



Course Name: The Shepherd's Qualifications (John 10:1-21 B)

By Tommy South

Course description:

This course is the second of two discussions about shepherds/elders that is focused on the qualifications of a *shepherd* based on the text John 10:1-21. The class will read the text and discuss key areas related to shepherding from the life of Jesus.

Course Objectives: By the end of this class students will have...

- A. Examined the text of John 10:1-21, having learned from the example of Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, what it means to be the “door” of the sheep.
- B. Considered how the lessons from Jesus can be applied to shepherds today.
- C. Discussed the importance of shepherds being the door for the sheep and what that means for shepherding the church today.

Outline of the class:

- A. During the first few minutes of the class divide the class into groups of three or four. Then ask each table to take 15-20 minutes to discuss the following.
 1. Ask half of the tables to read Ephesians 4:1-16.
 2. Ask the other half to read Acts 20:17-35.
 3. While each group reads their section of scripture, have them discuss how John 10:11 specifically fits into the idea of shepherds fulfilling the responsibility of being the door to the sheep.
- B. Introduction
 1. In the Spring of 1995, Carl, Tommy, and several others made a trip to Ukraine to continue nurturing the church that had been established in Zhytomyr less than two years before. On the way home, they stayed overnight in Kyiv at Hotel Bratislava, an old Soviet-style hotel not far from the airport.
 - a. “Soviet style” means, among other things, there were separate floors for locals and for foreigners. Those for foreigners were nicer, better kept, and watched over by the “floor-lady,” sort of a chief housekeeper who had responsibility for all that took place on her floor, always quiet and orderly.
 - b. For some reason, Carl and Tommy ended up in a room that was not on one of those floors. But it was okay, so they did not think too much of it.

- c. That all changed once they went to bed. Carl fell asleep quickly and very soundly. Tommy was still awake when someone started pounding on the door.
 - d. Naturally, he did not respond. Neither did Carl – in fact, Carl did not even wake up! The pounding grew louder and the man on the other side of the door began yelling loudly, hitting the door and trying to force the doorknob. (Wrong room? Drunk?)
 - e. One thing about those old hotels: *the doors were lousy*. Ill-fitting, lots of space around them, not very strong. Tommy was sure that any minute the “guest” would put his shoulder to the door and come barreling into the room.
 - f. So, Tommy positioned himself near the door with a chair in his hands, ready to take the “guest” out the second he entered. Thankfully, it was not needed. The man finally gave up and went away.
2. A reminder that a **door** can have **Two Purposes**
- a. For one, it *provides access*. When approaching a building, we automatically look for the door. We do not think about climbing in a window or trying to break through the wall. We look for the door and enter by the door. (Burglars sometimes try to go down chimneys, which never works out very well)
 - b. On the other hand, a door can be a *barrier to entry*. We close and lock our doors at night to keep out unwanted visitors.
 - c. We want our doors to be *strong*, so they can keep out intruders, keep us safe inside.
 - d. When Jesus says in John 10:7, “I am the door to the sheep,” He intends *both functions* of a door.
 - *Notice in v. 9 “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” Through Jesus we enter God’s kingdom and find eternal life. By Him we are kept safe.
 - *But in v. 10 He begins to talk regarding “the thief” who comes to steal and kill and destroy. Jesus, by contrast (v. 10) “came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” As the Door, Jesus keeps the thief out and keeps His sheep safely within.
 - e. Now remember, He also said, “I am the Good Shepherd.” This goes hand-in-hand with the idea of being “The Door.”
 - *In Jesus’ day, a sheepfold was usually some sort of enclosure formed out of rocks or brush. At night, the sheep brought inside the enclosure.
 - *The shepherd would then lie down across the entrance to the sheepfold. No sheep could get out and no intruder could get in, *without going through him*. So, “Shepherd” and “Door” were the same thing.

*In the morning, he would lead them out to find pasture and water. At night, he would lead them back again to safety.

*That is what Good Shepherds do: They serve as *doors* for the sheep. It is just part of the job.

3. What does this have to do with Shepherds in the church today? Everything, according to Paul.
- a. Shepherds/elders (remember, also called “overseers”) are the *Gate-keepers of the church*.
- *Protect those inside
 - *Keep unwanted intruders (thieves and wolves) out.
 - *Lead sheep to find what they need for spiritual growth and nourishment.
- b. **Ephesians 4:1-16** (read earlier). This text talks about various “gifts” God gives for the church’s growth and stability.
- *All are united in *one* faith but have *different gifts*.
 - *Notice vv. 11-16 – “And he gave some as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (shepherds), and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”
 - *Notice first that “shepherds and teachers” = literally, “*teaching shepherds*,” or “*shepherd teachers*.” These are not two different roles, but one. Shepherds must be teachers.
 - *Note also, their ministry is *two-fold*: to “equip the saints (church) for ministry” – by teaching, by example, by providing training and learning opportunities. And to “build up the body of Christ” so it reaches maturity and enjoys unity and stability.
 - **Question*: How many churches have you ever known or heard of that were like what Paul describes in vv. 13-16? (Mature, doctrinally stable, Christlike, each part [member] working, being built up in love)
 - *My guess is, *not many*. Could that be because most elders do not focus on equipping the saints and building up the body spiritually? Again, it’s a fallacy of elders = “decision-makers”! Could it be that churches do not look for true shepherds to lead them, but good businessmen instead?
 - *This is what “shepherding” is. It is what Good Shepherds do!

