

How Do You Recognize a True Minister? – Part 1

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Every year we get a certain number of brethren who come to our fellowship and they're new to us. They email or write or come to services or watch or listen in their living rooms and come to the Feast and maybe the holy days. When you talk to them, they have some amazing stories about their journey of coming out of Worldwide when it blew up, going to other groups and cycling through other groups and eventually arriving on our doorstep. There are some very interesting stories, and we've had quite a few of those here in the last couple of months. It turns out that most of these people have a common denominator and it's probably the same common denominator that most of us have had. The fact is, they come to us and they arrive very hurt by the bad examples of and/or the bad treatment by ministers in their past lives in the church. As a result, they come to us and they arrive with a certain disrespect for the ministry, a certain distrust of the ministry and frankly, some of them are scared of the ministry. As a result of that they find it hard to open up or to bear their heart to a minister because they've been burned in the past.

By the way, elders are not immune to hurtful experiences either. Since I was ordained an elder in 1974, I've lost track of the number of ministers I've worked under. It's well over twenty. Some were very converted and I learned a great deal from them. Others frankly were not very converted and I learned a great deal from them too. Then a few, like most of us, hurt me very deeply. So in that regard, all of us, the folks who are coming new plus those of us here to one extent or another are walking wounded because of our past experience particularly with certain ministers.

Now with that being said, we shouldn't be surprised. We should not be surprised because it was prophesied. Let's go to Ezekiel, chapter 34 and see this. Sometimes we marvel at what happens to us when, in fact, it's in the Bible. It was prophesied and, therefore, we shouldn't be caught off guard or shouldn't misunderstand.

Ezekiel 34:2. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, ... (NKJV)

Prophecy against them; and we know that we are spiritual Israel. There was a physical fulfillment back then, but there is a spiritual fulfillment today.

2b) ... prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds:" ... (NKJV)

Okay, God is making it very clear. Christ, the God of the Old Testament Who is head of the body of Christ right now is saying the following to the shepherds of Israel. He says:

2 continued) ..."Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves!" ... (NKJV)

Then He asks the question:

2 continued) ... "Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" (NKJV)

Isn't that what they're supposed to do? This is a very good question that is going to come into play a little later. Verse 4; this is a condemnation. Notice what He says.

4) "The weak (diseased) you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick," ... (NKJV)

There is a spiritual application as well as a physical application.

4b) ... "nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away." ... (NKJV)

Can you imagine a shepherd driving one of his sheep away?

4 continued) ... "nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them." (NKJV)

Since I've been in the church, I have personally witnessed each one of these condemnations. I witnessed every one of them and some multiple times. These continue to this day because it's a prophecy for today also. Let's understand that. In fact, one minister told me (this was about in 1986), I was asking about a friend. We had moved back into an area after being gone for three years and I asked about a friend of mine, a guy in the church that we spent a lot of time with. He said, "Oh, I ran him off." I thought, "What?" He said, "Yeah, I ran him off." Well, look at verse 5.

5) "So they were scattered because [there was] no shepherd;" ... (NKJV)

There was no one to take care of them.

5b) ... "and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered." (NKJV)

Second time repeated in this verse 5.

6) "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching [for them]." (NKJV)

Here in these two verses, 5 and 6, it is mentioned three times for emphasis. Because of the conduct of the ministers, the brethren were scattered. That scattering, frankly, continues to this day. There are quite a few that are still wandering around looking for a field, looking for a pasture, looking for a shepherd that will take care of them and look

after them, where they find a home where they feel safe because they haven't felt that way before.

I was contacted by two people last week that were in this position of just wandering, looking and hoping, and yet as I said, they were walking wounded.

As I said before, it's hard to have an accurate image of God if we've had a bad example of a father, because God is our Father. If we had a physical father that was abusive or didn't set a good example then we have to work extra hard to have a picture of God Almighty. In the same vein, it's hard for us to have an accurate Biblical perspective of what a minister should be if we have experienced bad examples in the past. We get confused. We don't know what a minister should do, shouldn't do, how he should relate to the people because of bad examples in the past.

So for the benefit of those who have been hurt and for everyone else's benefit, we need to answer a question. The Bible is very clear on this question. There is no doubt, but the teachings have been ignored for years. The Bible is very clear. It's a question I personally had to sort out starting about fifteen years ago because you ask the question:

What is a true minister?
How should he relate to the people?
How should he treat the people?

The example I had in the past and frankly some of my personal actions in the past got me to questioning, am I really doing what the Bible says? So the title of the sermon is:

How Do You Recognize a True Minister? – Part 1

How should a true minister treat and relate to the brethren? As I said, the Bible is clear, there is no ambiguity at all on this subject. But I think looking back over fifty years or so, sometimes we haven't done a very good job of that.

So the first thing we want to do is to define our terms. We've got to decide that we need to investigate what the word "minister" means.

