

**HWMR: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRAL BURDEN AND PRESENT TRUTH OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY BEFORE HIS APPEARING, (Week 6)**

*Scripture Reading: John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 5:2; 2:25; Eph. 4:12-16*

**Shepherding according to God**

John 21:15	Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.
John 21:16	He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.
John 21:17	He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that 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.
1 Peter 5:2	Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;
1 Peter 2:25	For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
Ephesians 4:12	For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
Ephesians 4:13	Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
Ephesians 4:14	That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
Ephesians 4:15	But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
Ephesians 4:16	Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

**Day 1**

*John 21:16* - He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.

*Acts 20:28* - Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

**I. To shepherd is to take **all-inclusive tender care** of the flock—John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28:**

- A. Shepherding refers to caring for **all the needs** of the sheep.
- B. All the sheep need to be **well provided for** and **well tended to**.

**II. In the Lord's recovery today, there is an **urgent need of shepherding**—John 21:16; 1 Pet. 5:2:**

- A. In His organic salvation God the Father first **regenerates** us by God the Spirit and then **shepherds** us in God the Son as our Shepherd so that we may **exist and grow** in His life for eternity—John 3:6; 10:10, 14-16.
- B. To shepherd the believers is crucial for their **growth in the divine life** unto maturity for the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12-16.

The shepherd, the divine life, and the human life are all for the flock. In verse 16 the Lord said, “*And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd.*” Who are the sheep that are not of this Jewish fold? They are the Gentiles. And what is this one flock? The one flock signifies the one church, the one Body of Christ, brought forth by life, which the Lord imparted into His members through His death. Before, the fold was Judaism; now, the **flock is the church**. The sheepfold was, and still is, Judaism, but the flock is the church. The flock is the church which includes two peoples—the believing Jews and Gentiles. The Lord brings both together into one flock and under one shepherd. Now, **the one flock and the one shepherd are the one Body and the one Head**.

In the human life we are condemned and divided; in the **divine life** we are **accepted** and **united**. In the divine life we are all one entity, meaning that **we are one flock under one shepherd in one life**. If we live by our human life and not by the divine life, we will only cause trouble. Furthermore, we would become strangers and stray away from the flock. Whenever you live by your human life, you are no longer a sheep but a stranger. **A sheep is a regenerated person with the divine life**. We all must live by the divine life and thus become genuine, real, and pure sheep. Then we shall all be in the flock. As long as we live by our human life, we will resemble a wild animal, perhaps a devouring lion or a wild horse. If we do not live by the divine life, there can be no flock. The flock is produced, kept, maintained, and formed by the divine life. How good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. However, dwelling in unity simply means to **dwell in the divine life**. Praise the Lord that in the divine life **we are truly one and love one another**. This is not possible in our human, psuche life, but only in the divine, zoe life. We receive this zoe life through the redemption accomplished by our shepherd who laid down His psuche life. He sacrificed His psuche life to accomplish redemption for us all that we might receive Him as our zoe life. Now we are in the zoe life under one shepherd to be one flock. This is not an organization; it is a flocking together in life. It is wonderful. Hallelujah! The flock is not a matter of religion, but of **life**. (*Life-Study of John, chapter 22*)

## Day 2

*Acts 2:42* - *And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

*Colossians 1:28* - *Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;*

### III. Shepherding depends on **teaching**; if we cannot teach, we cannot shepherd—**Matt. 28:19-20; 9:35-36**:

A. **Shepherding** and **teaching** go together—Eph. 4:11.

B. Our shepherding should always be with teaching, and our teaching should always be with shepherding—Acts 2:42; 20:28; Col. 1:28.

In his first Epistle, Peter speaks of Christ being the Shepherd and **Overseer of our soul, our inner being and real person**. Then in 5:1-2 he tells the elders that their obligation is to shepherd God’s flock according to God. According to God means that we must **live God**. We must **have God on hand**. We have God in our understanding, in our theology, and in our teaching, but we may not live God when we are shepherding people. When we are one with God, we become God. Then we have God and are God in our shepherding of others. To shepherd according to God is to **shepherd according to what God is in His attributes**. God is love, light, holiness, and righteousness. “According to God” is at least according to these four attributes of God. We must shepherd the young ones, the weak ones, and the backsliding ones according to these four attributes. Then we will be good shepherds.

Without shepherding, there is **no way** for us to minister life to others. John is the Gospel of life. If we want to enjoy life and minister life to others, we must shepherd them. The real ministering of life is **shepherding by visiting and contacting people**. (*The Vital Groups, chapter 7*)

### Day 3

*1 Peter 2:25* - For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

*Psalms 23:3* - He restores my soul; / He guides me on the paths of righteousness / For His name's sake.

