion and killed the bear, it wasn't written up in any magazine.

He didn't show up on the 10 o'clock news. Nobody knew about it except God. God prepared him in private.

God prepared him in solitude. And then when David was ready, he brought him out in public, let him kill a giant. And then little by little, David was increased.

David's a beautiful illustration of that principle in Matthew chapter 25. Well done thou good and faithful servant. Thou has been faithful over a few things.

I'll make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. He wants a man with a servant's heart.

Now if we go into a ministry to be the boss, there are going to be problems. You can't feed people without a shepherd's heart. You can't lead people without a shepherd's heart.

He had a shepherd's heart. He had a servant's heart. David knew that we serve in order to lead.

David knew that we give in order that we might get. David knew that we go down that we might go up. Some folks have never learned that.

God was concerned about his heart, but God was also concerned about his hands. Ladies and gentlemen, no amount of sincerity in the heart can compensate for lack of skill in the hands. David knew how to follow the youths who were with young.

And shepherds tell us that it's very important to take care of those mothers. And after the lambing season, to care for the little ones. David did this.

David had skill to his hands. He had skill with a sword. He had skill with a sling.

And this is what you have been doing for several years. You've been getting skill for your hands, and you've been getting spiritual nurture for your hearts. And God is looking for that kind of a person.

It's unfortunate that in some quarters there are those who say, well, as long as your heart is right with God, it's not important to develop ministerial skills. I'm glad my doctor doesn't have that philosophy. Every time I have had surgery, I've been grateful.

In fact, I went to make an appointment with my doctor some months ago, and the nurse said he won't be here. I said, I'm sorry, is he ill? No, he's leaving town. Vacation? No, he's going to a two-week seminar to update himself on his skills.

I hear men say, well, I've had 10 years experience in the ministry, and I say, I'm sorry, you've had one year's experience 10 times. You see, if those who take care of the body can develop skills in the hands, why can't we develop skills? It's good for us to stay with our work. It's good for us to read books on the things that we've studied.

God's looking for a shepherd. He's looking at the shepherd's heart. He's looking at the shepherd's hands, a spiritual heart, skillful hands, which leads us now to the third need.

God's people have a need. They need leading and feeding. God has a need.

He needs men and women who have got the right kind of hearts and the right kind of trained hands. Now, what does that man need? What does that woman need? There stands the shepherd, the shepherdess. What does that person need? It's found in one word in verse 72, integrity.

So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart. Now, integrity means oneness. When I was in grade school, they taught us that you have fractions and you have integers.

Integers are whole numbers. People with integrity are whole people. It's the thing Jesus talked about.

No man can serve two masters. If your eye is single, your whole body is full of light. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. David prays, Unite my heart to fear thy name. Integrity means oneness of life.

I'm sure the Lord must weep when he looks down upon those who minister without integrity because you know who the losers are. Not only God's people, they aren't being fed properly, they aren't being led properly, but that minister becomes a loser. The integrity of our character.

In just a few minutes, you will be handed a degree. Nobody can hand you character. I've heard people say, well, a crisis is what makes a man.

Don't you kid yourself. A crisis doesn't make a man. A crisis shows what a man's made of.

A man is made, a woman is made every day, inch by inch, pound by pound in the everyday decisions of life. And more than one person has found his life dividing. A double-minded man, unstable in all of his ways, a double-hearted person, loving here and loving there.

David was the kind of a man who had integrity of person. It took me a long time to discover, but I'm glad I finally learned it, that ministry is not something that we do. Ministry is something that we are.

And if our ministry is to have wholeness and character, we have to have integrity. Now that's easier said than done, students. Oh, how easy it is to preach but not practice.

How easy it is to pray but not be an answer to our prayers. There's a word for that in the Bible. It's called hypocrisy.

The voice is the voice of Jacob and the hands are the hands of Esau. And God is looking for that one great thing in our lives, integrity, so that we do practice what we preach and we do practice what we pray. And our message is not an echo of somebody else.

Alexander White has long been one of my favorites. I remember standing in the pulpit of Free St. George's in Edinburgh and thinking to myself, the great Alexander White stood here and preached those surgical sermons that just cut right into your soul. He had an assistant.

I won't name him. He himself became a very well known preacher. But when he first began as White's assistant, he began to imitate Alexander White.

And when he prepared his messages, he prepared them the way White would prepare them. And one night after the service, Alexander White turned to his assistant and made one statement. And that statement has been helpful to me in my ministry.

He said to his assistant, preach your own message. You see, we have a lot of cookie cutter preachers today, a lot of imitators, a lot of echoes. And I say to you, teach your own lesson, preach your own message.

God is filtering his truth through you. And if you have integrity, your character and that message will blend together and you'll see things happen and it'll make a difference. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest example as a He fed people.

They hung upon his words. He led people. Our Lord Jesus Christ knew the needs of people, and he was a shepherd.

And his life was like that seamless robe that they gambled for all one piece. And I would say to you, and I would say to my own heart as I return to my own ministry, integrity, the seamless robe of Christian

character built up through hours of study and meditation and prayer and obedience. And then you step out to meet the needs that are out there.

And the sheep look up and they say, here is a person who leads us. Here is a person who feeds us. And God looks down and says, there is a person whose hands and whose heart I can use.

And the Holy Spirit from within says, yes, here is a person of integrity. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart. And he led them, guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

And when you do that, you make a difference. Gracious Father, you see our hearts tonight. I pray that you will help each one of us to be a part of the answer and not a part of the problem.

To make the kind of divine difference that brings glory to God, strength to your people, the gospel to the lost, the accomplishing of your will in this world for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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