What is the definition of the word? Now in the New Testament, it's Strong's No. 1249 and it's the Greek word "diakonos" and in the New Testament you find it thirty-one times. Of those thirty-one times, twenty times it's translated as *minister*, eight times it's translated as *servant*, and three times it's translated as *deacon*. That's where we get the English word "deacon" from diakonos. It means *an attendant*, somebody who attends to somebody else; a *waiter* at a table, or *someone who performs menial duties*. The root word of diakonos means *to run errands*; you could say an errand boy. Today we could say the definition is a *worker who serves*. A diakonos is simply *one who serves and who works in the service of others*. Therefore, in that sense elders and deacons are diakonos. They are ministers. I know that goes contrary to what's been

taught in the past, but if you look at the definition of the Greek word “minister,” it’s translated also *deacon*, also *servant*, so in that sense elders and deacons are ministers, are servants.

Let’s go to Matthew, chapter 20. Again, we’re talking about the definition of the word minister. I’m going to read it out of the New Living Translation. It puts it in modern English and, therefore, is a bit easier to understand. Matthew 20 and we’ll read verses 25 through 28. Notice Christ is drawing a contrast between the world and their observations of what’s happening in the world versus the way they ought to be.

Matthew 20:25. *But Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them.*

26) But among you it will be different. ... (NLT)

He is talking to the apostles, future apostles.

26b) ... Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, (NLT)

That word “servant” in the King James is translated *minister*. It’s the word “diakonos”. He said, “Whoever wants to be a leader must be your minister or your servant or your deacon or your diakonos.

27) and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. (NLT)

Just the opposite of the world, the opposite of what we find with politicians today. They are here to be served. They have all these perks and they get into office and their prime motivation is to stay in office because of all the perks. There was an article in the paper the other day. It was about several congressmen who came into congress. Their net worth was stated when they came into congress and ten years later they were all multi-millionaires. Where did that come from? Who is serving whom?

In verse 28, Christ said, “It’s different and I’m setting the example.”

28) For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many. (NLT)

What a concept, to serve and give one’s life for other people. Christ did it ultimately because He died for us. But what He is saying to the apostles is, “You see what’s happening in the world. You see how they serve themselves. I’m telling you that it should be just the opposite, absolutely the opposite.”

In the Worldwide Church of God in the ‘60s and the ‘70s and the ‘50s maybe too, people coveted the ordination to be an elder. They coveted it because of power. They now had power. They now had authority and they had “respect” of the office. But reality is that respect is not given; respect is earned. But people coveted that office

because of power, authority and respect. Obviously those motives are wrong. They are un-Christian motives if you want to be a minister or an elder because of getting power, authority, respect, etc.

You see the bottom line is that as with Christ, a minister is a servant of the brethren, obviously a servant of God and Jesus Christ first. The ordination to being an elder or a deacon is an ordination really to greater service. It's an ordination to greater sacrifice, not an ordination to elevate the self. We got so off track with this concept of rank and being raised and elevated in rank. The presumption there was you're now in a bigger spotlight if you're elevated in rank, and the reality should have been when you're ordained an elder that means you work harder, you sacrifice more, you get down in the trenches and you serve the brethren to your own hurt sometimes, if needed. In the Worldwide Church it was obviously backwards. I think we all remember the minister would pull up in front of the church and this hoard of people would come out and one would grab his briefcase and other would grab the kids and the other would take his wife by the arm and they would be seated in the front row. Somebody else would park the car and on and on it went. The ministers used the trainees coming out of Ambassador College to wash their car, mow their lawn, cook their meals and all of that. It was just backwards. It was absolutely backwards.

I'm not condemning any individual because that was the culture of the time, but after what we've been through one would hope that with 20/20 hindsight you look back and we would learn lessons from this, and shame on us if we don't.

George Santayana was a philosopher and an author. He was born in 1863 and he died in 1952, and he had this saying that is famous and is quoted from time to time: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." If we don't learn from the past, guess what? It just gets repeated over and over and over. In historical circles there is a paradox called Hegel's Paradox and it says, "Man learns from history that man learns nothing from history," because we repeat it over and over and over again.

So here under this first point about the definition of a minister is that we should strive to learn from the past and not repeat the mistakes of the past. We need to understand that ministers are servants of God and Christ first and then servants of the brethren. That is the definition of a minister.

Now that leads us to the second point. Therefore, because of that definition in the mind of a minister, God and Christ should come first and then the brethren, the welfare of the brethren, first to do the will of God and Christ and second, to serve and help the brethren.

Now this has not always been the case, because back in Worldwide days the first priority was what? The first priority was doing the work, being loyal to headquarters and following headquarters. That was the prime objective. I can remember when Dorothy and I arrived in '76/'77 and I mentioned this before; I talked to the minister after a few months and said, "What do you want my role to be? I want to do what you want me to

do.” He was very clear. He said, “I want you to point the brethren to me.” And he said, “Then I’ll point them to headquarters.” I went away scratching my head and I said, “Okay, where is God and Christ in this equation? Where are they in this equation?” The priority was doing the work or focusing on headquarters. Back then and, frankly today, the first priority of many is to suck up to a man and serve a man or to serve a corporation or an administration rather than serve God and Christ and serve the brethren. Too often, even today, the brethren are far down on the minister’s list because of all these other priorities, and we got it backwards.

Let’s go to Colossians 1:7. I’m saying this because the whole point of this sermon is to glorify God because God has created servants to help His people. What a wonderful God that is. Let’s see that as we go through. Notice what Paul is saying.