#### IV. We all need to know and experience **Christ as the Shepherd** of our souls— **1 Pet. 2:25**:

- A. As the Shepherd of our souls, Christ **oversees our inward condition**, caring for the situation of our inner being:
  - 1. Christ's organic shepherding **primarily** takes care of our **soul**—Psa. 23:3.
  - 2. He shepherds us by caring for the **welfare of our soul** and by exercising oversight over the condition of our **inner being**—cf. Heb. 13:17.
  - 3. This kind of shepherding is an **inward, intrinsic, organic comforting**—2 Cor. 1:3-4.
- B. Because our soul is very complicated, **we need Christ**, who is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, to shepherd us in our soul, to take care of our mind, emotion, and will and all our problems, needs, and wounds—John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17:
  - 1. As our pneumatic Shepherd, Christ takes care of us **from within our spirit**:
    - a. His shepherding **begins** from our spirit and **spreads** to every part of our soul—Eph. 3:17.
    - b. From our spirit Christ reaches all the parts of our soul and takes care of us in a **tender, organic, all-inclusive way**—1 Thes. 5:23.
  - 2. This is the inward shepherding of the processed and consummated Triune God united and incorporated with His regenerated believers—2 Cor. 13:14; John 3:6; 14:20; Rom. 8:16.

### Day 4

*1 Peter 5:2* - Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;

*2 Peter 1:4* - Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

#### V. Those who shepherd the flock of God should **shepherd according to God**— **1 Pet. 5:2; Phil. 1:21a**:

- A. To shepherd according to God is to shepherd according to **God's nature, desire, way, and glory**, not according to our preference, interest, purpose, and disposition—2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 1:5, 9; 3:21; John 14:6.
- B. *According to God* in 1 Peter 5:2 means that **we live God**; only those who live God can shepherd according to God:
  - 1. God's economy is to **work Himself into us** so that we may receive Him as our life and life supply in order to live Him—John 11:25; 6:48, 57.
  - 2. We are **participating** in the **divine life** and the **divine nature** so that we can live God in our humanity—Gal. 2:20.
- C. In order to shepherd according to God, we need to become **God in life, nature, expression, and function** but **not in the Godhead**—Col. 3:4; 2 Pet. 1:4:
  - 1. **We need to be filled** to the brim with the divine life, enjoying the Triune God as the fountain, the spring, and the river to become the totality of the divine life, even to become the divine life itself—John 4:14; Col. 3:4.
  - 2. **We need to become God in His attributes** of love, light, righteousness, and holiness—1 John 4:8; 1:5; Rom. 3:21, 25-26; Eph. 1:4; 5:27; 1 Pet. 1:15-16.

3. **We need to be the reproduction of Christ**, the expression of God, so that in our shepherding we express God, not the self with its disposition and peculiarities—Rom. 8:19, 29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Matt. 16:24.
  4. **We need to become God in His function of shepherding** the flock of God according to what He is and according to the goal of His economy—Eph. 1:10.
- D. If we would shepherd according to God, **we need to become one with God**—John 14:20; 1 Cor. 6:17:
1. The basic principle of the Bible is that in His economy God is **making Himself one with man and man one with Him**—John 15:4; 1 Cor. 6:17.
  2. God desires that the divine life and the human life be **joined together** to become **one life** that has one living—John 6:57; Gal. 2:20.
3. When we are one with God, we become God in life and nature and are God in our shepherding of others—1 John 5:11-12; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Pet. 5:2.

In 1 Peter 5:3 Peter directly tells the elders **not to lord it over the church**. All the elders should be slaves of the saints. It is not adequate for the elders even to be servants; they must be slaves. This is something Peter learned from the Lord Himself. Peter heard the Lord Jesus say that those who desire to become great must be slaves. Elders should regard themselves as slaves, and the brothers and sisters as their masters.

Literally, the word “allotments” means lots, portions; hence, allotments, **portions entrusted**. Here this word refers to the flock. The churches are **God’s possession**, allotted to the elders as their allotments, their portions, **entrusted to them by God for their care**.

The church is God’s flock and His possession. The elders have been appointed by God to be shepherds of the flock. Hence, **God has allotted the church in their locality to them for their care**. The church in a particular locality is God’s possession; it is not the possession of the elders. But God has allotted that church to the elders so that they may care for it and shepherd it. Furthermore, the church is only allotted to the elders for their care temporarily. For eternity the church is God’s possession. Even the elders themselves are a part of the church as the possession of God.

Instead of lording it over the allotments, the elders should become **patterns of the flock**. This means that they take the lead to serve and care for the church so that the believers may follow. (*Life-Study of 1 Peter, chapter 32*)

## Day 5

*2 Corinthians 6:11* - Our mouth is opened to you, Corinthians; our heart is enlarged.

