



The Sharon Star

Dating

By Andy Snoke

God has put it within the heart of men and women, to seek out a life long spouse. It is important to make wise decisions about a choice in one's husband or wife, as these choices will affect generations to come.

The institution of marriage is decreed by God himself to be a lifetime bond between two partners: a husband (one man) and a wife (one woman).

Presidents, and Prime Ministers, States, Provinces, and Nations have worked hard to alter the true description of marriage. But God recognizes only what He instituted, and that is the union between a male husband and a female wife.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” Mark 10:7-9, NKJV.

The spiritual and physical relationship in marriage, is difficult to describe in human terms. The scriptures best describe the uniqueness of marriage in Genesis:

“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” Genesis 2:21-25 KJV

Animals briefly mate to propagate the species, and invest little in rearing their family. In the human race,

God has created man to be much more than an animal, and has decreed that we “marry” for a lifetime. God has designed animals to be independent and fend for themselves, many in less than one year after birth. While the human children require almost two decades of nurturing before they are independent and self-sufficient. It is important to make wise lifetime partner choices during the dating or courting process.

The purpose of this article is to give some guidelines and principles to help in the dating process. Now I realize that each culture is different regarding how a young man or woman selects a future mate. Typically dating or courting is the most prevalent North American model, while other countries rely more on the selection and choosing of a mate by the parents or loved ones.

In any case, the following principles offer guidance in making wise choices. These are “principles” not “laws.” There will always be exceptions.

There are 67 verses in Genesis chapter 24 that give us an insight into how to select a future mate. This chapter contains the story of Abraham sending out his servant (which speaks of the Holy Spirit, as the servant of God, going out on his behalf) to find a wife for his son Isaac. The Lord, through many signs, indicates and chooses Rebekah as the wife for Isaac.

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This chapter is lengthy, and to save time, I suggest that you read Genesis 24:1-67 before continuing with this article.

Principle of Mutuality

The more things a couple has in common, the better the foundation will be. Abraham told his servant “That you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac” V3-4, NIV.

The apostle Paul spoke about being unequally yoked in 2 Cor 6: 14-17.

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’ Therefore, ‘Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.’”

To be unequally yoked, is to invite many problems.

Some examples of being unequally yoked may include:

1. A believer dating an unbeliever.
2. A believer, with greater liberty in the gifts of the Spirit, being yoked to a believer who is OPPOSED to greater liberty in the Spirit. (This will bring constant turmoil).
3. Conflicting cultures and background. (This is not a law, but there are greater challenges when two people marry from different cultures, etc. (I say this carefully recognizing that there are many happy marriages that are cross-cultural.)
4. A law abiding citizen dating an ex felon.
5. An exaggerated difference in age between two couples.
6. A financially responsible person dating, or marrying a person who has a history of financial irresponsibility, bankruptcies, etc.

Many have heard the phrase “love is blind.” In other words, when you are in love, you are blind to the shortcomings of your partner. I think that not only is love “blind” but it is also deaf, dumb and blind!

Many marriages have become shipwrecked years after saying “I do,” because the loving couples have been unable to recognize the unequal yoke in one another during the dating process. Many thought that

their “love” for one another would compensate for the unequal differences in their relationship. Marriage does not cover these differences, it often magnifies them.

When a contractor builds a building, he first pours a good foundation. He must have something that he can build on. After the concrete sets and cures, it is inspected for cracks. If the concrete foundation was poured improperly, it may be full of cracks! And no matter how much that contractor “loves” that foundation, the cracks remain.

If the contractor were to become so in love with his concrete, that he became “deaf, dumb and blind” to the cracks, and the inequality of the foundation, the cracks would still be there. If he completely ignored the warning signs (the cracks in the concrete foundation) and continued to build on that inadequate foundation, the cracks would grow deeper from the weight of the building.

When you are in the dating or courting process, look for the cracks. Don’t attempt to build on something that may be broken already.

The Principle of Divine activity

It is important to ask the Lord to direct you in your choice of finding a lifetime husband or wife. God is interested. The servant that was sent out on behalf of Isaac, prayed three times asking God about confirmation in the selection of Rebekah.