- c. **Acts 20:17-35** Paul’s meeting with the elders from the church at Ephesus.
- *Paul thinks he will never see them again, so he wants to give them kind of a “last will and testament” regarding their responsibilities.
 - *Notice vv. 28-31 “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.”
 - *Here is that *protective function* of elders/shepherds/overseers we talked about earlier: Gate-keepers.
 - *Note: Meets with “*elders*,” calls them “*overseers*” in v. 28, and tells them to “*care for*” (lit., “shepherd”) the church of God. So, all refer to the same role.
 - *But the church *needs* protecting, because “wolves” will come and seek to take over the flock and destroy it in the process. This happens more often than you might think!
 - *Shepherds cannot let that happen! They are the “Doors” of the congregation. They must protect it at all costs.
 - *Note: “Wolves” may even arise *from within their own* ranks. If so, they have to be prepared to deal with it. With *each other*.
- d. This is why *Teaching* has to *always* be a Primary Function of elders. It is not *all* they do, but something they *must* do.
- ***1 Timothy 3:2** – “Able to teach.”
 - ***Titus 1:5-10** – Paul left Titus in Crete for two purposes: 1) “Put what remained in order.” The church needed to be better ordered, maybe in multiple ways, and 2) “Appoint elders in every town.”
 - *Then, he gives qualifications for those elders (called “overseers” in v. 7).
 - *The final qualification he lists (v. 9) “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”
 - *Why? Note vv. 10-11 Many are “insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers...must be silenced.”
 - *So, elders/shepherds have a dual function of both teaching what is true according to Scripture, and refuting what is false. *It is the only way to protect the flock.*
 - *It means they not only have to KNOW scripture well, but also HOLD FIRMLY to its teachings. They must be able to *recognize the difference* between true and false teaching. What is healthy and what is not.

***Example:** *Terry Garner*, who said, “If I am going to be a shepherd, I need to know the difference between a sheep and a wolf.”

*By contrast, Tommy once sat in a class where a man declared that Jesus’ death on the cross was not absolutely necessary. Four elders were in that class, and not one said a word to refute that heresy, not sure they knew it WAS heresy!

- e. If one is going to shepherd the flock, defend it, uphold healthy doctrine, they must be able to teach Who Jesus Is, How to Follow Him, the Nature of the Church and Its Importance, and Healthy vs. Unhealthy Christian living. *If you cannot, then you are not shepherd material.*
 - f. It means that when looking for shepherds, we need to look for men who are *diligent students of the Word*, with more than just a “surface” knowledge. Do not “dabble” in the Bible but KNOW the Bible.
 - g. It takes *Men of the Word* to lead churches who will be *faithful to the Word*, and who *Proclaim the Word* to the world around us. Remember: Sheep only go where they are LED!
4. Back to that hotel room in Kyiv. Tommy was sure that if the man had tried hard enough, he could have broken down that door. He was sure thankful he did not.

Conclusion:

- A. There will come times when the “Doors” of the church – its shepherds – will be tested. Knowing that will happen, we must be absolutely certain to select and appoint men who are *good* shepherds, Strong Doors, Men of the Word who can Protect the Sheep.
- B. Jesus said, “I am the Door.” Also, He said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”
- C. If you want eternal life, it has to come through Jesus and His death on the cross for your sins, and His resurrection from the dead, to give you Hope. There is no other way.
- D. Below (on the next page) is a proposed study guide to either give as homework for each person in the class, or it can be used as a separate class for discussion on the matter presented.

PROPOSED STUDY GUIDE (John 10:1-21)

1. Read Ephesians 4:11-16: Paul says elders are to “equip the saints for ministry.” Practically speaking, what kinds of things do you think they should do to accomplish this part of their task?
2. Read Ephesians 4:1-16: What does the proper functioning of church leaders have to do with achieving unity within the church and stability in the face of “every wind of doctrine”?
3. Read Acts 20:17-35: Why did Paul tell the Ephesian elders to “pay attention to yourselves,” as well as “to all the flock”? What does it mean that “the Holy Spirit has made you overseers”? Does this imply some sort of special authority or infallibility? Why or why not?
4. According to Acts 20:29-30, what do “fierce wolves” do that requires shepherds to protect the church from them? What happens if shepherds do not protect the church from “wolves”?
5. Read Titus 1:5-10: What does it mean to “hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught”? Along with 1 Timothy 3:2, does this require that elders be able to teach the church publicly? Why or why not?