

## Shepherds

Shepherds are alert thinkers. The sheep's welfare and safety depend on the good work of the shepherd. Parents and grandparents are raising an adult who is not yet an adult. Therefore, they have the responsibility to provide the path and the resources for that child to reach a wholesome adulthood. So, the leader in this session needs to make sure the discussions stay focused on the responsibility parents and grandparents have to make that happen.

This is a calling God has given them and they must make time for it, educate themselves for it, be ever watchful for what is happening in the life of that child and what is influencing them. Many children today are looking to media and social networking to be their shepherd. Or they are looking to their peers who very likely are much influenced by media and social networking. This means parents are constantly challenged to keep being the key people and influence in the lives of their kids. That will take some real intention and not just a "hope-so" or wishful thinking attitude.

As always, time may well slip away. The questionnaire on Ezekiel needs to be brought up and some feedback given. Some people may avoid filling out the questionnaire before class. This is not just busy work. It is intended to give more substance to the discussion in the next class period. It plants in the mind and heart of the class participant an ability to see the issues more clearly. That in turn builds a foundation for a new way of thinking about what is in the session and what they need to get ahold of to be the family leader they actually want to be. A Bible passage like Ezekiel 34 could well become a guiding light for any family leader who wants to get good words from God as to what makes sense to how they think about their calling.

In order for people to get in the habit of filling out the questionnaire, tell the people beforehand that they are to bring the filled-out questionnaire to class and then you will go through it briefly. Then people will be called on to share their answer to a certain question. Remind class members the idea in this course is to learn enough so that their relationship with their offspring will bear good fruit. This is not about punishing class members but it is giving them what they need to be the family leaders they actually desire to be. Remember, the more a class member puts themselves into this course, the more they will get out of it. To accomplish that good discipline is needed. For many in the class, being a family leader is most likely the most important calling they have in their lifetime.

We have identified the presence of wolves in the lives of all of us. Recognizing who they are and the harm they can cause, if we are awake, we realize we have a real challenge on our hands. That challenge becomes more acute when we understand that not only are we adults vulnerable like sheep but even more, our precious young ones are even more vulnerable. As grown-ups we can comprehend more how being vulnerable can affect our lives. Will our children recognize that as well? Probably not! It is doubtful a sheep says to itself, "I am really vulnerable, defenseless, much more than most other animals. I really need a shepherd to be there or bad things are going to happen that I'm not ready for."

So whether our children recognize their vulnerability or not, it is still helpful for parents and grandparents to consider themselves as shepherds. Why is that so? Whether a child can articulate their need for a shepherd like person or not, it is obvious they have a great need for such a person. If we look at Psalm 23 which starts out, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." The truth is right there in front of us. The only way a child can feel secure and without want is for someone to constantly provide what they need. They need food, they need care,



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they need safety. If they don't have these, they will soon let us know. God has given the authority to parents and grandparents to be his representatives on earth to make sure children receive what they need.

As leader or facilitator make sure you do seven things.

1. Go back and review briefly the Leader's Guide for Session One.
2. Prepare by yourself filling out the questionnaire you have handed out on "shepherd".
3. Read through the written material for Session Four
4. Review the power point you will be going through with the class.
5. Write down any examples from your own life and thinking that touches on what this session is about.
6. Pray for each person in the course.
7. Print off the supplemental material: "Shepherding, How Does this Relate to Parenting, Grandparenting" and the questionnaire leading to Session 5 on "What is Expected of a Congregation?" Both of these are to be handed out. The one on shepherding early and the questionnaire for Session Five at the end of the class.

Remember, if you have questions or concerns you can always call 612-708-1875 to discuss those.