He prayed before he met the young lady (vv 12-14).

He prayed again after signs of progress from the young lady (vv 26-27).

And he worshiped the Lord and gave thanks when her parents said “yes!”

Pray before the dating process. Pray during the dating process. Pray after the dating process. Pray during the engagement. Pray during a lifetime of marriage. In all stations of life, pray!!

As you read Genesis 24, there is little doubt that God was directing the servant in finding a wife for Isaac.

Marriage is the second greatest choice that a person can make. The most significant life changing choice that can be made is the day that a man or woman accepts Jesus into his/her heart. The second most life changing choice is the choice in marriage.

God is interested in most people being married. God decrees it and God is interested in helping you find that right partner.

I need to pause for a moment and remind us that there are those that God has called to remain single. The Bible is full of many examples of great men and women that God called and used as unmarried. In fact, the apostle Paul was so happy with his singleness that

he wished that everyone would be as blessed as he was to be unmarried. However, this would have meant the end of the human race!!

If God has not given you a mate, pray about it and seek the Lord. If the Lord seems to have called you to remaining single, then embrace it.

I like the story of the young lady who was single. Someone asked her: “Do you think that God has called you to remain single?” She answered: “for now, He has.” In other words, she was embracing the station in life that God had called her to at that time, and she was ready if the Lord were to change all of that with a husband.

Principal of Morality

“The woman was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again” Genesis 24:16, NIV.

God has placed, created, and blessed the sexual union between man and a woman, in marriage and only in marriage. Fornication (sex between unmarried persons) and adultery (sex between married partners with others) are condemned in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body—in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God;” 1 Thes 4: 3-5, NIV.

When a couple begins to date or court, it is wise that they set high standards and boundaries for themselves. One of those standards is “no sex” before marriage.

Remember, God has not said “no” to sex. But He did say “no” to sex outside of marriage.

“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” Heb 13:4, NIV.

We are created with a hunger drive and a sex drive. It’s there! A hunger drive makes a 2 hour old baby scream at the top of his lungs for food! He or she may know nothing at all in the hours after birth but the hunger drive kicks in automatically and the precious little one immediately has a way of letting his mother know that he wants to eat! God made babies feel hunger, and he made them scream at a frequency and decibel level that demands full attention from mom and dad.

We are also created with a sex drive. It is equally as powerful as the hunger drive. But it is intended to direct a young man and woman towards its fulfillment in marriage for a lifetime. For the record, physically a man’s sex drive is highest when he is about 18, and for a lady it is closer to 30.

I apologize for being so blunt. But knowledge is

power. Knowledge gives the ability to make wise choices.

Therefore, knowing that during the dating process, that God created sex drive will powerfully begin to pull a couple in a certain direction if it is not kept under control. A couple learns to keep themselves pure by setting standards and personal boundaries. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Date only Christians. If they do not know the Lord, bring them to church and give them the opportunity to know the Lord before entering any type of relationship.

2. Meet the parents.

3. Don’t go places that allow you to be completely alone, that could inspire you to act unwisely.

4. Purpose in your heart, to remain a virgin until married.

5. Set a personal curfew for yourself. Don’t be out too late.

6. Don’t start dating too early in life, when judgment and wisdom are immature.

7. Let your date know your standards and boundaries at the appropriate time in your relationship.

8. Be conservative with physical affection with one another.

As I write this article, I am aware that many young people have “crossed the line.” With God, it is never too late to do things the right way. Failures of the past are never an excuse to continue in them. There is one principle that always follows us through life, and that is: Repentance and confession brings forgiveness.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” 1 John 1:9, NIV.

If you have made mistakes, quit making them! Confess to the Lord, ask forgiveness and move on!

Yes, there are always consequences to our sins, even after they are forgiven. Sin is always forgiven, the results of sin often remains present.

Therefore in dating and in marriage, it is proper to mutually face our shortcomings, and deal with them!

Principle of Parents

Of the 67 verses in Genesis 24: 1-67, over half of the scriptures that pertain to the union of Isaac and Rebekah, address conversations and relationships to the parents (vv 1-9, 28-60).

