

## 9. Self-Serving Individuals or Serving Shepherds

In Ezekiel 34, God spoke through Ezekiel to describe the self-serving leaders of Israel and described what His ministry would be as the faithful shepherd. We will see that these verses teach us two very different attitudes about spiritual leadership. As we develop spiritual leaders, we want to develop leaders who have the attitudes that are the attitudes that God said Christ would demonstrate.

We will begin by looking at the attitudes of the faithless leaders Ezekiel described. Ezekiel 34:3-4 says, “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.” These verses teach us several things about the attitudes godly leaders will avoid.

First, we see that the focus of the self-serving leaders was to satisfy their own needs. The passage shows three things they were doing to satisfy themselves, “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings.” These verses show that their primary concern was to please themselves and get what they wanted. They were not concerned for the people who they were supposed to be shepherding.

Second, the self-serving shepherds were not feeding the flock. Here, we see that they had no concern for the spiritual growth of the people they were responsible for. There was no effort to teach the people the Word of God. They were not helping the people to understand what the Word meant. They were not helping the people to apply the Word of God to their own lives.

Third, the self-serving shepherds were not strengthening the diseased or weak. Disease or weakness can be the result of false teaching or just a lack of help in spiritual growth. Instead of protecting people from false teaching, or helping those who were weak, the self-serving shepherds did nothing to help them.

Fourth, the self-serving shepherds were not healing those who were sick. Here, we see that the self-serving shepherds had no concern to help others become healthy followers of the Lord. Instead, they left them in their weak, unhealthy state. There was no concern to minister to either their physical or spiritual needs.

Fifth, the self-serving shepherds were not binding up the broken. Many times, people are broken or crushed by the things that happen in their lives. The self-serving shepherds were doing nothing to minister to those who had been broken by the things they had experienced in their lives. Instead of serving those with spiritual or emotional needs, they left them to suffer without help or encouragement.

Sixth, the self-serving shepherds were not bringing back those that were driven away. The word that is translated “driven away” speaks of *those that have been driven or chased away*. A self-

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serving shepherd is one who drives people away by his words or his actions. Such a person is one who only thinks about how to get what he wants for himself. That person will make no effort to restore fellowship with those that have been driven away.

Seventh, the self-serving shepherds were not seeking the lost. Here, we see that self-serving shepherds have no concern to reach out to those who do not know God. Christ says that we are to preach the Gospel to every creature. These self-serving shepherds were so busy seeking to get what they wanted for themselves, they had no concern to reach out to those who did not know God.

Eighth, the self-serving shepherds were ruling with force and cruelty. Instead of serving those they were leading, the self-serving shepherds ruled them with harshness and cruelty. Spiritual leaders that drive people with this attitude are totally controlled by their own desires. They do not care how many others they destroy to get what they want for themselves.

In contrast, Ezekiel 34:11, 15-16 summarize the attitudes Christ had as the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. Those verses say, ““For thus says the Lord God: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out...I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,’ says the Lord God. ‘I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.’””” In these verses, we see that Christ shows us the attitudes and actions of a faithful spiritual leader.

First, Christ said that He came to seek and to save those who are lost. Luke 19:10 says, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Christ gave us an example of the fact that a godly shepherd will seek those who are lost in their sin. The concern of Christ is that all will come to repentance. We will develop faithful spiritual leaders if we show them how to reach out effectively to those who have not yet placed their trust in Christ.

Second, Christ said He would feed His flock. Once people place their trust in Christ, His concern is that they will be fed. In John 21:17, Christ told Peter, “He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’” Peter probably thought of that event when he wrote, in 1 Peter 5:2-3, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” Christ made it clear that spiritual leaders are to feed His sheep and be an example.

Third, Christ said He would cause His flock to lie down in a good fold. Christ also has a great concern for Christians to be a part of His body where they can love one another. In John 10:16-17, Christ said, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.” Christ has taken Jews and Gentiles and

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made us one in the church. Christ also prayed in John 17, that we would all be one.

Fourth, Christ said He would bring back those who were driven away. People are sometimes driven away from the fellowship of a local church by the words and actions of others. Christ says He will bring back those that are driven away. We are to follow His example and do whatever possible to help restore Christians to the fellowship of a local church. Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Fifth, Christ said He would bind up the broken. In Luke 4:18-19, Christ quoted from Isaiah 61 about His ministry to the broken. Those verses in Luke say: “‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’” Christ wants spiritual leaders to follow His example and minister to the brokenhearted.

Sixth, Christ said He would strengthen the sick. Christians are affected both by false teachers and by unconfessed sin in their own lives. We are to follow the example of Christ and strengthen those affected by false teaching by helping them learn to understand and apply the Word of God to their lives. We are to help those affected by sinful living to restore their fellowship with the Lord by confessing and forsaking sin. Proverbs 28:13 says, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” We want Christians to understand that Christ both forgives and cleanses us of our sins.

Seventh, Christ said He would destroy those who were self-serving shepherds. Romans 12:19 says, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.” We see that we are to leave all judgment to Him and not try to take that to ourselves.

It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to help others learn to become serving shepherds that are following the example of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip others to serve Him.