

8. Jesus Carried His Lambs in His Bosom

In Isaiah 40:11, we read, “He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.” In this verse, Isaiah spoke of two of the ministries Christ would have with those who followed Him. Our focus today will be on the fact that Christ would gather the lambs in His arm and carry them in His bosom. By His example, Christ showed the importance of this ministry for all spiritual leaders.

In John 10:11, Christ said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” In that chapter, Christ talked about the way He leads His sheep and protects His sheep. He makes it very clear that His sheep are those who have placed their trust in Him. A lamb is a very young sheep.

Many times, as a shepherd led his flock to the grassy places, a lamb would become tired and would not be able to keep up with the rest of the flock. Unless the shepherd carried that lamb, it would end up alone, and then, it would be killed either by the wild animals or the weather. To protect the lamb, the shepherd would pick up the lamb and carry it. As the shepherd carried the lamb home, it would be held close to the heart of the shepherd. We see that Christ has a very great concern for those who have just begun to follow Him and are like newborn lambs. In the same way, Christ wants all leaders, and developing leaders, to have this same concern for His lambs.

In Matthew 18, Christ taught about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. To illustrate His message, Christ called a young child to Him and set the child in the middle. In verse 6, Christ said, ““But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”” In this passage, Christ used a child to illustrate a little one who had believed in Him. Christ said that if a person caused a little one to sin, that person should be judged. Spiritual leaders are examples to both little children and also new Christians. Christ made it clear that it is sin to cause a little one (a young child or a new Christian) to sin.

While still talking about little children, Christ said a few verses later, in Matthew 18:12-14, ““What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.””

In these verses, we see that it is possible for people to go astray. The word that is translated “perish” in verse fourteen can mean that *the spiritual life of a person is destroyed* rather than referring to eternal destruction. John 10:27- 28 says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” Since Christians will not face eternal destruction, a sheep or lamb that goes astray speaks of a Christian who has his or her spiritual life destroyed.

A new Christian can have his or her spiritual life destroyed very easily. Christ, as the Good Shepherd, and we, as His under-shepherds, are to go after the sheep or the lamb that has gone astray until we find it, and then, bring it back to the flock. However, it is much better to prevent new Christians from going astray and hurting or destroying their spiritual lives by being there to help and carry them during their difficult times. It is much better to prevent problems before they happen than try to correct them after they happen. To do this, we need to work with developing leaders to show them how to help new Christians begin healthy spiritual growth.

In 1 Corinthians 4:15-16, we read, “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” Here, we see that Christ wants every new Christian to have a spiritual parent he or she can follow and imitate. A wise church develops a plan of action to make certain that every new Christian has one or more spiritual parents to begin follow-up immediately after that person becomes a Christian.

A careful study of John chapters 1 and 2 shows that Christ immediately gave His new disciples His example to follow. John 1:35-42 tells about Christ meeting some of His disciples for the first time. John 1:43 begins, “The following day...” John 2:1 begins, “On the third day...” John 2:12 says He then spent a few days with His disciples in Capernaum (NASB). Then, we see in the second half of John 2 that these new disciples traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem for the feast (2:13-22). Christ realized the importance of helping these disciples get a healthy start in their new life in Christ. He made certain that they had an example to follow in their very first days of this new life. He spent a lot of time with them during these first few weeks. We want to help developing leaders see that this is a very important part of their ministry to new Christians.

In 1 Peter 2:2, we read, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” Here, we see that Christ is concerned that those who are new Christians get the proper food they need in order to grow in their spiritual lives. We read about the beginning of Christ’s public ministry in Luke 4:14-15. Those verses say, “Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.”

Matthew 5-7 records what is called the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:1-2 says, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them...” Here, we see that His primary focus was to teach His new disciples, even though there may have been crowds gathered around Him as well. A study of the Sermon on the Mount shows that Christ spent most of the sermon teaching His disciples how to apply the Scripture to situations they faced in their daily lives. Christ taught His new followers:

- how to experience blessing in their lives
- how to be a light to the people around them
- how to understand and carry out the law in love
- how to treat those who treat you as enemies
- how to give and pray

Growing Christian Leaders Series – Developing Leaders Who Are Becoming Like Their Shepherd 8. “Jesus Carried His Lambs in His Bosom”

Updated October 2025

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- how to have treasure in heaven
- how to have victory over worry
- how to avoid judging others
- how God responds to their prayers
- how to make wise choices
- how to recognize false teachers
- the importance of doing, not just hearing
- the importance of teaching and explaining the Word of God instead of giving the opinions of others

Christ demonstrated how to carry His lambs (new Christians) in His bosom. He knew what they needed to begin healthy spiritual growth. First, they needed an example to follow. Second, they needed someone who would teach them the Word of God, help them to understand the Word, and then, help them apply the Word to their daily lives. Even though there were often crowds of people around, Christ focused on being an example and helping His new disciples learn to know, understand, and apply the Word of God to their personal lives. His first concern was their spiritual growth and development, rather than the crowds that came and went. Christ knew that if His disciples experienced healthy spiritual growth, they would then reproduce what happened in their own lives in the lives of others.

In the same way, developing spiritual leaders need to develop priorities for their lives as they lead others. Their first priority needs to be that of learning to be a godly example to others. Their second priority needs to be to help those they have led to Christ learn to know, understand, and apply the Word of God to their daily lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to follow the example of Christ by carrying new Christians close to their heart and helping them to experience healthy spiritual growth.