In most cases, parents can offer a lot of good advice for young dating couples. The problem with this truth is, this is also a time when most young people are to a degree pulling away from mom and dad, and don’t often ask for advice from their parents.

There is a reservoir of wisdom in the hearts of most

mothers and fathers for their teenage children that usually is never taken full advantage of. In many cases, it is an untapped resource.

Moms and dads, and the elders and their wives of local churches have a lot of wisdom for young people. They have “been there” before.

I enjoy the short story of the mother that was arguing with her teenage daughter about the revealing clothes that the daughter wanted to wear. They had many arguments and the daughter demanded to know why her mother always thought she knew everything. The mother replied: “I was once 15, but you have never been 37! I have been where you are now, but you have never been, where I am today.”

When dating, talk to your parents about your date. Introduce him/her to your parents. And no matter how much you feel to resist it, ask for their advice and opinions.

When I fell in love with a wonderful, beautiful, young lady, I introduced her to my parents on about the second date. I met her parents on the first date. She loved her parents, and I loved mine.

After a year of dating, I decided I wanted to marry this wonderful girl. So, I asked my parents what their thoughts were. My mother said something like: “If you mean you want to marry that nice young lady that has been attached to your arm for the last year, then please do!!!”

I then asked her dad if I could marry his daughter. He said something like, “I was going to go fishing today, and you sure ruined that!!! But welcome to the family!” I was both humbled and happy at the same time!

Introduce your parents to the person you are dating. Some of you fathers may even go as far as giving a warning to your daughter’s date about your expectations. When I dated, my future father-in-law asked me if we (his daughter and I) could be home by a certain time,

when dating, and we always were. Out of respect, love, and a little fear, I heeded his warnings! (He continues to be a wonderful father in law).

This makes me think of a short story I read the other day. A teenaged daughter had started dating, and she brought her date home to meet her dad.

After a few pleasantries, her father said this: “Young man, I want you to know that my daughter is my greatest treasure in life. She is everything to me. I love her more than you can ever know. And I just want you to know that if anything bad or immoral were to ever happen to her or if you were to hurt her in any way, please understand, I won’t mind going back to prison.”

When you are dating as young people. It is good that you and your date have a great respect for your parents; that you value their opinions and advice and that you honor them. And it is healthy that you have a little Godly fear of them! It will keep you safe.

Good choices in dating will reap good marriages. Good marriages will reap good families. Good families reap a strong church and a strong nation. Good families, in time, produce another crop of young people that learn to make wise choices in dating. And the cycle starts all over again.

Unwise choices in dating will reap weak or broken marriages. Broken homes weaken the church and the nation. Broken homes, sadly, often produce children that model what they have (or have not) seen at home and often have children that follow the same direction. However, this cycle can be broken and by the Grace of God, we are never without hope in any circumstance.

Court wisely.

I gratefully acknowledge that some of the principles in this article have been loosely adapted from Author Gary Chapman’s book titled, “Toward a Growing Marriage.”

True Shepherds

P. J. Mathew

In this writing, I would like to focus on the attributes of good shepherds who are chosen and ordained to the ministry of serving God’s flock. In Matthew’s gospel, we read in chapter 9: 36, “When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (NIV). Jesus had a great concern for the people because they were misled by the religious leaders of

the time such as Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus appeared to Peter at the Sea of Galilee to remind him specifically of feeding His sheep. Although Peter had been backslid at that point, Jesus encouraged him to continue the ministry of a shepherd. John 21:15-17, “When Jesus had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I

love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep.’ The third time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ He said, ‘Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep’” (NIV).

Several years later Peter himself wrote “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away” (1Peter 5:1-4, NIV). We must note that when a man enters the eldership, a great honor is conferred upon him, for he is entering into the oldest spiritual office in the world, whose history can be traced through Christianity and Judaism for four thousand years. It is not a small responsibility either. He has been ordained a shepherd of the flock of God and a defender of the faith for life. Peter the apostle who witnessed the sufferings of Christ advised the body of elders to be examples to the flock. It has to be realized that it is not your will but rather you come under the will of God in caring for God's flock.

