

FEEDING THE SHEEP

I. THE THEOLOGY OF SHEEP FEEDING

A. The Nature of the Bible

1. It is God's Word. 1 Thessalonians 2:13
2. It is effective; it accomplishes that for which it is sent.
1 Thessalonians 2:13
3. It is Powerful Hebrews 4:12
4. It cannot be contained. 2 Timothy 2:9
5. It is the tool of the Spirit. Ephesians 2:17
—The believer should not choose between following the Holy Spirit and following the Word of God!
6. The Scriptures give us hope. Romans 15:4

B. The Usefulness of the Scriptures 2 Timothy 3:16–17 2 Timothy 3:16–17

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

1. Paul states from the beginning that the subject matter is the Scriptures.
The Greek word translated “Scriptures” is *graphe*, γραφή. This word has to do with something that is written.
2. As far as instruction is concerned, Paul was helping Timothy to carry on the centuries-old tradition of making the primary educational material of the learning community to be the written Word of God.
3. Note that Paul was not concerned with propagating any oral tradition of interpretation of the Word. This is what the many of Paul's contemporaries were doing in the rest of the non-Messianic Jewish world.

Rather, Sha'ul's main concern was that the Scriptures were to take priority in the life of God's learning community. He stated it even clearer in 1 Corinthians 4:6, where he urged his readers to follow his instructions, “so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.”

4. Next, Paul says that there are two special characteristics of Scripture.

a. First, they are “inspired.”

The Greek word translated “inspired” is quite picturesque. It is the word, *theopneustos*, θεόπνευστος. This term literally means “God-breathed.”

In other words, Scripture originates from the very mouth of God. There is a hint here of the first written revelation uttered by God, when He spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. God literally breathed it out of His mouth.

b. The second characteristic that Scripture possesses is that they are “profitable.”

The Greek word rendered “profitable” is *hofelimos*, ὠφέλιμος. It carries the idea of something being valuable or beneficial. Indeed, Scripture is extremely beneficial as being the primary educational material of the learning community.

5. “All (*pasa*, πασα) Scripture”

a. Paul uses a very important qualifier at the beginning of 3:16. He informs us that *all* (*pasa*, πασα) Scripture is from the mouth of God and has divine, eternal value.

b. In Paul’s day, “all Scripture” would have been only the Tanakh. It is doubtful whether the books of the Newer Covenant Scriptures were considered Scripture at this time of history.

— Moreover, many of these were not even written at the time this letter to Timothy was written.

c. Without a doubt, included in this “all” was the Torah, the five books of Moses.

This, therefore, is another witness to the fact that the primary teaching tool and educational manual for the learning community was and is the Torah.

Let us now explore some of the nuances of the specific purposes of Scripture that Paul tells us in verses 16 and Sha’ul then specified four ways in which the Word of God has particular value

1. *Profitable for Teaching (didaskalia – διδασκαλία)*
 — Sha’ul says that all of God’s Word is beneficial for teaching.
 - a. The word translated “teaching” is *didaskalian* (διδασκαλιαν)
 - b. It emphasizes sound doctrinal teaching.
 - i. Many people think that sound doctrine can only be learned from the Newer Covenant Scriptures.
 - ii. However, as Professor Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. notes, “the claim is clear, the OT is most useful and profitable for ‘teaching.’ In fact, some literary and theological heights reached in the OT remain unrivalled by the NT, for all its own grandeur.”¹
 - c. Once again, this is another confirmation of the primacy of the Torah in the educational curriculum of the learning community.
2. *Profitable for Rebuke (elegmos – ελεγμοθερτυψυιοπς)*
 Sha’ul says that all Scripture is beneficial for rebuking. Missing the mark by walking in the flesh of members of the learning community needs proper reproof. This reproof is designed to awaken in us the sense of the sin, a hatred of it, and a desire to depart from it. According to Kaiser, perhaps the best place in the Tanakh that serves as a guide for rebuke is the book of Proverbs.
3. *Profitable for Correction (epanorthosin – επανορθωσιν)*
 — All Scriptures are useful for correction.
 - a. Correction goes hand in hand with rebuke.
 - b. Moreover, correction has educational overtones.
 - c. Kaiser says that this word that we translate as “correction” means, “restoration to an upright position or to a right state” or “setting straight that which had become bent or twisted.”²
 - d. Calls to correction were one of the main themes of the prophets. When they did so, in reality, they were calling Israel back to faithfulness to the covenant and to the teaching of the Torah.

¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*, 29.

² *Ibid.*, 30.

- e. Kaiser aptly points out that all of us — our children, our nation, and our communities — stand in dire need of heeding the corrections mentioned in the Tanakh, if we are going to live, and live abundantly.³
 - f. The biblical learning community must learn how to correct properly with great love and graciousness, without shaming and judgment.
4. *Profitable for Instruction in Righteousness*
(*paidein tein en dikaiosune* – παιδειν την εν δικαιοσυνη)
- a. Here is yet another call for education.
 - b. This instruction, however, is slightly different from the first word in the passage that designated instruction.
 - c. Here, the emphasis is on child training, as the Greek term (*paidean*, παιδειαν) would suggest.
 - i. The Tanakh is God’s instruction book to train the child of God in righteousness, that is, righteous living.
 - ii. Such training is a life-long task.
 - d. Kaiser insightfully comments in this regard when he writes, “Unfortunately, many are of the opinion that all that is needed for [a believer’s] life and growth can be found in the NT. Paul unmask[s] that position as a lie and insists that there is much profit and utility to be found in the OT if one wishes to be trained in righteousness!”⁴
5. *Profitable for Equipping*
- a. All Scripture is useful to equip the man (or woman) of God for everything God calls him/her to do.
 - b. The Greek word translated “equipped” is *artios* (αρτιος).
 - i. It means, “to make one fully qualified.”
 - ii. The entire Word of God constitutes the educational material necessary to fully prepare and qualify an individual for whatever work God calls him to do.

³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*

C. The Role of the Holy Spirit

1. *To Convict of sin* **John 16:8**
 - a. ἐλέγχω *elegcho*
 - b. To bring to light, expose, set forth
 - c. To bring a person to the point of recognizing wrongdoing, convict, convince someone of something.
— We do not have to help the H. S. by our teaching and preaching methods. Keep calm, do not holler and do not shame people.
2. *To guide us into all truth* **John 16:13**
ὁδηγέω *hodegeo*
 - a. To lead, guide, or teach
 - i. To assist someone in acquiring information or knowledge
 - ii. To guide or to direct, with the implication of making certain that people reach an appropriate destination
 - iii. To be a guide or a teacher
 - iv. **Acts 8:31**
“And he said, ‘Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.”
 - b. All truth
 - c. It is the role of the H.S. to make the truth known to the people. He often uses a human teacher.

D. The Role of the Good Shepherd **Psalm 23**

1. *To not let the sheep be in need or lacking anything*
23:1 – חסר *Chaser* means to lack something
2. *To provide enduring nourishing food*
23:2 – “green pastures”
 - a. In Middle East, green pastures are only seasonal, and sheep must sometimes go great distances find some.
 - b. The Good Shepherd provides a permanent supply of nourishing food so that the sheep can be restful in taking it in.
3. *To provide restful feeding times*
23:2 – על מי מנוחות ”restful waters”
 - a. Sheep cannot drink by fast running waters because:
 - i. Their front feet are weaker and might slip into the stream and they could get hurt.

- ii. The front wool can easily get full of water and hinder the sheep from drinking and endanger the sheep to fall into the water.
- b. The shepherd is to provide a restful feeding time for the sheep — no commotion!
- 4. *To provide restoration to the complete person*
23:3 – נפשי שׁוּבֵב – “restoration of the whole being”
 — The task of the shepherd is to help to restore the sheep, not to turn them away. No spiritual abuse permitted.