Colossians 1:7. *As you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant (he was a minister), who is a faithful minister of (Of Paul? No.) Christ on your behalf, (NKJV)*

He says, “For you, the brethren in Colossi, he is a faithful minister of Christ for you.” Not a minister of another human being, not a minister of a corporation, but a minister of Christ for the benefit of the brethren. All elders everywhere must keep that in the forefront of their minds. I know the elders and the deacons with Pacific do their very best, after God and Christ, to put the brethren first. Now we’re not perfect at that. We’re human beings and we make mistakes, but I’m telling you the motivation and goal is to do God’s will, to do Christ’s will and serve the brethren.

Let’s go to Romans 12:1, the second point. God and Christ come first and then the brethren. Notice what Paul says. He is talking to the brethren, but it applies even more to a minister.

Romans 12:1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, ... (KJV)*

This applies to all of us.

1b) ... by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, ... (KJV)

Christ died; a dead sacrifice. Paul is saying in that similar light, “I want you to be a living sacrifice.”

1 continued) ... holy, acceptable to God, [which is] your reasonable service. (KJV)

The New Living Translation translates, “which is your reasonable service,” (and I think it’s a very good translation) as “*When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask?*”

Christ was willing to die for each one of us. Is it too much to ask to be a living sacrifice? How much more should that apply to a minister? Therefore, a true minister is willing to sacrifice his time, his energy, his money or any resources he might have to serve the brethren. He should be willing to make that sacrifice. Otherwise, if somebody is not willing to do that then he shouldn't be a minister.

So the second point we've seen is that God and Christ come first. Serving the brethren, serving the body of Christ comes next.

The third point I'd like to bring out is that the work of a true minister is to help complete the brethren.

What do I mean by the word "complete?" The work of a true minister is to help complete the brethren.

Let's go to Colossians, chapter 1. We were in verse 7 and we'll read verses 25 through 28. Notice how Paul words this. Notice what he says.

Colossians 1:25. Whereof I am made a minister (diakonos), according to the dispensation of God ... (KJV)

The Greek word "dispensation" means the *stewardship*. In others words, a steward is somebody who is a caretaker of something, who looks after something. So he is saying, "*I am made a minister according to the stewardship of God ...*"

25b) ... which is given to me ... (KJV)

The stewardship, but notice:

25 continued) ... for you, ... (KJV)

For your benefit, to do what?

25 continued) ... to fulfill the word of God; (KJV)

So Paul is saying, "I am made a minister for your benefit, to benefit you."

26) [even] the mystery which has been hid from the ages ... (KJV)

Now this is part of the stewardship. This is part of the word of God, this mystery that has been hid from the ages...

26b) ... and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints. (KJV)

A sea-change, a paradigm shift.

27) *To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; ... (KJV)*

Not just the Jews, but among the Gentiles. That's the mystery, one of the mysteries that are given to the ministers as stewards, to preach.

27b) *... which is (this is the big thing) Christ in you (Jew or Gentile), the hope of glory: (KJV)*

He said, "We've become stewards of that mystery and that mystery is for your benefit, Christ in you, the hope of glory."

28) *Whom we preach, ... (KJV)*

Christ, Christ in you.

28b) *... warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we (meaning the ministry) may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: (KJV)*

We know the word "man" means mankind, men and women. He says the whole goal is to present every human that we have charge over, stewardship over, perfect in Christ Jesus. That word "perfect" (we know we are all human; nobody is perfect) so what does that word mean? It's Strong's 5046 and it's pronounced in English "teleios." What it means is *complete, complete in growth, complete in mental and moral character*. It means *of full age, meaning mature*. So this tells us that the goal of the ministry is to present to Jesus Christ the members as complete Christians, of full age and mature, wise, with mental and moral character that is beyond reproach. That is the goal.

Now let me ask a question. Can you help complete somebody that you are ignoring? Can you help complete somebody that you have no relationship with? Can you help complete somebody that you are abusing? Can you help complete somebody that you are looking down upon? Obviously not, so therefore, a true minister must have a loving, personal, respectful relationship with the brethren. The reason for that is the goal of helping the brethren attain the Kingdom of God. That is the purpose, to help complete the brethren so that they stand before God and Jesus Christ on that day and have a crown of glory put on their head. That is the goal, not to aggrandize the self, not to be in the spotlight, but to help serve the brethren.

So that leads us logically, step by step, to the fourth point. If this is the case that we help complete the brethren, if the brethren are to be made complete, they must be fed.

They have to be fed. The minister must feed the brethren, actually help Christ feed the brethren.

Let's go to John, chapter 21. In John 21, Christ was crucified, is resurrected and now He is appearing to his apostles, to His disciples and to the brethren on several occasions. We'll read verses 15 through 17. This is a very familiar scripture. We have emphasized this in the past. The brethren must be fed. Now think about this scripture as a job description. Think about this scripture as a commandment. Think about it as a mandate from Christ to the apostles, particularly Peter.

John 21:15. *So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, [son] of Jonas, do you love me more than these (those in attendance)?" He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. ... (KJV)*

Then Christ said to him, "Okay, because you say you love me ..."

