

The Need for Pastor Shepherds

A Paper

Submitted to Dr. Rick Efird & Pastor Jonathan Logan

Phoenix Seminary

Scottsdale, Arizona

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
MI 501**

by

Troy A. Griffitts

30-May-2006

In a world where Church attendance reaching above three hundred is commonplace, pastors in today's American Church need to learn how to stay involved, on a personal level, with their flock. So often, out of pressure to have things run smoothly, hierarchies are established, committees convene, and the head pastor of the local Church acts as a kind of CEO, with no quality interaction with his flock. Implementing the Shepard Pastor model for Church leadership has many advantages, as well as challenges, in today's local assembly. Leadership modeled can be significantly more effective than top-down, corporate or military style authority. Teaching a community with whom one is intimately acquainted may inspire a more loyal response to a call to maturity. Caring for and protecting a flock is a key responsibility mandated by Scripture.

The pastor, as leader, fulfills a vital need in a growing, local Church. The Church is called to make disciples of all men. Often we apply this verse to missionary work, but Christ's example of making disciples had nothing to do with initial decisions to follow Him; instead, He lived with and taught His disciples through daily life. Christ became intimately familiar with His disciples and led them personally, by example, to where He desired to take them. None could question His lack of experience or willingness to do what He commanded, because He was always the first to display such. This kind of leadership is greatly more difficult in that not only will our leaders need to communicate God's direction to His people-- which is the most easily accepted responsibility of a pastor-- but they must actually lead not only in word, but also in deed. In the end, it wasn't a question of a desire to follow their master, but rather, as Peter declares, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." (John 13:37).

Teaching may be done generally with moderate success, but an intimate knowledge of where one's students are at yields an invaluable source to enrich a lesson which will change a life. A teacher who knows his students will undoubtedly have the insight to direct a lesson to the heart of what the hearers need to elevate them to the next level of understanding. Teaching will not put to sleep an audience when it is relevant to their lives, and the only way to plan a lesson relevant to their lives is to be intimately familiar with their lives. The next step a true teacher desires for his student, after learning a lesson, is to put that lesson into practice in the daily life. When a student has built a trust relationship with a teacher, there are less mental barriers inhibiting this leap to the practical. The student sees these lessons lived out in the life of the teacher and has witnessed the truth exemplified. The road to practicing the lesson is vividly displayed, leaving no ambiguity as to how to apply the new knowledge to the personal life. Building intimate relationships with a congregation involves time, which most pastors today have filled with other more pressing activities.

Caring for a flock is essential for demonstrating the desire which God has for His people. Christ's mission in life was predicated on the fact that He actually loved His creation. He knew their **need** and was *intimately* involved in **meeting that need**. Often the indifference from today's pastor comes from not intimately understanding the personal needs of the flock. Today's pastor has no intimate knowledge of the needs of his flock because he is not intimately involved with his flock. He's lost a desire to care for His flock because he does not have any members of his flock for whom he

cares. When a pastor does not love his flock, that pastor has no conception of the heart God has for His people. Even beyond this, more so our leaders at best give lip service to the concept of Hell and neglect a **lost and dying world's real need, and their flock's role in meeting that need.** It was for no ascetic purpose that Christ mandates anyone who wishes to come after Him to “deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.” (Matthew 16:24) Christ had a clear goal when He looked to the Cross-- to meet the needs of His people. Our leaders have forgotten that need. They've pushed it away behind their theology books and have exchanged their hearts of flesh for titles and numbers. No, it's time we remember the Love of our Saviour which moved Him to leave the ultimate of all Comfort Zones, take on humility, and die to care for His world-- a world He still longs to reach today through the sacrifice of His Body in service. Our leaders need to raise up a Church after God's Own Heart, desiring to fulfill their purpose and meet the needs and care for a lost world, and this task is impossible if our leaders, themselves can't exemplify that Heart in caring for the individuals of their Church. Matthew 10:38 speaks sobering truth to our flocks-- and if to them, how much more to our pastors who neglect Christ's common calling, “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”