Some of the attributes of the good shepherd

The Good shepherd is a willing servant. He is not a hireling, meaning one who works solely for compensation. A caring shepherd does not expect any remuneration for his work. He owns his flock as his precious possession and wants to take care of it willingly. Whereas a hireling does not feel obliged to protect the sheep as sincerely as a true shepherd would. When a wolf or any wild animal attacks the sheep he would flee for his own safety as opposed to a true shepherd who would fight for the life of his precious sheep. A shepherd is born to do his task. He is sent out with the flock as soon as he is old enough to go. The sheep become his friends and companions; and it is his second nature to think of them before he thinks of himself. But the false shepherd came into the job not with a calling but as a means of livelihood. He is in it simply and solely for the pay that he could get. He has no sense of the height and the responsibility of his task because he is only a hireling. “They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They

are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain” (Isaiah 56:11, NIV).

The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

The good shepherd is self-sacrificing in regard to the needs of his sheep. If any of the sheep needs special attention, care or protection, the good shepherd is the one who would recognize it first. He would be willing to chase the wild animal and secure the weak and injured lamb and carry it on his shoulders and then would treat the injury. He would wash the wound, apply oil and bind the wound. He would not rest until he finds the lost sheep and restores it (Luke 5: 4-7). To save his sheep, he is willing to suffer pain, even to the point of death. The good shepherd spends day and night with his flock. David saved his sheep from the jaws of a bear and a lion, risking his own life. A false shepherd does not have the same love for the sheep as a willing shepherd. “The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep” (John 10:12-13, NIV).

The Good Shepherd is the door of the sheep

Then Jesus said unto them again, “Verily, Verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep” (John 10: 7, KJV). In this parable, Jesus spoke about two kinds of sheepfolds. In the first kind, there were communal sheepfolds where all the village flocks were sheltered when they returned home at night. These folds were protected by a strong door of which only the guardian of the door held the key. When the shepherd comes, the guardian gives the key to him and then he enters through that door of the sheepfold. It was to that kind of fold that Jesus referred in verses 2 and 3 of John Chapter 10. “But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out” (KJV). In the second type, when the sheep were out on the hills in the warm season and did not return at night to the village at all, they were collected into sheepfolds on the hillside. These hillside sheepfolds were just open spaces enclosed by a wall. In them, there was an opening by which the sheep came in and went out; but there was no door of any kind. What happened was that at night the shepherd himself lay down across the opening, and no sheep could get out or in except walking over his body. In the most literal sense, the shepherd was the door. No wild animal can get in without go-

ing over the body of the shepherd. There was only one passage or entry. Should any disobedient sheep want to go astray at night without the knowledge of the shepherd, it will not happen since the good shepherd is lying on the door preventing his sheep from going out. We can draw a true comparison here of how the church as a sheepfold protects the believers from going out by the ministry of the good shepherd. It is through him alone that we find access to God. In Ephesians 2:18 we read, "And it is through him that both of us (Jew and gentile) now can approach the Father in the one Spirit" (J.B. Phillips). "It is the new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body" (Hebrews 10:20, NIV).

The Good Shepherd Cares for his sheep

A good shepherd recognizes the weak, sick and the young ones in his flock. As the sheep enter the pen, he examines each one physically to find out whether any one of them is bitten by an insect or any thorn that is being pricked or any open wound that is caused by any external force. Lice and other insects would often get into the wool of sheep, and when they got near the sheep's head, they could burrow into the sheep's ears and kill the sheep. So, ancient shepherds poured oil on the sheep's head. "You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (Psalms 23:5, NIV). This made the wool slippery, making it impossible for insects to get near the sheep's ears because the insects would slide off. Only a sheep can explain that comforting and loving touch of the shepherd. Had he not attended to the need of that sheep before dusk the poor creature would have suffered blood loss and it would have died during the night. A good shepherd is gifted with the insight to grasp the unspoken language of his sheep. The shepherd is absolutely responsible for the sheep. If anything happened to one of his sheep, he had to produce some kind of a proof that it was not his fault. Amos speaks about the shepherd rescuing two legs or pieces of an ear out of a lion's mouth. In Amos 3:12, the law laid it down, "If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring in the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal." The idea is that the shepherd must bring home proof that the sheep had died, and that he had been unable to prevent the death of his sheep even though he tried hard to rescue the animal.