II. THE KINDS OF SHEEP FEEDING

The following remarks are directed mainly to those who are called to be elders or other kinds of leaders in a local congregation. Some would call them “pastors” others would call them “rabbis.”

A. **Make time to feed the sheep.**

— A spiritual leader of a congregation must delegate as many kinds of tasks to others. Here are some examples:

1. **Acts 6:2** | “So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables’.”
2. **1 Timothy 5:17** | “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.”
3. The primary responsibility of such a leader is to feed the sheep and he/she should not waste their precious time by involvement of business schemes, church growth programs, and other kinds of ministries which could be delegated to others in the congregation. God has called that leader to study and teach, thereby feeding the sheep.
2 Timothy 4:2
 “Preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

B. **Preaching can be different from Teaching.**

1. *Preaching* | 3 different words that we translate “preaching”
 - a. κηρύσσω *kerusso* used 16x
 - i. To make an official announcement
 - ii. To announce, make known, by an official herald or one who functions as such
 - iii. To make public declarations, proclaim aloud
 Matthew 4:17; 10:7, 11:1
 Mark 1:38; 3:14; 16:15

- Acts 10:42; 15:21 Romans 2:21; 10:15
 1 Corinthians 1:23; 15:11
 2 Corinthians 4:5
 Galatians 2:2; 5:11 2 Timothy 4:2
- b. εὐαγγέλιον *euaggelion* used 16x
- i. To bring good news
 - ii. To announce good news and proclaim the divine message of salvation, proclaim the gospel
 - iii. “Evangelistic” meetings
 Luke 4:18, 43; Acts 13:32; 14:7; 14:15; 16:10
 Romans 1:15; 15:20
 1 Corinthians 1:17; 9:16; 9:18
 2 Cor. 10:16
 Galatians 1:8; 1:16 Ephesians 3:8
 Revelation 14:6
- c. παρακαλέω *parakaleo* Used many times!
- i. To call to one’s side
 - ii. To summon to one’s aid, call upon for help
 - iii. To be friendly to or speak to in a friendly manner **1 Timothy 6:2**
 - iv. Note its use in reference to the Holy Spirit in **John 14:16.**
2. *Teaching* | 4 different words, each of which describes a particular way to teach
- a. διδάσκω *didasko* **37x teach**
 — To provide instruction in a formal or informal setting
 - b. διαλέγομαι *dialegomai*
 - i. To engage in speech interchange, *converse*,
 - ii. To discuss, argue Acts 17:2
 - c. ἀνακρίνω *anakrino*
 — To engage in careful study of a question, question, examine, of general questions Acts 17:11
 - c. διακατελέγχομαι *diakatelegchomai*
 — To refute completely in a debate Acts 18:18
3. In a way, helping, preaching, and teaching can all be going at the same time. They do not contradict each other.

III. THE WAYS OF SHEEP FEEDING

A. A Biographical Study

A biographical study is one where we pick a biblical character and explore what we can learn from his/her life. It is that simple.

1. *Advantages*
 - a. One is that everyone can identify with the biblical characters because they were all people in the journey of life — as are we, so it is easy to see ourselves in their lives.
 - b. Secondly, many biblical characters are interesting.
2. *Disadvantages*
 - a. We are not given all of the details necessary to draw proper conclusions from the lives of biblical characters.
 - b. We need to remember that the Bible records the words and actions of Bible characters, but it does not want us to necessarily pattern our lives after theirs. In other words, just because a Bible character does something, does not mean we are to do that same thing.

B. Word/Topical/Doctrinal Study

A topical/doctrinal study is one in which the student explores a certain theological teaching, word, or concept from the Bible. It seeks to answer the question: “What does the Bible say about _____?”

1. *Advantages*
 - a. This kind of study is that it can be quite interesting, and it tends to be very relevant. People study what interests them, and they get to see the biblical perspective on just about any topic.
 - b. People can get a perspective on any given issue or topic from the *entire* Bible or entire book of the Bible.
2. *Disadvantages*
 - a. The main disadvantage to this kind of study is similar to the biographical study: Sometimes we have incomplete information — if we do not look up every instance when a particular word is used, or that a specific topic is mentioned.

