This message is part of an ongoing series dedicated to equipping God’s servants. Whether you serve as a pastor, teacher, apostle, bishop, prophet, or in any other leadership capacity in the body of Christ, these insights are especially for you.

A Shepherd’s Wisdom: Understanding the Pace of the Flock

In Genesis 33, Jacob prepares to meet his brother Esau after years of separation. The reunion, though potentially tense due to their past conflict (Genesis 27:41), turns out to be peaceful and filled with reconciliation a profound act of divine grace and restoration (cf. Proverbs 16:7).

But after this emotional reunion, a subtle yet theologically rich moment unfolds. Esau invites Jacob to travel with him, but Jacob gently declines. His reason reveals the heart of a true shepherd:

> *“My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard even one day, all the animals will die.” (*Genesis 33:13, NIV*)*

Jacob understood that the people and livestock under his care required a slower, more considerate pace. He said:

> *“So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the herds before me and the children...” (*Genesis 33:14, NIV*)*

This shows us several key principles:

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1. Leadership Requires Discernment and Compassion

Jacob’s choice reflects a theological truth: good leadership is not about speed but stewardship. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, exemplifies this in John 10:11, saying:

> *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”*

A shepherd doesn’t push the sheep to exhaustion he leads them

gently, according to their ability to follow. Compare this to Isaiah 40:11:

> *“He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.”*
> (Isaiah 40:11, NIV)

Jacob models this kind of leadership, putting the welfare of his flock above the convenience of traveling with Esau.

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2. Ministry Includes the Weak and the Vulnerable

The Church, like Jacob’s camp, is diverse. It includes spiritual infants (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1–2), the wounded, the maturing, and the strong. Paul recognized this in Romans 14:1:

> *“Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters.”*

And in 1 Thessalonians 5:14:

> *“...Encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”*

Jacob’s decision to slow down teaches us to avoid placing unreasonable expectations on those we lead. Ministry must adapt to meet people where they are, not where we wish they were.

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3. Sukkoth: A Place of Shelter and Strategy

> *“Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth.”*
> (Genesis 33:17, NIV)

The name *Sukkoth* means “booths” or “shelters” in Hebrew (סֻכּוֹת), symbolizing protection and preparation. This foreshadows later biblical themes such as the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) in

Leviticus 23:42–43, where Israel was commanded to dwell in booths to remember God’s provision during the wilderness.

Jacob building shelters also reflects the principle of pastoral foresight. Leaders must create spiritual “Sukkoths” places of rest, healing, and protection for their congregations. Jesus calls the weary to such a place in:

> *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*
> (Matthew 11:28, NIV)

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4. Rushing Ahead Can Lead to Loss

Jacob recognized that a hurried journey could cost him dearly. Leaders must guard against the temptation to “arrive” at ministry milestones quickly. As seen in Ecclesiastes 7:8:

> *“The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.”*

Moses himself slowed his pace for the sake of the people (see Numbers 9:18–23). He moved when the cloud moved not before. Like Moses, like Jacob, we must learn that divine timing often requires pastoral patience.

Build Your Sukkoth

Jacob didn’t just slow down he built. He created a temporary sanctuary for his people, a place of shelter in the journey. Likewise, leaders today must create *spiritual Sukkoths* safe spaces for growth, healing, and rest within the local church.

Let us not measure our success by speed or size, but by faithfulness to God and care for His people. In all things, walk with your flock don’t run ahead of them.

May the Lord bless you as you lead with wisdom, patience, and compassion.
Shalom.

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