

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 19 (May 3-9, 2015)

A pastor has many roles, but I think the role of shepherding the flock entrusted to him/her is of primary importance. We will study the passages of Scripture dealing with this vital subject in the next few weeks of devotions.

Sunday, May 3 (read John 21:1-14)

He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." (John 21:6a)

Jesus had previously called Peter from a fruitless night of fishing to become His faithful follower (see Luke 5:1-11). Peter already knows a lot about fishing, but in this week's study, Jesus will teach him how to shepherd His flock. After the death of the Lord, Peter returns to his familiar occupation and takes six of the disciples with him, experiencing the same results as before (v. 1-3). Most of us relate to those who return to the same activities we did before we met and followed Jesus. Like these disciples, we also have to learn, "apart from (Him) (we) can do nothing" (John 15:5). Jesus calls out to them early in the morning and says, "Throw your net on the **right side** of the boat and you will find some" (v. 6a, emphasis mine). You probably already know where I'm going with that in tomorrow's devotion.

Monday, May 4 (reread John 21:1-14)

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" (John 21:7a)

In His first encounter with Peter, the Lord told the fisherman to "Put out into the **deep water**, and let down the nets for a catch" (Luke 5:4, emphasis mine). Now the disciple is commanded to fish on the **right side** of the boat (v. 6a). At the risk of taking this Scripture out of context, I have allowed the fishing lessons to influence how I minister. Like Peter, I have been called to be a "fisher of men" (Luke 5:10). My Biblical worldview causes me to fish in the **deep water** on the **right side** (conservative side) of the boat. The politically correct worldview demands **shallow** and **liberal**. True followers of Jesus desire truth straight from His Word, not emotional feelings that are doomed to fall short of His plan. Note that the Lord already has fish of His own (v. 9), but He still uses us to participate in the process of catching others (v. 10). Don't forget that it is His job to show us where the fish are! It is our job only to obey! So much for the second fishing lesson, now Jesus is ready to teach Peter (and us) how to shepherd His people.

Tuesday, May 5 (read John 21:15)

Jesus said, "Feed My lambs." (John 21:15b)

Jesus has called **all of us**, not just the pastors, to be **shepherds** to the sheep in our fields. The Lord's first command as He reinstates His wayward disciple who denied Him three times is to "Feed my **lambs**" (emphasis mine). Jesus has a great concern for the young in any flock. He teaches us in Matthew 18:1-14 and again in Matthew 19:13-15 to place a high priority on providing proper food and care for the little ones. He wants Peter and us to know that it is our responsibility to be sure that the young are cared for and taught to become His followers. Frankly, this is one of my biggest concerns in my ministry. God has used my verse-by-verse style of teaching, but I'm concerned that the youngest in the flock may not be properly fed. If you see this unmet need, could He be calling **you** to provide food and care for the lambs?

Wednesday, May 6 (John 21:16)

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." (John 21:16b)

The second job that Jesus assigns to Peter (and to us) is to "**Take care of my sheep**" (6b, emphasis mine). The shepherd must be sure that those in his fold are nurtured and cared for. I often say, "They won't care how much I know until they know how much I care." This is where the challenge comes in. If the shepherd knows his flock well, he will understand that some of them have special needs. He cannot make them feel like a vital part of the flock unless he provides for these needs to the best of his ability. This knowledge will affect **what** is taught as well as **when** and **how** it is taught. Some sheep may prefer personal interaction with the shepherd while others may not, and a wise shepherd will be able to discern the difference. I hope you can see that this material is important to parents, grandparents and teachers as well as to pastors.

Thursday, May 7 (read John 21:17)

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." (John 21:17b)

The third job that all shepherds are commanded to do is to "**Feed my sheep.**" Many preachers are excellent nurturers, but they fall short in their job of feeding the flock. They spend all their time in the field taking care of the sheep, but they fail to adequately prepare for the feeding by God's Word. The sheep are often given leftovers because the shepherd has neglected proper study time. I hope your church consists of **new** believers, **mature** believers, as well as those who have **not yet become believers**. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide your pastor and you to assure that each gets his/her proper food at the proper time (see Psalm 145:15). Whether you are a pastor or a layperson, be sure that you understand the threefold command of our Lord: "**Feed my lambs,**" "**Take care of my sheep,**" and "**Feed my sheep.**"

Friday, May 8 (read John 21:18-19)

Then He said to him, "Follow me." (John 21:19b)

Whether you are a pastor, teacher, parent or employer, you must understand that your time is no longer yours alone. Peter has become the leader as well as the spokesman for the disciples. He is used to having his own way. Now Jesus warns him that, as His **follower**, Peter is no longer in charge of his own life (v. 18). The Holy Spirit will lead this disciple (who cowardly denied the Lord three times) on a road that will ultimately lead to his own death on a cross (v. 19). Jewish history books tell us that Peter chose to be crucified upside down, not feeling worthy to die as his Lord died. Are you a **follower** of Jesus? In today's intolerant society, do not be surprised that many are forced to surrender their lives for the cause of Christ as well!

Saturday, May 9 (read John 21:20-25)

When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" (John 21:21)

As **followers** of Jesus, we do not get to decide **where** we will go and **what** we will say. That's the Lord's responsibility! Peter (who was always competitive with John before the Spirit later filled him) wants to make sure that John's calling is just as tough as his (v. 21). Jesus lets Peter know that John's calling is not his business (v. 22). It's easy to think that someone else has a better assignment than we do. We fail to be faithful to the Lord's calling for us because we envy the field of another. To Peter's credit, after he is filled with the Holy Spirit, he becomes the leader that Jesus commands him to be. I hope the same will be said of you and me when we stand in the presence of our Lord. Until then, we still have lots of God's hidden secrets left to discover while we live on this earth (v. 25)!