The Good shepherd knows his sheep and his sheep know him

Knowing the sheep means having an intimate and unbreakable relationship between the good shepherd and his sheep. He is able to discern the very anatomy (detailed analysis) of his sheep, meaning the strengths

and weaknesses of his sheep. He knows how to manage and lead them depending on the nature and scope of his flock. He knows which one is obedient, disobedient, stubborn, aggressive or sober. In Jesus' day, shepherds in Palestine used a sling to control the movement of the sheep. Whenever a sheep goes far away or out of reach, he would send a small stone using his sling and aiming very close to the nose of the sheep but making sure that the stone would not hit the sheep. When that stone falls a few inches off the nose of the sheep, it gets the message that it is not supposed to go in that direction any further. Immediately a good sheep will change the course. This is an example of how a sheep knows and obeys its shepherd. Even today Bedouin tribes in the Middle East use slings to tend their sheep. Again, in Palestine, shepherds used a rod and staff to guide and warn the sheep. The shepherd had the rod attached to a hook and let it hang from his waist. Whenever a sheep goes away from the rest of the flock, the shepherd extends his rod and hooks the ear of the sheep, mildly causing a little discomfort and reminding the sheep not to go astray. Similarly, he uses his staff with a gentle touch on those who are weak and tired to encourage and support them to go along with the rest of the flock. David mentions it in Psalms 23: 4, "Your rod and staff they comfort me." The sheep and the shepherd know and understand each other through the use of these simple tools such as sling, rod and staff. They make a powerful line of communication between them.

The Good Shepherd calls his sheep by name and the sheep know his voice

"He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10: 3-4, NIV). A good shepherd calls his sheep by name. It is said that the shepherd literally had kept a name for each sheep and called him or her Blacky, Red Eye or some name that matched its color or character. The sheep do not listen to the voice of the stranger even if he fakes the voice of the true shepherd. Sheep know and understand the voice, tone and the language of the true shepherd. For the sheep it is not so much the name that is important, but the voice of the master. "My sheep listen to my voice: I know them and they follow me" (John 10:27, NIV). The shepherd goes ahead and the sheep follow him without any doubt. The sheep know only one way, which is the shepherd's way. The sheep do not know any other way but they know that the shepherd's way is the best and safest way. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes

to the father except through me” (John 14: 6, NIV).

Good Shepherd will search for the lost sheep

The true shepherd keeps a good count of his sheep. When he gathers them from the field to lead them to the pen he makes sure that all the sheep are counted accurately. If he misses any of them, he will return to the pasture searching for them. Psalmist David describes in Psalms 23: 4, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me” (NIV). If a sheep goes astray while pasturing in the field, there are chances that it might lose the direction and will never be able to get to the sheepfold. Jesus told a parable in Luke 15: 1-7 of the lost sheep and the shepherd’s joy when he finds it. The shepherd in Judea had a hard and dangerous task. Pasture was scarce. The narrow central plateau was only a few miles wide, and then it plunged down to the wild cliffs and the terrible devastation of the desert. There were no restraining walls and the sheep would wander away. As a result, the sheep might end up falling into a dangerous ravine and couldn’t climb up. Consequently, it could get hurt and suffer terrible pain. Yet, that sheep has a hope that shepherd will come to save it. “Wouldn’t any man among you who owned a hundred sheep, and lost one of them, leave the ninety-nine to themselves in the open, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he found it, he will lift it on to his shoulders with great joy, and as soon as he gets home, he will call his friends and neighbors together. ‘Rejoice with me,’ he will say, ‘for I have found that sheep of mine which was lost’” (Luke 15:4-6, J.B. Phillips). Imagine the joy and hope of that lamb when it hears the footsteps of the shepherd while it is trapped in the ravine. Also think of the tears of joy of the shepherd as he picks up his lost lamb and puts it on his shoulders. Isaiah 41: 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” (NIV).