15b) ... "Feed my lambs." (KJV)

The lambs are the little ones, the new ones, the inexperienced ones, the over zealous, bouncing from pillar to post ones, as we all were when we were new. He said, "Okay, you say you love Me in front of all these people; I want you to feed these little ones."

In verse 16, He could have dropped it there and gone on to another subject, but He didn't.

16) He said to him again the second time, "Simon, [son] of Jonas, do you love me?" He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He (Christ) said to him, "Feed My sheep;" (KJV)

This time the more mature ones, the ones that are older and have been around longer, they have their own special needs. He said, "Feed them." I'm sure Peter was, "Okay, He used lambs first, sheep second, so He's trying to get something across to me. I understand that." But then, Christ could have left it alone but He comes back a third time and He says,

17) He said unto him the third time, "Simon, [son] of Jonas, do you love me?" ... (KJV)

You've got to think what's going through Peter's mind here. "I've already told Him twice. Yes, He talked about lambs and yes, He talked about feeding the sheep. What else is left other than the fact that maybe He doesn't believe me, or maybe I'm in trouble. Maybe I've done something wrong." Peter was grieved going on in verse 17.

17b) ... Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said unto him, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." ... (KJV)

This is implying, "God you know what's in my mind as well as the words that are coming out of my mouth. You know my thoughts, my motives as well as the words."

17 continued) ... Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." (KJV)

So here in one series of scriptures, it's repeated three times. We often say that when the Bible repeats something twice, it's for emphasis. What about three times? What's the emphasis there? This is a direct commandment from Christ to an apostle. It can't get any clearer or any more direct, a direct commandment from Christ to an apostle.

Now Paul wasn't there at that time, so what about Paul? Did Paul somehow miss this commandment or miss this admonition? Let's go to Acts chapter 20 and see what happened to Paul. Did Christ just say this to Peter and then forget about it? Remember Christ taught Paul in the Arabian Desert for three years. Did Christ maybe mention it to Paul? Was this important to Christ, important to get across to an apostle? In verse 17 we see in context that Paul is speaking to the elders. So here you have an apostle instructing elders. Look at verse 28 with that in mind.

Acts 20:28. *Take heed (elders) therefore unto yourselves, ... (KJV)*

Then he says also take heed ...

28b) ... and to all the flock (sheep)... (KJV)

That's the context and the terms that Christ told Peter. That's interesting Paul uses the word "flock" here.

28 continued) ... over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, ... (KJV)

Meaning someone who looks after. Notice:

28 continued) ... to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood. (KJV)

So the same message comes to Paul and Paul is saying, "Christ wants me to feed the flock which is the brethren whom He purchased, each one with His own blood and His own suffering." It is a direct command now from Paul the apostle to all the other elders. Christ gave it to Peter, Christ gave it to Paul and here Paul is saying the same commandment and carrying on the same commitment to the elders.

Now what about Peter? We saw in John 21 that Christ told Peter three times. Now did Peter just say "Okay" and then walk away and forget it? Or did he somehow get confused and get off on other things and emphasized other points? Let's go to 1 Peter, chapter 5 and see if Peter took this seriously and then began to preach it to the other elders as did Paul. To set the context, Peter is talking to elders just as Paul was. He is writing this letter, but now he is singling out the elders for direct communication.

1 Peter 5:1. *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder ... (KJV)*

“I am one of you. I am not way up here and you’re way down there and I’m going to crack the whip.” He said, “I’m an elder just like you are.”

2) *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight [thereof], (just what Paul said in acts 20) not by constraint, ... (KJV)*

That means not because you have to or you’re forced to.

2b) *... but willingly; not for filthy lucre ... (KJV)*

It’s not a job to make money.

2 continued) *... but of a ready mind; (KJV)*

The NIV says: *Because you are eager to serve.*

So here we have a direct command from an apostle to the elders. Now we have three scriptures, one of which mentioned it three times. The other two mentions it one each. We have three scriptures that emphasize this point and I’m here to tell you that this is far more of a direct command than to do any kind of work, to get on radio stations or TV or print booklets or whatever. This is about as serious as it gets, three scriptures, Paul, Peter, Christ to both, and then they say it to the elders. It can’t get any clearer.

Now in all of these cases, Christ to Peter, Peter to the elders, Paul to the elders, the brethren are referred to as sheep or a flock. Now it is sad but true, but in the Worldwide Church of God ministry even to the very highest level, the brethren were referred to all too often as “dumb sheep.” I’ve heard it with my own ears, and I cringe. It was said in front of the brethren, “You’re just dumb sheep.” Now the term “sheep” descriptively of human beings, is not a demeaning term. It’s not. Yet sometimes the brethren were made to feel like, “Yeah, we don’t have any brains; we don’t have any ability; we just pray and pay and get out of the way.” That is not the case.

