

"THE LIFE OF A SHEPHERD"

A Message Honoring Faithful Pastoral Leadership

CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does it actually cost to shepherd people well?

I. THE SHEPHERD GOD CHOSE

Key Scripture: Exodus 3:1–4

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law... and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush..."

A. THE TEST BEFORE THE CALL

God did not speak to Moses the moment he saw the bush. The Bible says God **waited** to see what Moses would do. There was a flock to protect and a curiosity to satisfy. Moses had to choose.

- If he left the flock, he risked losing a sheep to a wolf or predator.
- If he ignored the bush, he might never see anything like it again.

"And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." (v. 4)

Key Insight: God was looking for someone so committed to the sheep that he could not leave them alone — even for a miracle.

B. WHY GOD CHOSE A SHEPHERD

Israel had been in bondage for hundreds of years. God could have sent a politician, a warrior, or a tactician. Instead he chose the one who could not let the sheep out of his sight.

"God picks somebody who is so infatuated with the sheep that he cannot let them be alone."

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SHEPHERD

A. WILLING TO MOVE

When God called Moses, Moses responded the way most people do — with a list of reasons why he was the wrong person for the job.

- *"Who am I?"* — God answered: I AM sent you.
- *"They won't believe me."* — God answered with signs: the staff became a serpent, a leprous hand was healed, water turned to blood.
- *"I can't speak plain."* — God answered: take Aaron with you.

Moses ran out of excuses. And when he moved, he moved in uncertainty — not knowing the full plan, not understanding the outcome.

"The first thing they going to do is offer excuses on why they can't move. Moses eventually ran out of excuses, and that's when God could use him."

B. WILLING TO TARRY

Key Scripture: Exodus 33:9–11

"And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended... and the LORD talked with Moses. And the LORD spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

Moses did not tarry only at the altar or in his tent. He tarried before the Red Sea when there was nowhere left to go. He tarried for 40 days on the mountain without food. He tarried when the people were falling into idolatry at the bottom of the hill.

Key Insight: The intimacy Moses had with God was not reserved for sacred spaces. It traveled with him.

C. WILLING TO COUNSEL

Key Scripture: Exodus 18:13

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening."

Moses was not counseling people through small problems. These were people transitioning out of a slave mentality, learning what marriage looks like without slavery as the norm, learning how to raise children in freedom. Moses was counseling them through things he didn't fully know how to navigate himself.

"As the church grows, the problems grow with it. Two hundred people have more marriage problems than one hundred people. The more people God brings, the more the weight adds up."

Key Insight: Moses needed help. And so does every pastor. The weight of shepherding is not meant to be carried alone.

III. THE REWARD OF A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

Key Scripture: Numbers 27:12

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel."

After 40 years of leading, counseling, interceding, and carrying the weight of a people — Moses climbed the mountain and saw what God had promised. He saw it before anyone else did.

- Moses saw the promised land before the first foot crossed over.
- He prayed for it, believed for it, and walked toward it for four decades.
- The people he counseled through impossible seasons were the ones who inherited it.

The Ripple Effect of Faithful Shepherding

When a pastor is willing to move in uncertainty, tarry before God in ordinary moments, and counsel people through seasons he doesn't fully understand — the fruit extends far beyond what he will ever see in his lifetime.

"If God has a man that's willing to be a shepherd, anything can happen."

IV. A PERSONAL WORD: WHAT A SHEPHERD COSTS

The speaker shared a piece of his own story to illustrate the long reach of faithful pastoral investment.

A. THE CALLING

On a van ride home from church camp — July 10, 1999 — a 17-year-old heard God say *"I'm sending you."* He argued. He had no family support, no pedigree, no built-in path. But he had a pastor willing to open a door.

"I didn't have the family system. I didn't have the friends. I didn't have the pedigree. I said, God, I can't do this. And this is what I found to be true over and over again — He makes beauty out of ashes."

Key Scripture: Psalm 37:4 — "Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

B. THE COUNSEL

A pastor's words land further than he knows. A definition of love taught in a pickup truck on Highway 27 came back years later on a wedding night. Counsel given in an ordinary moment became the framework for a marriage.

"No matter what you go through, I'll be here — because we did the right thing."

C. THE RECOVERY

The speaker shared that he suffered a massive stroke the Friday before Easter, losing his ability to communicate for several weeks. During his recovery, his prayer shifted:

"God, don't make me what I used to be. Make me what you want me to be."

That prayer — rooted in a lifetime of pastoral investment — is what a faithful shepherd produces in the people he leads.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

A faithful shepherd is not measured by the size of his congregation. He is measured by what he produces in people who go out and produce in others.

Move Answer the call even when you don't have all the answers.	Tarry Bring God into the ordinary moments — not just the sacred ones.	Counsel Carry the weight of the people even when it is heavier than you expected.
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FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

- When God called Moses, Moses offered excuses. What excuses have you given God in response to something He's asked of you?
- Where in your life are you being asked to tarry — to stay present with God in an ordinary, unglamorous moment?
- Who has been a shepherd to you? Have you told them what that investment has produced in your life?
- Moses saw the promised land before the people crossed over. What has God shown you that you are still believing for and working toward?