

Elder Shepherd – Part 1

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Introduction:

A. God has given me a better vision for counseling than ever before.

1. I observed that many non-professionals are doing better counseling than licensed counselors.
2. I don't believe there is any expert of the soul.
3. We have only shepherds of should.
4. When I told this to a group of counselors they applauded me.
5. They were tired of hiding a sense of inadequacy.
6. Our culture needs more elders than experts.
7. One psychiatrist told me I was committing professional suicide ant that it's about time.
8. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can change lives.
9. It's about time that we admit our inadequacy of the cultural lie that we have answers.

B. What we really need is the wisdom of the Spirit.

I. What is an elder shepherd?

A. Above all else dispenses grace into the deepest part of another's soul.

1. I want to share with you the journey that has brought me to this place.
 - a. Brother Brenen told me of his spiritual director that he would meet periodically who would leap when they met.
 - b. I found myself desiring to share with Brenen on spiritual matters.
 - c. When was the last time someone leapt when they saw you?
 - d. When was the last time you dispensed grace into the deepest part of another's soul?
 - e. Brenen was blessed by my disturbing need for help.
 - f. Have I been encouraging others to walk more intimately with God?
2. I want to share of a situation that developed with my son.

- a. Can you tell someone that the energy of Christ comes out of you? (Colossians 1:29)
- b. None years ago I was away at a seminar when a friend told me my son had been kicked out of university.
- c. I didn't know what to do but returned home.
- d. I reflected on my son's rebellion and talked with my wife so that she thought I was blaming her for giving birth to the boy.
- e. I began blaming God for not making his parenting principles more clear.
- f. We had family devotions in Old Testament and New Testament.
- g. I thought that if I could get the word of God into them all would be alright.
- h. I bargained with God to take responsibility for my family.
- i. I reflected on how hard I had tried to raise godly children.
- j. I realized that there is a difference between following a procedure and really leading my family.
- k. The Desert Fathers said the secret of influencing a culture for Christ is to never answer a question unless the quality of your life has provoked someone to ask it.
- l. My son never asked me significant questions because my life aroused little curiosity.
- m. I told the Lord I had tried everything I knew.
- n. When I met my son I had no anger but dispensed grace.
- o. Effective soul care has almost nothing to do with technique but with caring.
- p. I asked my son how I could help and this was a breakthrough for me.

B. An elder shepherd believes in the people that he works with.

- 1. Moses was quite a man at 120.
- 2. Would modern Christianity have been attracted to Moses at age 40?
- 3. He was self-confident and talented.
- 4. Probably we would have liked him.
- 5. Maybe the word elder does imply wisdom after all.

C. Three things characterize elder shepherds.

1. Beneath our culture's psychological problems are souls that need what only spiritual community can provide.
 - a. To some degree the counseling movement has told the community they can't minister.
 - b. We have bought into this and it's not correct.
 - c. We all suffer with problems that needs more than professional counseling.
 - d. Modern psychotherapy arose to fulfill a void left by the Reformation's ending the confessions.
 - e. Luther said we had abolished the errors of the church but needed to recover the Biblical idea of confessions.
 - f. People need a place to go where they can be transparent.
 - g. Maybe there is a soul crying out for connection in each of us.
 - h. If we understand that we can trust the Spirit of God in us to minister to others.
 - i. I worked with someone with multiple personality disorders that once I told she needed to stop being so crazy.
 - a. We had had a caring relationship.
 - b. She had no psychical problem.
 - c. At that point in time I spoke truth to her that she received.
 - j. Henry Nouen wrote book describing a tremendous battle called the dark night of his soul at 56.
 - a. He left his position at university to join a handicapped community.
 - b. He was received well but fell into depression.
 - c. He realized that all his achievements were no help to the handicapped.
 - d. I wondered if my training has been used to reduce the mysteries of people's lives so that I can help them in a superficial way.
 - e. I wondered if I hide behind a professional mask because I can't help people.
 - f. Did Nouen have this problem?
 - g. When we feel helpless we retreat.

- h. Nouen wondered if he could continue working with these people.
 - i. He concluded that he was a useless person.
 - j. He found himself living with demons.
 - k. What feelings come up in you when you hear of his struggle?
 - 1. Inadequacy.
 - 2. Fear.
 - 3. Identification.
 - l. He didn't go to a therapist but to an elder man that was all but forgotten to the world.
 - m. This man was there for me, holding my head to his side, praying for me without words.
 - n. Maybe you need to pull someone's head to your side and pray.
 - o. A friend dispensed grace to me in this way without compromising truth.
 - p. An elder shepherd pours something of Christ into another.
2. When community fails to provide good connections we turn to professionals to solve our problems.
- a. 379 mental illnesses are listed by psychological experts, implying that untrained Christians can't help.
 - b. The trend is to put the Christian community out of existence.
 - c. We don't exist to just have a good time but to minister to each other's souls.
 - d. I met with a group weekly to battle for each other's souls.
 - e. Maybe we have problems that we can help each other with.
 - f. This is Biblical community that has more potential than so called experts.
3. A healing community functions most profoundly when we realize that there is a power inside every believer placed by the Spirit that as it is released in connecting relationships can strengthen the inclination to do good until that inclination is stronger than the inclination to do bad.
- a. An implication of the New Covenant is a need for the Spirit of God. (Ezekiel 36, Jeremiah 31)

- b. All the protection mechanisms we have developed over time die to our hurts can be displaced by truth and love.
- c. A pastor's boy got into trouble and was taken to a treatment center.
 - 1. In this group boys and girls shared openly of their troubles.
 - 2. My pastor friend told a girl who had just confessed prostitution that he didn't see a prostitute in her but a forgiven child of God.
 - 3. We never see this kind of open confession and genuine embrace in church.
 - 4. Why not?
 - 5. Is there something in our services that prohibits reality?
 - 6. Are we hiding our own problems?
 - 7. Am I ministering so that I can just get to the good stuff?
- d. Another friend saw a therapist who told her that her inadequacies might be due to sexual abuse.
 - 1. He told her to open the door that might unlock her healing.
 - 2. I asked her how many closet doors she needed to open.
 - 3. How would she know when each nook and cranny was opened?
 - 4. I told her to open the door of Christ in her.
 - 5. Is there not a place in us that sheds light into all the dark corners?
 - 6. Christ accepts us unconditionally.
 - 7. Christ leaps when one of his children comes to him.
 - 8. As I look on my life the things most influential is not a clever interpretative idea but people that profoundly believed in me.
 - a. These few people helped me to overcome the badness in me.
 - b. They helped me to become the person I am.
 - 9. The people I help never tell me how brilliantly I have diagnosed their problems, but how much I have believed in them.
 - 10. The older we are the more we experience Christ and can therefore share Christ with others.