

Guidelines for the Exercise of the Lord's Day Prophesying

Message Ten : Shepherding according to God

I. Overview:

Shepherding is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock; shepherding refers to taking care of all the needs of the sheep. To shepherd is to comfort, to soothe, to nurture with tender love, and to foster with tender care. In the Lord's recovery today there is an urgent need of shepherding. We are both sheep and shepherds, shepherding and being shepherded in mutuality; through this shepherding, the church is built up into the Body of Christ. The more we are constituted with Christ, the more we will spontaneously live a shepherding life and have the burden to take care of others. We need to shepherd the flock of God according to the loving and tender heart of our Father God and according to the seeking and shepherding Spirit of our Savior Christ. As the Chief Shepherd, Christ shepherds His flock through the elders of the churches. Without the elders' shepherding, the church cannot be built up. As the Shepherd of our souls, the pneumatic Christ oversees our inward condition, caring for the situation of our inner being. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to God's nature, desire, way, and glory, not according to our preference, interest, purpose, and disposition.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Explain the matter of shepherding the Lord commissioned.

When the Lord stayed with His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension, in one of His appearances, He commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep in His absence, while He is in the heavens. Shepherding implies feeding, but it includes much more than feeding. To shepherd is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock.

B. Expound how Paul cherished the newly baptized ones.

Paul likened himself to a nursing mother in his care for the new believers. We need to preach the gospel and take care of the newly baptized ones in the organic way, not in the old way. Paul cherished the people whom he had begotten through the gospel. In addition to being like a nursing mother, Paul was also like an exhorting father to the new believers.

Day 2 —

A. Explain that shepherding includes feeding.

After the believers are regenerated and receive God as their eternal life, they still need to receive the shepherding in God's life. In His organic salvation God the Father of the Divine Trinity first regenerates us by God the Spirit and then shepherds us in God the Son as our Shepherd that we may grow and exist in His life for eternity. Shepherding includes feeding.

B. Expound shepherding being a gift that every brother or sister has.

Some may argue that shepherding is a gift that not every brother or sister has. However, no one would say that raising children is a gift that some have and others do not. Every parent, regardless of how smart or foolish he is, has a talent for raising children. By our spiritual birth every member in the church has the gift of shepherding.

Day 3 —

A. State learning to minister life to others in shepherding.

Most importantly, we must learn to minister life to others. In order to do this, we ourselves must have life. Therefore, we must learn the lessons of life. Then we will know how to minister to others. In fact, if we have life, there is no need to purposely minister life to others. Life will already be ministered to them.

B. Expound the relationship of the mutual reliance in shepherding.

We must learn to trust and rely upon the ones who are under our care. This is to have a proper fellowship. In one sense, we are the parents nourishing our children, but in another sense, we are all brothers and sisters.

Therefore, we should show others that not only do they rely on us, but we also rely on them. This mutual reliance creates much profit.

Day 4 —

A. Expound the Lord being the Shepherd of all aspects.

The Gospel of John tells us not only that the Lord is the life but also that the Lord is the good Shepherd who came that we might have life and have it abundantly. Furthermore, the Gospel of John tells us that the Lord as the good Shepherd would lay down His life to form the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers into one flock under the shepherding of Himself as the one Shepherd. As the Chief Shepherd and the great Shepherd of God's flock.

B. Explain the work of Christ as the Shepherd.

In John 10:16 the Lord said, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd." This means that Christ was the Shepherd flocking the divided Jewish and Gentile sheep together to be one flock. The proper shepherding work is to flock people together.

Day 5 —

A. Explain the effective way of the shepherding being by small vital groups.

Shepherding works. We should not desire to be giant speakers to make a name for ourselves. The way of having large gospel campaigns does not work. We may have big gospel meetings with many people, but eventually not many of them are added to the church. The way that can save people effectively must be by small vital groups, and everyone in this small vital group must be a shepherd. After a short time the church will be revived. No other way is more prevailing than this shepherding way.

B. State the healthy teaching in the vital groups.

For the shepherding of the saints, there must be the healthy teaching in the vital groups. In 1 Timothy 3:2 Paul says that an elder should be apt to teach.

Teaching here is similar to parents' teaching their children. An elder must be apt to render this kind of home teaching to the members of a local church. I hope that we would pray, "Lord, I want to be a shepherd. I want to go to feed people, to shepherd people."

Day 6 —

A. Explain the words in First Peter 2:25 and 5:1-2.

In First Peter 2:25, Peter speaks of Christ being the Shepherd and Overseer of our soul, our inner being and real person. Then in 5:1-2 he tells the elders that their obligation is to shepherd God's flock according to God. According to God means that we must live God. We must have God on hand. We have God in our understanding, in our theology, and in our teaching.

B. Expound that if you have truly seen the Body, you will be concerned for the weaker ones.

In the church life we need to take care of the little ones, the weaker ones, and the uncomely ones. We must not have any rank; the strong ones should not form themselves into a special class of their own. The proper church life is a big family that includes grandparents, young ones, weak ones, and even sick ones. When all the saints are cared for, we shall have a beautiful church life.

III. Conclusion:

We might think that our difficulties lie in our physical bodies. Undoubtedly, our bodies do present us with many troubles. However, our true difficulties are within our souls. We experience difficulties in our minds, emotions, and wills. Those who do not believe are wandering within their souls, without a shepherd to care for them. But our situation is different. We have a shepherd who cares for our souls. We not only have the life of Christ within us, but He also serves as our shepherd. He now shepherds us in our souls; our minds, our emotions, and our wills. When we go to shepherd others, it should be Christ shepherding them through us. How can we be shepherds if the Lord is not shepherding using? If we seek to shepherd others apart from Christ, we are not in the realm of the resurrection but in the old creation. When Christ shepherds others through us, we are indeed in the realm of the resurrection.