

The Challenges of Being A Shepherd

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Wouldn't it be great if being a pastor was only about blessing others, and enjoying the goodness of the Lord? When God gave us "free will," He started a "landslide" of feelings, emotions, and attitudes. But, He likes that! He likes situations that make us "struggle" or "wrestle" with others. He enjoys seeing us "strive" with others for His sake.

The fact that you are a pastor over the children's ministry affects how you deal with the "stuff" of personalities, though. In 1 Corinthians 13, God gives us a "formula" or definition of love. In Philippians 2, He describes how love is to "show itself." Both of those passages take on a different perspective when a pastor views them.

You cannot afford to "believe all things," or to not keep a "record of wrongs" when it comes to leading and protecting the children's ministry! You also can't always put your needs or perspectives behind those of others; because others' views may not be what is best for the kids or for the ministry team.

A shepherd carries both a rod and a staff. The "staff" was a comforting tool. It was used to touch or direct the sheep. It wasn't a tool of protection or defense. The "rod," on the other hand, was purely a tool of protection and defense. The rod was used to beat a threat to the sheep. If a shepherd found himself confronting a lion, wolf, or other threat, he would use his rod against the threat. It is interesting that David, in Psalm 23, says, "...*Thy rod and thy staff comfort me.*"



As a pastor/director, you have both the "rod" and the "staff" at your disposal. We would all love to only need to use the "staff"; but, we work with people, so we are called to use the "rod" when needed to protect the rest of the flock. You use the "rod" when a team member or paid leader doesn't respond to the "staff."

Jesus was a great model for us. His use of the "staff" was almost on a daily, moment-by-moment basis. He encouraged, supported, and complimented people on a regular basis.

- *"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men..."* (Mk. 1:15)
- *"Your sins are forgiven..."* (Mk. 2:5)
- *"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* (Mk. 4:40)
- *"Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."* (Mk.5:19)
- *"Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."* (Mk. 5:34)

His words were always purposeful. He was all about building leaders and motivating followers! BUT, He also used His "rod" periodically.

- *"How can the guests of the Bridegroom fast while he is with them?"* (Mk. 2:19)
- *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."* (Mk. 2:27)
- *"Which is lawful on the Sabbath; to do good, or to do evil, to save a life, or to kill?"* (Mk. 3:4)
- *"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites..."* (Mk. 7:6-16)
- *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."* (Mt. 16:23)

You are learning how to use your "rod" and "staff." This, in God's eyes, is good. He does caution us to be careful not to bruise or stumble those under our leadership, though. There are so many scriptures that caution us, as leaders, to be gentle with those under our authority:

- *“An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe, and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it...For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.” (Titus 1: 7-11)*
- *"And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." (2Timothy 2:24-26)*

So, correct, without bruising or stumbling; yet, still correct. You see clearly, as a "shepherd" of your team. You know what has to be done! If there is a pattern of behavior, your correction must be more stronger and clearer. Your correction has to include very clear consequences ("warning" of removal, etc.). There is a great Proverb that applies (sadly) to this situation:

*"Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife;
quarrels and insults are ended." (Proverbs 22:10)*



The very BEST thing you could do as a shepherd is to love the “sheep” that are in your “flock.” Ask God to help you give them security and to lovingly lead them closer to the Master Shepherd, Jesus!