FEED MY SHEEP, FEED MY LAMBS

A Biblical Mandate for All Servants of God

Is shepherding God's flock the exclusive role of pastors? What about apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers? Are they exempt from caring for the flock? According to Scripture, the call to feed and tend the flock extends to all who are called to ministry, regardless of office or title.

Jesus' conversation with Peter in John 21 profoundly emphasizes this point.

1. Jesus' Command to Peter: A Universal Ministry Pattern

> *John 21:15–17 (NKJV)*
>
> "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?'

> He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’
> He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’
> He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’”

Peter, an apostle, not a pastor, was directly commanded to care for God’s people. This signifies that the responsibility to feed and tend the flock is not limited to those with the pastoral title—it applies to anyone entrusted with the spiritual oversight of others.

2. The Role of Church Leaders in Feeding the Flock

Paul emphasizes this shared responsibility in his final address to the Ephesian elders:

> *Acts 20:28 (NKJV)*

> “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Here, Paul speaks to elders (presbyters)—a term used interchangeably with bishops or overseers (episkopoi) in the early church. They were not all “pastors” by title, but they were all required to shepherd and feed the church, recognizing the immense value God placed on His people by purchasing them with Christ’s own blood.

3. Sheep and Lambs: Understanding the Two Groups

Jesus distinctly mentions both “lambs” and “sheep”, indicating two categories within the flock: Lambs represent new believers—young in the faith, needing gentle teaching, encouragement, and nurturing (Hebrews 5:12-14).Sheep are mature believers, who require deeper teaching, correction, direction, and spiritual meat (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

Attempting to feed both groups the same way leads to imbalance. Paul addressed this in:

> *Hebrews 5:12-14 (NKJV)*
>
> “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles... You have come to need milk and not solid food.”
>
> *1 Corinthians 3:1-2 (NKJV)*
>
> “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal... I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it.”

This highlights the need for spiritual discernment in ministry: knowing who needs milk and who needs meat.

4. Feeding the Flock: Not Optional, But a Test of Love

Jesus equates love for Him with caring for His people. Each of Peter’s confessions of love is met with a command: feed, tend, or shepherd. Thus, ministry to people is evidence of love for Christ.

> *1 John 3:18 (NKJV)*
>
> “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

If we claim to love Christ but neglect the spiritual nourishment of His people, our love is questionable. The work of the ministry is not about title, status, or charisma—but service, accountability, and love.

5. A Warning to Leaders

The prophet Ezekiel gives a sobering warning to shepherds who neglect their duty:

> *Ezekiel 34:2-4 (NKJV)*
>
> “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?... The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick... but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.”

Neglecting to feed God’s people leads to spiritual decay, confusion, and vulnerability to deception (Hosea 4:6).

6. Faithful Ministers Follow Christ’s Model

Jesus Himself is called the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20), and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). As such, we are under-shepherds, modeling His care, love, patience, and truth in how we minister to others.

> *1 Peter 5:2-3 (NKJV)*
>
> “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers… not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

As a servant of God—whether an apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher, or pastor—you are called to feed and care for the flock entrusted to you. This is not about gifting; it’s about responsibility.

Don’t disqualify yourself by saying, *“I’m not a pastor.”* If you are entrusted with souls, you are accountable. Like Peter, Christ asks, *“Do you love Me?”* And if your answer is *“Yes, Lord”*, then the response remains the same:

Feed My lambs. Tend My sheep. Feed My sheep.

Maranatha—Come, Lord Jesus!

Please share this message with other faithful servants of God.

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