When you think about it, if you’ve ever been around sheep they, generally speaking, are gentle, they’re harmonious and they’re non violent. Who ever heard of a sheep fight? We’ve heard of dog fights, cat fights. We’ve seen lions fighting each other, but have you ever heard of a sheep fight? No of course, not. Generally, God’s people are the same way. About the worst you ever see a sheep do is one of them will start muscling a little bit to bump around a bit, but generally they are quiet, harmonious and non violent. But the fact is that the sheep must be led. They cannot be driven. I learned that firsthand growing up in West Texas. We lived in El Paso and in our neighborhood was a family, and they had a boy that we were friends with. His dad owned a cattle and sheep ranch north of Van Horn, Texas which is about ninety miles east of El Paso, up in the hills. In the spring, about this time of the year, they had the roundup. They would

round up the cattle and round up the sheep, brand, inoculate, shear the sheep and all of that. We kids in the neighborhood were free labor and we were glad to do it, you know, to go out and be a cowboy. I always wanted to be a cowboy. So we had a chance for a few days to go ninety miles out in the east. It was dirty and hot and dusty, but you got to ride a horse and got to learn how to herd cattle and sheep. I can remember my first time out there and we were as green as grass. The foreman of the ranch was a guy named Sparky. He was about 5'8" or 5'9" and thin as a rail and tough as leather. His skin was so dark and he chewed tobacco and he was bowlegged because he spent so many hours on a horse. He was in his sixties, but he loved every minute of it. We would get up at 3:30 a.m., be in the saddle at 4:30 with barely enough light to see and he would take us out to where he wanted us to work. He would say, "Okay, see those hills over there?" They were five to seven miles away. He would say, "I want you to go out there and sweep through the base of those hills and bring everything you find this way." Thankfully we had a border collie. The collie was smarter than we were and he knew what to do. We would bounce along on the horse and go out and get them moving in a certain direction. I remember as we were moving them, several hours later, there was a stream. It was springtime and there were hills up there. The stream was probably five feet wide and six to ten inches deep. It wasn't a roaring stream, but all the sheep came up to the stream and just stopped and stood there. We'd yell at them and whack them on the fanny with a rope and they would just stay there. You'd walk your horse right up to them thinking that the presence of the horse would move them across the stream. Uh-uh, it doesn't work. They just part and all of a sudden you're sitting there by the stream and they're all there behind you. So you scratch your head and wonder what to do. So you go up stream maybe thirty yards, go across the stream and come back on the other side and now you're facing the sheep. So there's one that kind of wants to go but can't bring himself to go and his legs are trembling and he wants to jump, but can't get there. So finally you lean down, grab the wool, tug him across and just get him started and then all of a sudden within ten seconds the whole herd moves across like nothing happened. You can't whip a sheep and you can't drive sheep. You have to lead sheep.

The fact is that back in the days of Jesus Christ, they weren't on horseback and they probably didn't have border collies. Maybe they did, I don't know. But the fact is that the shepherd lived with the sheep, in the fields with the sheep and it got to the point that the sheep would follow the shepherd wherever the shepherd went, and they knew his voice as Christ said in John, chapter 10, and they would follow. But you see, the fact is that they not only must be lead (not beaten, whipped or herded), they must be fed. Ministers are overseers who serve by feeding the sheep and also protecting the sheep from particularly the roaring lion that wants to destroy (Satan the devil).

So let's understand the fourth point is that to complete the sheep, they have to be fed.

So we see here that from all of the scriptures we read so far, it's very clear ministers are to be shepherds.

That's the fifth point: ministers are to be shepherds.

Now, lest anyone get the big head, as Neil was mentioning in his sermonette, let's be clear there is only one chief shepherd. Let's go to 1 Peter 5:4. We were here earlier, but look at verse 4. We read earlier about feeding the flock of God. Notice what he says in 1 Peter 5:4.

1 Peter 5:4. *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away. (KJV)*

So here it's very clear. There is one chief shepherd. Now if you have a chief of anything, then the chief has to be chief of something and so this strongly implies that if you have a chief shepherd, then there must be subordinate shepherds or assistant shepherds under the chief shepherd. That's the point.

Now with that in mind, let's go to John, chapter 10. Peter is saying that Christ is the chief shepherd, now let's notice what Christ says about Himself. In John, chapter 10, we will begin in verse 11. Ministers are to be shepherds.

John 10:11. *I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. (KJV)*

That's been a theme since we started this sermon of the scriptures we've read. I'll read verse 12 from the New Living Translation. It's in modern English.

12) A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will leave the sheep because they are not his and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. (NLT)

Just what we read in Ezekiel 34 in the beginning; the hireling flees because he doesn't view the sheep as his. He's looking to save his own skin and he just leaves.