*2 Corinthians 6:13* - But for a recompense in kind, I speak as to children, you also be enlarged.

### **VI. In order to shepherd according to God, we need to **live a shepherding life**— John 21:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:1-13; 7:2-3:**

- A. The more we are **constituted with Christ**, the more we will spontaneously live a shepherding life because the constitution of Christ in our spiritual life **has a shepherding aspect**—Col. 1:27; 3:10-11, 14; John 21:15-17.
- B. In order to have a shepherding life, we need an **enlarged heart**, a heart to embrace all of God’s people—2 Cor. 6:11-13; 7:2-3; cf. 1 Kings 4:29.
- C. A shepherding life is a life that warms up others by **cherishing** them in the humanity of Jesus to **nourish** them in the divinity of Christ with the riches of Christ—Eph. 5:29; Prov. 25:15.
- D. A shepherding life is an **all-fitting life**, a life that is able to fit all situations, accept any kind of environment, and work under any condition—2 Cor. 6:1-13; 7:2-3.
- E. We need to shepherd the flock of God according to the **loving and tender heart of our Father God** and according to the **seeking and shepherding spirit of our Savior Christ**—Luke 15:1-32.

Someone may say that a certain brother should not be an elder. If not, then who should be an elder? None are qualified. **We must humble ourselves.** Pride is the biggest enemy of God. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Whenever we criticize others, we miss grace and instead suffer God's resistance. **We all must learn to shepherd one another.** This does not mean that since I am shepherding you, I do not need your shepherding. I need your shepherding. **We all have defects and shortcomings.** Everyone has defects. Therefore, we have to humble ourselves to meet God's grace. This strengthens our spirit to visit people and to take care of people regardless of whether they are good or bad. Regardless of what they are, we must go to visit them and keep visiting.

We need to have this kind of love and go to tell all the dormant ones who think that the church condemns them that the church does not condemn anyone. Rather, the church wants to see all the dormant ones come back. If they all would come back, I would weep with tears of thanksgiving to the Lord. The Lord can testify for me that I do not condemn anyone. **We have no qualification to condemn anyone. Without the Lord's mercy,** we would be the same as the dormant ones. Therefore, we must love them. It all depends upon love, as the wise king Solomon said, "Love covers all transgressions" (Prov. 10:12). We love people. We love the opposers, and we love the top rebels. I really mean it. We love them and do not hate them. Who am I? I am not qualified to condemn or to hate. Am I perfect? Even the prophet Isaiah, when he saw the Lord, said, "Woe is me, for I am finished! / For I am a man of unclean lips, / And in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell" (Isa. 6:5). Who is clean today? If we criticize people and say something bad about them, we are not clean. (*A Word of Love to the Co-workers, Elders, Lovers, and Seekers of the Lord, chapter 2*)

## Day 6

*1 Corinthians 12:24-26* - But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked, That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.

### VII. The shepherding that builds up the Body of Christ is **mutual shepherding**— 1 Cor. 12:23-26:

- A. All of us need to be under the **organic shepherding of Christ** and be one with Him to shepherd one another—John 21:15-17.
- B. We are **both sheep and shepherds**, shepherding and being shepherded in mutuality.
- C. In mutual shepherding, we **shepherd one another in love**—1 Cor. 13:1-13.
- D. Through this **mutual shepherding**, the church as the Body of Christ **will build itself up in love**—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22; 4:16.

No shepherding can be prevailing if we do not have a love for people, an interest in them, a burden for them, and adequate prayer. **Love, interest, burden, and prayer** are the essential, **basic elements of proper shepherding.** Most of us were born with no interest in people. We do not like people, and we do not wish to be bothered by them, invited by them, or visited by them. We would rather live on top of a mountain. This is our natural tendency. However, if we keep this kind of disposition, we will be finished with the building. **We need to love the new ones as the Lord loves them, be interested in them, and take care of them. Then we must have a burden for them and adequate prayer.** In addition, the fifteen practical points concerning shepherding in the previous chapter are very useful. We need to be patient, know how to deal with people, and know what to say and what not to say. We should know how to be positive yet not too quick, not for our sake but for the ones who are under our care. Our basic need, however, is love, interest, burden, and prayer. If we would practice all these things, the church will grow in a proper way and be built up under the hands of all the saints, not only the elders or those with a special ministry. Everyone in the service groups in the church life must build up the church. There is no need to depend wholly upon the elders. Sometimes the elders cannot do the job adequately; therefore, **we must all take up some part of the work of shepherding.** Then the church will receive the benefit. Although it would be better to have a training on these matters all year round, what we have shared here should still give an impression of what we need to practice for the normal way of fruit-bearing and shepherding for the building up of the church. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church, chapter 9*)