

Shepherding Notes and Applications

April 3, 2000

Acts 20	Paul as a shepherd	Application to IV staff
v18	"You yourselves know how I lived among you...": His life as a model was both accessible and attractive. He lived near enough to them that they could tell that his life was consistent, that the things he said about his love for God and people matched his actions	This is crucial for shepherding, and especially for leadership development (or staff development, for that matter). Staff need to live lives that are accessible (not seeing students for just ninety minutes/week) and attractive (not always complaining about their lives or worrying about burnout).
v18b, 31	"the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia". Paul lived his model consistently. 31: "for three years I did not cease <i>night or day</i> to warn everyone with tears"	While we do not work as staff 24-7, as shepherds our hearts are always available to the flock. How easily do I "clock out"?
v19	"serving the LORD with all humility & with tears": Paul's heart is in it. He cries over his people. His focus isn't on the greatness of his own leadership.	I am tempted to be impressed at myself when I find myself in a tender moment with a staff person. I take pride in being trusted enough that staff will cry with me. But do I cry with them?
v20	"I did not shrink from doing anything helpful." He had a deep pocket--he was willing to teach, to pray, to make tents, to serve in whatever way was needed, whether "important" or not.	Are there helpful things that I won't do because it doesn't feel like my job?
v26	"I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you." Paul understands his role as a sentinel (Ezekiel 33:6). He is responsible <i>to</i> the people, to speak the truth. He isn't responsible <i>for</i> them, for their response.	Do I understand the difference between responsibility <i>to</i> and <i>for</i> people? Do I err on the side of taking too much responsibility <i>for</i> people's choices, or taking too little responsibility <i>to</i> people in my role as sentinel?
v27	"for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." Everything Paul received from God he gave to the people he led. Not, "	Are there things I receive from God that I have withheld from the people I lead? Insights, challenges, calls to repentance, affirmations and appreciations, etc. Can I say that "I did not shrink" when I met with them or wrote year-end appraisals? Are there things I have said to others about them that I have failed to say to them? Have I been faithful to my sentinel role, my responsibility to them?
v28, v31	v28: "Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock..." v31: "therefore be alert": Paul tells them to keep watch over themselves too, not just the flock.	As a shepherd, a big part of my role is to keep watch. How do I do at looking around, at noticing danger before its already wreaking havoc? How do I do at keeping watch over myself? How am I potentially a danger to the flock?
v28	"Of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." Paul has a sense of God's involvement in their appointment as leaders.	The HS makes us overseers by 1) giving us a heart for the flock, and 2) giving the flock hearts to trust us as leaders. This takes time. How have I seen the HS do his work in my heart?
v28	"To shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son." Paul was very aware of the ownership claims God makes on his church. This is extraordinary: Paul is not distant, yet not possessive of the church. (See also 1 Peter 5:2: "flock of God")	How am I tempted to think of the fellowship as my fellowship, or the small group as mine? Or <i>my</i> staff team? What does it do to my understanding to speak of <i>God's</i> staff team? <i>God's</i> flock?
v29	"I know that after I have gone..." How does Paul know? We could say he knows because he is a prophet... Or simply that he has foresight. He sees further down the road than his younger leaders. He knows the kinds of things that are likely--he may even have an idea about who are likely wolves.	In what ways do I exercise foresight for the flock? What can I say about what I know will happen with next year's staff team? Student leadership team? Have I had foresight for the fellowship but not communicated it? Have I had suspicions about the dangerous wolves but refrained from speaking up?

v29-30	“Savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. [Paul, as Saul, was one of these.] Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them.” Paul knows the dangers are both from outside and from within. He’s seen this first-hand.	Wolves: people who are a danger to the sheep or even to other shepherds. People who get inappropriate needs met through their leadership experience. People who, by their actions, harm others: intimidation, harshness, abuse, romantic attentions, sowing divisions.
v31	“I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears” Paul’s warnings come not with impatience or anger, but with tears. He feels deeply, and cries on behalf of these folks (also v19): compassion, he really cared for them, cried over them. He was deeply involved with the people. Not simply a “professional.” He didn’t live a self-protective lifestyle.	Do my warnings come with tears? Or simply with impatience or annoyance? Or do I shrink back from warnings altogether?
v32	“I commend you to God and to the message of his grace” also v 25: “none of you... Will ever see my face again.”	Paul’s lack of possessiveness of the ministry in Ephesus makes it possible for him to commend folks to God
v33-35	“In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Paul is willing to call attention to his model, interpreting what he was doing so that they will understand why. He doesn’t want them merely to think that he is a great guy, but that God promises to so bless anyone who would so live. Paul wasn’t ripped off by his lifestyle--rather he was very blessed by God.	Modelling is not enough. Actions are not self-interpreting. I tend to be much better at modelling than I am at interpreting my model. For the sake of avoiding blowing my own horn I might risk people getting the wrong idea: they conclude that I am uniquely a servant, rather than I simply have come upon a key insight of Jesus’: it actually IS more blessed to give than to receive. Interpreting the model calls people to follow, not because I am so special, but because God backs your choice to be generous.
v35	“It is more blessed to give than to receive”: Paul understands that he is living a blessed life. He wants everyone to know it too, so they will also.	How do I motivate generosity? How willing am I to connect a generous life with receiving blessing from God?
20-32	Paul proclaims the message (v20), teaches publicly and from house to house (v20), testifies (v21), proclaims the kingdom (v25), declares (v26, 27), warns everyone (v32). Implies urgency, constancy, boldness. It seems that this is all he thinks about. He is fanatical about this stuff. He is forceful, determined.	Paul has a total life involvement in his leadership that is intense (and potentially intimidating) but also very attractive. People are most sad that they will never see him again. Is my life’s intensity attractive or just intimidating? Does Paul’s fanaticism seem accessible to me, or just too far gone?

I Peter 5

Proper motives for shepherding (intrinsic rewards)	Improper (sordid) motives for shepherding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the chance to grow in faith • an ability to see God at work • deepen relationships with people • grow in capacity for love: even our ability to love our parents and families grows when we grow as shepherds • crown of glory that doesn’t fade: fruit that lasts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition or status • privilege or money • romance, seeking approval, being well liked • power: social, intellectual, emotional

What are the warning signs of improper motives for shepherding?

- resentment of other leaders
- impatience at the flock, domination and control (from Ezek 34, leading “with force and harshness”)
- people desiring influence without paying the cost
- Prayerlessness