

# God's Calling for Us to Be Shepherds

by Sanjay Poonen

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*Sanjay Poonen emphasizes the call for every Christian to embrace their role as shepherds, guiding and caring for others with compassion and humility.*

**Duration:** 23:07

**Scripture:** Zechariah 10:2, Matthew 9:36, John 10:12, Philippians 2:3-8, 1 Peter 5:1-7

**Topics:** "Spiritual Leadership", "Discipleship"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being a shepherd to those around us, drawing parallels to the responsibilities and challenges faced by older siblings. It highlights the need for submission to a shepherd, developing compassion for others, and embracing the role of a shepherd with pure motives. The sermon also explores biblical examples of shepherds like David, Joseph, Nehemiah, and Peter, showcasing their humility, passion for God's kingdom, and transformation through obedience.

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## Transcript

How many of you are oldest brothers in your family, or oldest siblings in the family? I know Sandeep wasn't speaking at me, but all of you can relate. If you are an oldest brother, how easy it is to be a Pharisee, and how much it's so easy for us to lord it over the others. And it doesn't have to be just physically the older.

When the Lord gives us a little bit of wisdom and a little bit of blessing like he has given us in the fellowship here, we can act like an older brother to so many around us who are growing in our younger sheep. And the burden the Lord has for us is what Sandeep was speaking at the end, to shepherd his sheep. And I want you to imagine if you were driving this morning to the meeting, and you saw just as you came up near the entrance of Cooktown, a big advertisement that said, wanted new young men to play for the Indian cricket team.

And only boys from CFC can apply. Or you saw another ad that said, Wipro or Infosys is hiring only sisters from CFC. Well, you have to go to a certain place at 9.30 in the morning on Sunday.

And then I wonder how many of you will come here. What the Lord has put a big ad is he is looking for shepherds. He is looking, and the ad says, wanted shepherds for the kingdom.

And today there are so many who live either as sheep who are wandering around and never have a calling to be a shepherd. We've heard about the oldest brother, the tragedy of that whole story, and it's so fresh it came this morning, is he should have been a shepherd to the younger brother. He shouldn't have waited for the younger brother to have gotten lost and then come back and then continue to be a Pharisee even after the younger brother came back.

If you turn in your Bibles to Zechariah in chapter 10 in verse two or 10 chapter one, here it says, ask rain from the Lord at the time of the spring rain, the Lord who makes the storm clouds, and he will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to each man. But they go to the diviners who speak iniquity and lying visions and tell false dreams. They comfort in vain.

The people wander like sheep and are afflicted because they have no shepherd. And the first challenge often for those of us is we have no shepherd who we can look up to. If we want to be, if the Lord has called us to be a shepherd, the Lord has called every one of us.

When we think about a shepherd, the natural reaction is, oh, it's brother Ian, it's brother Newton, it's brother Zach. They are the shepherd and we are the sheep. And the Lord is calling us all to be shepherds in our sphere of influence.

It may be in our family where we have a younger sibling, or it may be for a wife or a child, or for a small group of children in the Sunday school you're in, or the music or the singing. The Lord's called us to be a shepherd. And the first thing we have to do is we have to have a shepherd that we submit to.

And so often today, I find that so many of the Christians who grow up are aimless. They're walking without a shepherd who can give them counsel. They're going often, as it says here in verse two, to the diviners, to the psychologists, to the people who worldly books, maybe even Christian preachers on television, but they have no shepherd in their own life that can give them counsel and who can rebuke them.

They grow up and they become aimless. They're like a sheep without a shepherd. And the first thing that the Lord wants to do to us if he wants to make us a shepherd is we need a shepherd in our life that we can submit to.

Even if we're not physically living here in Bangalore, the Lord, we have to pray that the Lord puts a shepherd in our life who can guide us. The second challenge is often most of us don't have a compassion. And now let's say that the Lord has given us a shepherd.

We still feel that our burden is just for ourselves. The Lord has not given us a compassion to go beyond just what is our own selfish interest to be a shepherd to somebody else, like the oldest brother should have been to his youngest brother. It says about Jesus, and you know this verse very well in Matthew 9, 36, seeing the people, he felt compassion for them because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

And Jesus' ministry was always about looking for the needy. He was searching out those who were needy in the ones that he was ministering to. He didn't come for the wealthy, for the rich, for those who were in good condition.

He came for the sick and for the needy. And he was always seeking out compassionately for those he could help. The heart of a shepherd is number one, they have a shepherd they can look up to, and number two, they have a compassion for those under.

The oldest brother should have had that for his youngest brother. And number three is when the Lord gives them responsibility for sheep, they shun it. And those of us who know the wonderful chapter in John chapter 10 and verse 12, where it talks about the good shepherd.

In John chapter 10 and verse 12 in the message translation, it says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary. A hired man is not a real shepherd.

The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf coming and he runs for it, leaves the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. He's only in it for the money.

The sheep don't matter to him. So one, the Lord gives us a shepherd, we look up to a shepherd. Number two, he gives us compassion.