The Good Shepherd discerns his sheep

Discern means to detect or perceive with the eyes or intellect or perceive the distinctions of (The American heritage dictionary). A true shepherd observes his sheep keenly to perceive the needs of his sheep. All the sheep do not have the same abilities or skills to find their food and water. They depend on the shepherd's plan for direction. The psalmist in Psalm 23: 2-3 “He makes me lie down in green pastures and he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in the path of righteousness for his name’s sake” (NIV). The shepherd guides his sheep towards the rich pasture and to quiet waters or

still waters. He understands the hunger and the thirst of his sheep. Just as the shepherd makes his sheep lie down in green pastures, Christ makes his saints lie down; He gives them quietude and contentment in their own minds, whatever their lot is; their souls dwell at ease in Him. Still waters do not necessarily mean stagnant or polluted water in this context. It means that the shepherd leads to the place of water that is neither standing nor rapid flowing water, but to the silent purling (gentle movement) water so that the sheep can drink the water restfully. Good shepherds will lead their sheep in the path of righteousness. In order to do that, the shepherd himself has to walk in the paths of righteousness. The shepherd leads the way and the sheep will follow in that path of righteousness. Like sheep in a parched land, our spiritual journey could become weary in this world. But He restores our souls. It is a great comfort to experience the restoration of our walk with God. Our Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, has restored our souls from becoming victims of our own vulnerabilities.

The Good shepherd is an example to his flock.

God's flock needs a true and consistent example in the shepherd. Sheep will follow the patterns of the shepherd and learn to emulate him. Jesus said to his ambitious disciples, “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the gentiles lord it over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all” (Mark 10:42-44, NIV). “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being en-samples to the flock” (1 Peter 5: 2-3, KJV). Then, it is implied that shepherds should go before the flock, and set an example to believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; and in patterns of good works. “Don't let any

IMPORTANT DATES

- North Battleford Feast **April 17 - 20, 2014**
- Henry, Illinois **May 2 - 4, 2014**
- North Battleford Camp.....**June 29 - July 6, 2014**
- Caribbean Summer Camp..... **Aug. 3 - 9, 2014**
- Pinelov Camp **Aug. 4 - 9, 2014**

one look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV).

The Good Shepherd is a provider.

The flock of God is His heritage. As the sheep is led to green pastures and to still waters by the shepherd, God's heritage deserves to be fed well in the word of God. “ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching” (1 Timothy 4: 13, NIV). One of the important qualifications of an elder or overseer is that he should be able to teach the word. “ You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1, NIV). “And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor may be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:4, KJV). God has placed shepherds over the flock that they would provide food for them, which is spiritual manna from the word of God. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28, KJV). Shepherds are reminded to not only take heed to their own souls but also have a constant attention to the souls of those who are under their charge. It is like a good shepherd keeping a watch over his sheep that none of his flock wanders from the fold or is seized by the beasts of prey or is missing. They must feed the church of God, must lead the sheep of Christ into the green pastures, and must provide solid food for them that they will be nourished in the eternal word of life. As shepherds keep watch over the flocks by night, we have to watch against everything that will be hurtful to the flock, and provide everything that will be advantageous for the flock of God.

In conclusion, Jesus our great shepherd set an example of a humble shepherd of God's flock. In Him

all the qualifications of a shepherd is fulfilled and He (Christ) has imparted those gifts to elders and deacons when they are prayed over by laying on of hands by the presbytery. Let us strive to do the ministry of a good shepherd. “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2: 15, NIV). “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4: 15-16, NIV). Apostle Paul directs his spiritual son Timothy to be a worthy shepherd and to pay attention to instructions mentioned in 1 Timothy Chapter 4. He (Paul) advises him to be a good minister of Christ Jesus in verse 6 of 1 Timothy Chapter 4. Our determination must be to press on toward the ministry of a good shepherd and to concur with Apostle Paul's words, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7, NIV).



For a listing of dates and contact information visit www.globalmissionsinc.org

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