I've had a personal firsthand experience of that. As I mentioned before, we grew up in El Paso. Mom and Dad built that house in 1936 and they both died in that house and my brother and I grew up in that house. Dorothy and I would go back to El Paso hopefully at least once a year to visit Mon and Dad. Our son, Brit, was their only grandchild so that was a great occasion for them. But the fact is we would go to service at the Worldwide congregation in El Paso and over the decades we got to know the people there and we got to know the ministers as they cycled through over the decades too. Then in '94, '95, '96 in that area, Worldwide began falling apart. We knew the minister that was there and as you know, there was a big group that left Worldwide with most of the ministers at that time. Dorothy and I had already left. But the fact is, this group left and the minister there in El Paso had always wanted to live (I won't mention the place) in a very nice place in the U.S. a couple thousand miles from El Paso. It's a place that appealed to him and he really wanted to live there. Well when Worldwide broke and this new group started, he negotiated a pastorship in this location. Guess what? All of a sudden the El Paso brethren had no shepherd, no minister. They were

trying to go through this turmoil and trouble without a minister, without this fellow that had been there for a few years anyway, to help them navigate these very rough waters. All of a sudden there is nobody there, and guess what? Ezekiel 34; they were scattered, and today as far as I know (maybe it's changed) there is no church in El Paso of any of the groups. There might be some living room people, and hopefully there are. There were translators there for the brethren that would come across from Juarez, Mexico, but that church of several hundred people was blown to bits.

13) The hireling flees, because he is a hireling and does not care for the sheep. (KJV)

Christ says, "I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep and am known of Mine. The sheep know Me, because I care for them. I look after them."

15) As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. (KJV)

He didn't flee. He didn't cut and run. He pleaded with God, "If this cup can pass, please let it pass." God said, "No, that's part of the plan." And Christ died for all of us.

16) And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold, [and] one shepherd. (KJV)

That is right; there is only one fold, the body of Christ, the Church of God. There is only one shepherd, Jesus Christ, head of the church. The fold is everybody in the world that has God's holy spirit. They're part of that fold. Geography doesn't matter, corporations don't matter and administrations don't matter. One fold and one shepherd and the shepherd gave His life for the sheep. Now if that isn't an admonition to the ministry that they should do likewise, be living sacrifices for the sheep. Christ says He is the chief shepherd, He is the good shepherd and He is the one shepherd. But what Christ has done for the benefit of all His people is He uses assistant (and I emphasize the word "assistant") shepherds. There are no chief shepherds among human beings. I think some would like to be, but there are no chief shepherds. We're all assistant shepherds and He has given assistant shepherds the responsibility and the authority to do what He wants done, to feed the sheep.

So point number five here is that ministers are to be shepherds.

Next what we're going to do, point number six, is see what that responsibility is and what that authority is that Christ has given assistant shepherds to help the flock.

So we lead to point number six.

Point number six is the lengthiest and the most important. Christ tells true ministers how they must feed the flock. How does He want it done? As I said in the beginning, the Bible is really clear. It is not a mystery. The Bible is very clear on how ministers should feed the flock. With that in mind, let's go to 2 Timothy, chapter 4, and if you have a marker in your Bible put it in this location because we're going to focus on this with four sub-points and then come back. So if you have a marker, put it there. I'm going to read it from the NIV because it is much clearer in modern English than the King James, but the NIV doesn't change the meaning at all. Notice what Paul is saying to this young minister and notice the emphasis in this first phrase.

2 Timothy 4:1. *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, ... (NIV)*

Now Timothy has got to know something big is coming here, because he says, "In the presence of God and Jesus Christ..."

1b) ... who will judge the living and the dead, ... (NIV)

That's a sobering thought.

1 continued) ... and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, ... (NIV)

"He is going to come, Timothy."

1 continued) ... I give you (Timothy) this charge. (NIV)

That's exactly what it means. It's a commandment, it's a charge, a commission, a mission statement. Whatever you want to call it, it's all of those wrapped together. He said, "In the presence of God and Jesus Christ, who are going to come and judge all of us, I'm giving you this charge." It couldn't be any more serious, any more important.

The next verse, verse 2, gives four parts to this charge.

Number one: He says, "*Preach the word. Be prepared in season and out of season.*"

Number two: "*I charge you, I give you this charge; you must correct.*"

Number three: "*I give you this charge that you must rebuke.*"

Number four: "*I give you this charge that you must encourage.*"

So we're going to take some time now, this is a two-part sermon, to go through these four, because this tells us in very brief form what a minister should do, how he should feed the flock.

Okay, if you like to outline, Point A, the first one: "I give you this charge: Preach the word."

The Greek word for “preach” is Strong’s 2784 and it means *to herald as a public crier*. Back before the age of electricity and before the age of computers and radio and TV, in a village often a public crier would go out and announce the locking of the gates, or in England back in the 1600s or 1700s, the public neighborhood crier would go out and say, “All is well,” and it was time to turn the street lights off. That means you should be home and tucked in bed and all of that. So a public crier would make announcements loudly and openly. In the Greek, Strong’s says, *to herald as a public crier, especially the divine truth*. In other words, one of the minister’s jobs is to preach the truth out of the Bible.

Now with that in mind let’s go to Titus, chapter 1 and verse 9. Titus was an elder and Paul is instructing elder Titus here. Notice what he says. It’s an admonition, a commandment, a warning, instruction.

Titus 1:9. Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, ... (KJV)

In Titus, it is a description of qualifications to be an elder. He said, “All of you who consider and want to be an elder, this is something you consider and Titus, you’re already an elder and you better consider it.” *Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught,*” (an elder should do that).