But unfortunately, number three, if we don't have a heart of a shepherd that Jesus had, which is not, I'm in it for myself, I'm in it for the money or I'm in it for something else. These are hired hands. In the next page in Zechariah 11, verse 17, it has a curse to such shepherds who are hired hands.

Woe to the worthless shepherds, it says, who leave the flock. A sword will be on his arm and on his right eye. His arm will be totally withered and his right eye will be blind.

And there are many shepherds, even some among us that we've known, who have had in their mind selfish motive. And the Lord has to humble us completely so that we shed all the selfish motives when the Lord gives us sheep, so that we have pure motives in our heart completely for the sheep, the way Jesus had, compassionate, not a hired hand. Somebody who, whenever the wolves come, and the wolves today could be anything that distract us.

It doesn't have to be the devil. It could be our work. It could be our jobs.

It could be a lot of different pressures that come to distract us. And what do we find if we leave the sheep alone? That is the heart and spirit of a hired hand, who leaves the sheep, leaving them alone when the Lord has asked us to tend to them and to look after them. Who knows what type of shepherd the eldest brother was.

He was one of those three. He either did not have a shepherd that he looked up to, his father or whoever it was that the Lord, he didn't have compassion, or he was just in it for himself. And I wanna just share four examples.

We'll look more at some of these examples during the youth camp, but I thought to just share a few of these examples that the Lord has blessed me from the Bible, of shepherds who had a heart for the Lord, for sheep, from the time they were young. And as the Lord grew them into more and more responsibility, that heart of the shepherd just grew. The first, obviously, is the one that we know who's written, the Lord is my shepherd, and that's David.

And if you think back to his story, he was submissive even when he was not the king to an evil king, to Saul. God put him under Saul, and he was submissive for years. He was anointed, and he knew in his heart of hearts he was going to be the king and the shepherd for all of Israel, but the time hadn't come.

He was submissive. And there's a point in all our lives where there'll be years and years where we have to learn to be submissive to the authority God has put in our lives, and that's very important. David learned that, yet when he was submissive, he still had a passion for the heart of God's people.

When he saw Goliath that was rebuking God's people, he went himself, and he slayed Goliath, as we know. And it's said about him, we can look more about the story of David, many of us know about this, but imagine that it could be said when Saul died in 1 Chronicles 11 and verse two. And this is when Saul died, the people of Israel, so the sheep came to David and said, in the past, yet even while Saul was king, you were the true leader, because God told you, you will shepherd my people.

You are the ruler of my people. Imagine that when the Lord was about to anoint him, the people already knew that he was the shepherd. He was already the ruler because he had acted in a way that was a shepherd, even though he wasn't yet the king.

And that's a tremendous part of what the Lord wants to do in our hearts, is he prepares us to be a shepherd, to maybe even just a very, very small set that the Lord may give us sheep for. And the sheep may be only our family, or the sheep may be only a smaller group who have a ministry for a larger fellowship that may be a much larger setting. But it starts with submission, like David learned, even before he was officially the king.

The second example is Joseph. And we know the story very well. He probably was not very submissive when he shared his dream with his brothers, saying, all of you will bow down to me.

But he learned it. He learned it because as soon as he was sent to Egypt, he was sent as a slave. All through his 20s, he was in prison.

And he learned the sovereignty of God, even through that circumstance. And imagine now when he, in Genesis 45, we turn to Genesis 45 and verse five, where years later, to all these brothers who had treated him in hostility, and he knew that they had wrecked his life, but later on, the Lord had restored it. Imagine that when you see those who have treated you unkindly, and maybe they're your own family, that you could have a response the way Joseph did.

And I'm reading again from the Message Bible in Genesis 45, verse five. I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But don't feel badly.

Don't blame yourselves for selling me. God was behind it. God sent me here ahead of you to save lives.

There's been a famine for two years, and the famine will continue. God sent me on ahead to pave the way so there'd be a remnant in the land. So you see, it wasn't you who sent me here, but it was God.

He sent me in a place to be a father to Pharaoh, put me in charge of his personal affairs. Imagine that you could have that heart, that even when someone has treated you badly from your own family, you're able to see God's hand in it and then save them eventually. The passion that Joseph had as a shepherd was always for the kingdom of God, even though he was in Egypt.

His heart was for his family in Israel. A third example, and I've got just two more that I want to share, and we'll, for those of you who are the young people who are gonna be coming to the camp next weekend, we'll look more at the lives of some of these great saints of God who the Lord gave them a shepherding heart. They were not, some of them were youngest in the family, or middle in the family, as we know from

David and from Joseph.

But God has no respecter of where you are in your family. You could be the oldest, you could be the youngest. And the Lord's given you a heart to be a shepherd, and you're able to live the life like some of these great men of God did.

There's a tremendous, tremendous blessing ahead. The third example is Nehemiah. And many of us don't know the story as much because it's not, but he was the number two person.

So think about being the chief of staff to the prime minister of India. Yet when one of his brothers physically came to him in Nehemiah chapter one and verse three, and told him about what was going on, he basically, it says, he wept. And they said to me, the remnant there in the province who survived are in great distress and reproach.

