

# The Shepherd Motif: His Character, Role, & Duties

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- 1. The Shepherd FEEDS** — The primary role of the shepherd is to feed the flock and provide the necessary sustenance they need to live. Just as a shepherd leads his flock to green pastures where they can graze and find their fill, so the pastor's most fundamental responsibility is to lead his flock into the Word of God and feed them from the Word of God so they can apply the meaning of the Word of God to their own lives. Thus, if a pastor neglects this duty he has forfeited his calling. Indeed, it does not matter whether a shepherd does every other thing necessary to care for his sheep, if he omits the feeding of the flock they will die — quickly. And so it is with the pastor and his necessary role to provide spiritual food for the flock for their regular and full spiritual growth.
- 2. The Shepherd GUARDS** — One aspect of a shepherd's responsibility includes that of watching out for incoming predators. When he sees a wolf or some other ravenous beast encroaching upon his flock, he quickly and fearlessly takes that intruder on head to head. He cannot run. He cannot flee. He cannot hide or he has squandered his role as shepherd and, consequently, his flock will die. But he must watch constantly and be on guard tirelessly so that when an unwelcome predator approaches, he boldly stands up against the foe and protects his flock.
- 3. The Shepherd PROTECTS** — And when that predator attacks, the shepherd must protect his sheep. He must fight for them. He must engage in hand to hand combat for their safety and well-being. He must engage in the hard, tough, and sometimes, the seemingly endless battles that rage against the foes. But this is the responsibility of the shepherd. The sheep, in fact, are helpless. They cannot defend for themselves. They don't know how to defend for themselves. The shepherd must keep watch over and protect his flock from being torn to pieces.
- 4. The Shepherd COUNTS** — Every true shepherd knows exactly who his flock is. He knows how many sheep he has and when one is missing he leaves the flock and carefully searches until he finds that lost sheep. He knows those who are his. He calls them by name. He loves them. He knows which sheep are in his flock and which sheep belong to the flock of another. And so it is with the biblical pastor. He must count his sheep, know them, and frequently call them by name. He should know when one is missing and he should know who is a part of his flock and who is a part of the flock of another. How unnatural it would be for a shepherd to allow any and every sheep that so desired to roam freely amongst his flock and, in the same way, the pastor of a church ought not to let any and every sheep roam freely amongst his flock without accountability and membership.
- 5. The Shepherd TENDS** — The shepherd tends his flock by serving them. He must be willing to be dirty and he must be willing to lead them, care for them, act in love toward them, protect them, and guard them even when there is little if any response. And in the same way, the pastor of

Christ's church must also tend his flock by serving them genuinely and faithfully regardless of how the sheep respond.

- 6. The Shepherd LEADS** — Without a shepherd, the sheep will walk themselves off a cliff to their own destruction. But with the leading of a shepherd, they will follow him to the green pastures where they can graze, rest, and sleep. Without the exemplary leading of a pastoral shepherd, the flock has no one to follow. This is why the pastor must be above-reproach and meet the spiritual and character qualifications in God's Word. He must lead his flock in such integrity that he can say to them: imitate me in so far as I am imitating Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd.
- 7. The Shepherd REBUKES** — When a sheep wanders off the path and abandons the rest of the flock and he heads for a thornbush or, worse, a cliff. The shepherd must use his shepherding rod to rebuke that sheep so that he realizes the imminent danger if left to his own way. The shepherd knows his sheep, accounts for them, and sees when they wander astray and the most loving thing that a shepherd does is to rebuke that sheep with the rod so that the sheep is gathered back to the fold. And so it must be with the sheep in the Church. When a shepherd sees a sheep in the church straying down a dangerous path of unbiblical doctrine or down a path of sinful conduct, the shepherd must — if he genuinely loves and cares for his sheep — go after the sheep and rebuke the sheep to restore that sheep to the Shepherd and to the flock. This is an essential element of shepherding.
- 8. The Shepherd LIVES WITH** — Every shepherd lives with his flock. Whether they travel through the fields or through the tempestuous and rugged terrain of the mountains, he lives with and abides with his flock. He cannot abandon them — ever. He cannot leave them with another. He must become part of them by his communing with them and regular residing with them as they travel together. And so it must be in the local Church. The pastor should live with and abide among his people. There cannot be a departure from the flock. To effectively shepherd, he must travel with and reside with the flock through both the green pastures and the dry and rugged valleys.
- 9. The Shepherd THINKS ABOUT** — At night when the shepherd lays himself down to rest with his flock, he considers his flock. He contemplates the day and their journey. He plans for tomorrow and what the travels may bring forth — predators, terrain, food, and water. He thinks about them and their future. He plans accordingly. And so it shall be with the spiritual shepherd. He thinks about his flock and their well-being. He sees to the future and recognizes when hardships are on the horizon. He smells when predators are on the rise and when poisonous food is in the field. He thinks about, plans, and acts accordingly to protect, love, care for, and shepherd his flock.
- 10. The Shepherd SEARCHES AND RESTORES** — As a shepherd searches for a lost sheep who has strayed with the intended goal of restoring that sheep to the rest of the flock, so must it be with the shepherd over Christ's sheep. He must search for those who stray into sin and rebellion by going after them, pursuing them, rebuking them so as to restore them to Christ and His church. And in seeking the lost and in restoring them to the fold, he imitates Jesus the great Shepherd and how He seeks and saves the lost so as to bring them to a right relationship with Himself.