9b) ... that he may be able by sound doctrine (teaching) both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. (KJV)

Hold fast to the faithful word; preach it. Now this didn’t happen with all too many ministers and brethren as Worldwide blew apart. It didn’t happen, didn’t hold fast. We had some friends in Lubbock, Texas, we were there for three years, and when the announcement came that it was okay to eat pork I got a knot in my stomach. I think all of us did. We felt just kicked. It was a big thing for the Lubbock congregation to go out to dinner at a local cafeteria after services and about half went out and had pork. They heard it and went out and had pork. Just like that. No holding fast, no considering that this might be wrong, but we’ve all experienced that. You see true ministers must preach the truth of God and never vary from it, never add anything and never take anything away.

Notice Deuteronomy 12:32. You can never subtract from God’s word, you can never add to God’s word. It is a horrific responsibility, something to be taken very, very seriously. God is saying to them then about His law and us today about His law.

Deuteronomy 12:32. What thing so ever I command you, observe to do it: you shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it. (KJV)

There are several other scriptures that say the same thing. In other words don’t get sidetracked by non-salvational issues, conspiracy theories, one-world governments and all this kind of stuff, getting way out there on certain areas of prophecy that we just can’t

know right now. We'd like to know, but don't. Some day we will as we get closer to the end. But, you see we can't get sidetracked and we can't get off the trunk of the tree, as Mr. Armstrong used to say. We've got to stay with the trunk of the tree. I get papers from all over about specific subjects and they want basically to have it reviewed and then give your stamp of approval on it. Most of it is non-salvational and some of it is way out there. What Satan wants you to do is lock onto that, make it a litmus test for the true church, if they believe this certain kind of far out doctrine. We can't do that. We have to be very discerning and careful, never deviating from what we've been taught unless there is absolutely clear scriptural evidence that we were wrong, but it's got to be so clear and so absolute. You just can't go willy-nilly off here and there, getting tugged to and fro.

So under point A here, preach the word, a minister has to preach the truth for his entire life. He can't vary from it.

The second point, B: Paul said to Timothy, "I give you this charge; you must correct."

What does he mean by correct? 2 Timothy 4:2. We are told:

2 Timothy 4:2. *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove ... (KJV)*

The NIV says "correct". The King James says "reprove", which is a word we don't often use. It's Strong's 1651, and you know what it means? It means *to tell a fault*, to tell someone they have a fault. That's all it means, to correct, to tell somebody they're in the midst of a fault and going in a wrong direction.

We are also told how that should be done. Should yelling and screaming be involved, a whip and a chair and all that? Let's go to Galatians 6:1. It's very easy, very simple. Notice what it says. He's talking to the brethren, but it applies even more to a minister.

Galatians 6:1. *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, (or a sin, getting off track) you which are spiritual, restore such a one (how do you do that?) in the spirit of meekness: considering yourself, lest you also be tempted (or put into the same situation). (KJV)*

So it applies even more to a minister and that's why a shepherd had a staff. On one end of the shepherd's staff is a big crook. The shepherds were on foot back then and if a little lamb somehow got in a crevice or a crack or on a ledge and was too scared to jump or go back and couldn't turn around, the shepherd would walk up and take the crook and pick it up and set it back down. Then if the lamb started heading back in another direction, he would take the crook and pull it gently in the right direction to where he wanted it to go. No damage, no blood, no screaming and yelling, no hurt on the sheep. That's the crook on the shepherd's staff.

So what we're told here in Galatians 6:1 is to gently reason using God's spirit with the goal that the individual can see themselves as God and Christ see them and see the error of their ways and head in the right direction.

You see, God did this with ancient Israel. Ancient Israel, as we know, didn't listen. Look at Isaiah, chapter 1 and we'll read verses 18 through 20. Yes, God was angry with Israel at times, but He didn't want it to be that way. Notice what He says to Israel.

Isaiah 1:18. *Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: ... (KJV)*

Let's talk about this.

18b) ... though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (white as new wool). (KJV)

Verse 19, again talking about sheep and lambs.

*19) If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land:
20) But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken [it]. (KJV)*

What God is saying to them and what a minister should say today is, "Look, think with me on this. Let's look at what God's word says. Let's compare it to what you are doing right now. You might try doing it this way, rather than the way you're doing it."

So what correction means here is a change of course. He said, "Look, you're going off ninety degrees. Let's turn it ninety degrees and head in the right direction and reason and talk through God's holy spirit to facilitate a course change." Correct, not with a whip and a chair, not with a bull horn, just gentle discussion and correction.

Now we get to the third. "I give you this charge." He says, "Rebuke."

2 Timothy 4:2. *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove (correct), rebuke, ... (KJV)*

This is a stronger Greek word than "correct" that we just covered. This is much stronger. It's Strong's 2008, and it means *to reprimand, to admonish or by implication, to forbid*. It means to say, "You just can't do this. We can't allow this to happen."

Now in the past all too often, the rebuke was made personal. It was made in an attacking way or a harsh way. I've sat in on those and I cringe to this day. In 1978 I went on a visit with a minister. He had the habit of calling me on a Sunday night and saying, "I'll be there at eight o'clock. I want to go visiting." I had a job, but he didn't care. So you just worked around it, made arrangements and did whatever you had to do. He was on the doorstep at eight o'clock and we went to visit a widow. She had had a dust up with another widow at the Feast and this was a week or two after the Feast.