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire. And it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and I wept and mourned for days. Lord had given him a passion for the kingdom where his heart, even though he was in a position, he was not Ezra who was called to be the priest and actually the person who was the minister of God.

He was a full-time, he had a full-time job, an important job in the government. Yet the Lord given him passion where when the walls of Jerusalem were broken, he wept for days. And as you know, the rest of the story, he was a 40 year old man.

He helped build the walls. And then later on, if you fast forward through his life, in Nehemiah 13, he went back and came back at the age of 63, we believe. And he found again, when he came back, that there was all kinds of desecration going on in Jerusalem.

And in Nehemiah 13 and verse 25, picture now this man as a 63 year old man. He had so much passion. He had so much of a shepherd's heart for God.

When he saw that all these mixed marriages were going on, all the desecration was going on in the temple of God. Here is the 63 year old man. I contended with them, I beat them and I pulled their hair out saying, you shall not give your daughters to the sons nor take your daughters for your sons, for yourselves.

He had such a passion for God's kingdom. And he had a shepherd's heart that he was willing to pull the hair out at age 63. Tremendous example of a shepherd of God, even though he was not a full time worker.

He was not, he wasn't called to a public ministry. He was called a full time job. His heart was for building the temple.

And the fourth example is one we also know very well in the New Testament and that's Peter. And we know the story of Peter. He could have thought he was the first disciple to be chosen.

And he was the eldest of all the disciples. He was the one who Jesus had chosen first. He was always the one that when Jesus said, if anybody, even if everybody forsakes you, I will follow you.

And he was the first to deny Jesus. And he had to learn through humility what it meant to be the elder shepherd for the church. And he was anointed the day of Pentecost.

And here was this man who was the chief denier of Jesus. Probably one of the proudest people maybe because of that, but he had a heart that was willing to learn from mistakes, humility. He was anointed the day of Pentecost and he was a different man, completely different man.

And he was able to write, as we know in 1 Peter 5, we know this chapter very well in verse one through seven. I'll read it again from the message. I have a special concern for you church leaders.

I know what it's like to be a leader in on Christ's sufferings as well as the coming glory. Here's my concern, that you care for God's flock with all the diligence of a shepherd. Not because you have to, but because you want to please God.

Not calculating what you can get out of it, but acting spontaneously. Not bossily telling other people what to do, but tenderly showing them the way. When God who is the best shepherd of all comes out in the open with his rule, he will see what you've done it right and commend you lavishly.

And you who are younger must follow your leaders. But all of you, leaders and followers alike, are to be down to earth with each other. For God has had it with the proud people, but he takes delight in just simple plain people.

Be content with who you are and don't put on airs. God's strong hand is on you and he will promote you at the right time. And where do we think Peter learned what it meant in that first few verses? With all diligence of a shepherd.

We know the story. He was having breakfast with Jesus right after Jesus was crucified and risen. And Jesus told him, a phrase that Sunday shared, shepherd my sheep, tend my lambs.

He had learned through mistakes what it meant to humble himself to the point where even if he had not done it, even after he had denied Jesus three times, he bounced back up and he became that amazing apostle that we knew, known on the day of Pentecost, who was completely transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit. So the Lord is calling every one of us. I have a tremendous burden in my heart.

Many of us are not called to be in a ministry where we're preaching every Sunday morning. We have a job. The Lord has called me in a full-time job.

And the Lord has put people in my life. It may be just my family. It may be just my wife and my children.

Or it may be more than that. It may be a small fellowship group that the Lord opens for you in your place of work or in your school or in your home. Many of us know that CFC started in 75 as a small group of families in a home.

And many of the first century Christians met in that fashion every day. The Lord has put that big advertisement out there and it says, wanted shepherds. He's looking for shepherds today.

And may the Lord give us that burden. First off, finding shepherds in our life that we can submit to. Second, having a compassion for those that He sees around us that are needy, that are sheep.

And third, when He gives us sheep, not to be like hired hands, hired people who just when the wolves of any kind come, they leave the sheep alone. I mean, just read this last verse in Philippians 2 and verse 3. How can we learn then to be the shepherd? And it's through being a servant. Doing nothing, Philippians 2 verse 3. Doing nothing from selfish or empty conceit.

With humility, regard one another as more important than yourselves. Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourself who is also in Christ Jesus, who although existed in form did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Emptied himself, taking the form of a bond servant and being made in the likeness of men. And found an appearance as a man, he humbled himself by obeying to the point of death. The Lord is calling every one of us, every one of us.

You don't have to be in a position where you may be an eloquent speaker or you might be in a place where the Lord has given you a public ministry. I wanna encourage every one of you, especially those of you who are young. Pray for the Lord's burden in your heart to be a shepherd.

Be a shepherd to those around you. Be a shepherd to those in the church who are younger to you. If you live your life where all you do is come in on Sunday morning to be fed, you will be like sheep who come in and the Lord never is able to use you.

The Lord may use you in your setting of work where you have a full-time job. And be alert to the Holy Spirit. Be anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit so the Lord can use us to be, whether you're the oldest brother or the youngest brother in the family, in that story.

The Lord's got a plan for our lives and may it be fulfilled, amen.

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