They had some dust up in Spokane at the Feast. So he was going to deal with this widow who had made an accusation. So we sat down in the little trailer court west of Yakima and he started talking. He had a temper, and the more he talked the more he got agitated and aggravated. His voice became louder and then it became louder still and louder still to the point that here the three of us are in this trailer and he is yelling and screaming at this eighty year old woman, and to the point (I mentioned it before) he said something (I've repressed what he said) but her head jerked back, her mouth flew open and her upper plate fell in her lap. It was embarrassing for her and certainly was embarrassing for me. She covered her mouth, reached down in her lap and took a few seconds getting it lodged back into place. He didn't miss a beat. He didn't stop. He didn't apologize. He didn't say, "Well, maybe I'm getting a little too harsh with this poor woman." He just kept right on and accelerated after that. There's nothing you can do. I'm a local elder and you're sitting there watching this and the only thing you can do is learn, you can just learn and commit yourself that if I'm ever in that position, I'm not going to do that, I'm not going to repeat that. That is clearly wrong. I was embarrassed for him and for her. His conduct was a violation of scripture. You don't treat people that way, you just don't.

Paul instructs Timothy on how it should be done. Let's go to 1 Timothy 5 and we'll read the first three verses. Remember, Timothy is very young and by most accounts, he is in his early twenties. Maybe he could have been a late teen, I don't know, but he was very young. Most of the congregation was old enough to be his parents or grandparents.

1 Timothy 5:1. Rebuke not an elder, ... (KJV)

Now what does the word "rebuke" mean? It's Strong's 1969, and this is a much stronger word than "rebuke" that we just talked about. The root word means *to pound*, like you're whacking on something, like you're tenderizing meat and you're just whacking on that meat. It means *to pound or rebuke severely*. It's a much more severe word than we read in 2 Timothy 4:2. So he is saying, "Don't pound an elder. Don't beat up on an elder." Now the Greek word for "elder"; he's not talking about a minister; what he's talking about is Strong's 4245, and Thayer's says it means *the elder of two people, it means advanced in age or a senior*. So what he's talking about to Timothy, he says, "Don't pound on somebody who is older than you. Don't just beat up on them. They're older than you." We're not talking about the very elderly, because in context, most of the members of the church that Timothy is dealing with are older than he. So he's saying, "Don't pound on those older than you."

1b) ... but intreat [him] (this elder) as a father; ... (KJV)

What do the commandments say? Honor, respect your father and mother.

1 continued) ... [and] the younger men as brothers;

2) The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

3) Honor widows that are widows indeed. (KJV)

The Greek word “intreat” is Strong’s 3870, and Thayer says it means *encourage, strengthen, comfort or console*. He says rather than pound on them, I want you to encourage them, I want you to comfort them, I want you to console them and that should be the role of a minister.

But, that being said, there comes a time when a minister has to draw a line in the sand. Hopefully it’s not very often, and thankfully it isn’t very often these days. But there has to be a line drawn in the sand, for only very rare and very certain conditions. For example, if somebody is in a pattern of sin, not just one sin but in a pattern of sin.

1 Corinthians, chapter 5 where Paul had to put out the guy committing immoral acts with his step mother, he said, “I don’t have to be there. I don’t have to do anything except tell you to get the guy out.” Okay, a line is drawn in the sand. That needs to be done for someone causing division. The Bible is very clear. We could cover a half a dozen scriptures on that. Or for someone introducing heresy into the congregation, the Bible is very clear on that. So there does come a time when you get to the point that you just can’t go any further. But even that can be done without rancor, without yelling and screaming.

Keith Waldon was a Worldwide minister; he is deceased now, he was one of my favorite ministers. I learned a lot from him. He had a unique ability to handle a very tense situation with humor, to defuse the situation. We went on a visit one day to see a lady. I can’t remember if she was single or divorced, but she was messing around and we found out about it. She had been doing it for quite some time and had been admonished before, so we went to her little house. Everybody was very friendly, and we went into the kitchen, she offered a cup of coffee. As Keith did, he sat with his elbows on the table and just looked at her with a smile on his face and he said, “Do you know why I’m here?” She kind of hung her head and said, “Yes.” He said, “Darlin, you can’t do this! You just can’t do this.” He said it with a smile on his face, “You understand that, don’t you?” She said, “Yes, I understand.” He said, “We love you and we care about you, but I can’t let you come to church doing this. Do you understand? Any time you want to change, you just let me know and we’ll talk and come together. We want you back, but I’ve got to do this because of what God and Christ tell me, what the Bible says and it’s for your benefit. Because you need to know what it’s like to be separated from the body of Christ.” He said this very calmly with a smile on his face and she nodded and she fully understood. She said, “I understand totally.” Then he said, “Okay, how about a second cup of coffee?” The message was delivered, it was over with and there were hugs and handshakes when we parted. So even when you draw a line in the sand, you don’t have to make it adversarial, you do it out of love.

So we’re going to close now. We are through three of the four points of showing us how a minister should preach God’s word, should correct, should reprove and rebuke. We’re going to see the fourth one, “encourage”. So we will carry on in part 2 next time.