- b. This kind of study is especially vulnerable to our individual prejudices about the meaning of a word or the nature of a doctrine. We need to let the *entire* Bible speak for itself and not let our preconceived ideas or theological systems interpret the Bible for us.
- c. When we look up verses or words, it is easy to either lose track of their context or to simply ignore the context altogether.
- d. We must avoid the temptation to say something like: “The Old Testament says _____ about this subject, but then the New Testament says _____ about it” — as if these two sections of the Bible either contradict themselves or one part cancels out the other. It is important that our students always see the Bible as one complete unit or book.

C. **Book Studies**

This is when an entire Bible book is explored, or larger chunks of books, such as paragraphs or chapters, are studied in a systematic way. We must admit that this is our favorite method of studying the Bible.

1. *Advantages*

- a. People get to know the Bible better because they see it as one book or section at a time and spend a lot of time in that book or section exploring its context, backgrounds, and flow of thought.
- b. Studying the Bible in this way helps students to see the context to many of their favorite verses and ideas to see how it all fits together, and to catch a better glimpse of why God said those words.
- c. As a result of seeing a verse in its original context, people get to learn their Bibles better, especially how to find things easier.
- d. This makes it easier to ascertain the author’s original intent behind the writing.
- e. Doing a book study provides continuity to our teaching.
- f. It is easier to teach students the necessary background information needed to understand each word, verse, passage, and book.
- g. It also “protects” the preacher/teacher from people accusing him/her of directing the preaching/teaching against certain people.

- h. If a book study is done properly, it is amazing to see how many topics arise within the context of the book — and people learn to see that subject in a greater context. Moreover, the teacher can always break the study during holy day times, returning to that book study at the close of the holy day season.
 - i. The preacher/teacher does not have to “worry” about what to preach next week. That material is already there in the Bible book.
2. *Disadvantages*
- a. It does require plenty of work to interpret properly the given passage: studying background information, language study, flow of thought, etc.
 - b. It *might* be a while before a given subject might be covered because it is dealt with only as it comes up in the book.

IV. A METHOD TO FEED THE SHEEP

— Observe | Organize | Present —

A. **Observe**

The first part of this three-point outline deals with the *observation* stage. Accurate observation of the details and grammar of a passage should always be in progress, in order to ensure that we know exactly what the text is really saying.

1. ***Observe what kind of literature it is.***

The Scriptures contain just about every type of literature imaginable, including *historical narrative, legal material, poems, and songs*. We need to be aware of which kind of literature we are studying. The type of literature studied will determine how we study and teach.

2. ***Observe what is in the text.***

We need to become thoroughly familiar with the *contents* of the text.

3. ***Observe the context.***

Observing the context is one of the most fundamental rules of interpreting any piece of literature. When there is not a perceivable context, it might be only because the words are cast in a certain type of literature that does not usually require contexts, such as the Book of Proverbs.

There are several kinds of contexts.

- a. The context of the whole book.
- b. The context of a paragraph or a section
- c. The immediate context Example:

4. *Observe the intended meaning of the passage.*
This involves putting ourselves into the shoes of the people who received the Scripture.
5. *Observe the historical, geographical, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds of the passage.*

B. Organize

1. *Continually apply all rules of interpretation.*
2. *Outline the passage.*

Every passage of the Bible has some kind of an organization, some orderly flow of the writer's logical thinking. Our job is to ascertain as best as we can the *author's* main point and how he developed it.

As we begin to discover the organization or logical development of the passage, we can begin to reflect that organization in our own outline, proceeding as follows:

3. *Give the passage a title.*
 - a. Derived from the contents of the passage.
 - b. Must reflect our understanding of the author's intent of the words.
 - c. Do not force our own ideas into the passage.
 - d. The title we choose for the section may be derived from the actual words of the text or may be put into our own words — as long as our words constitute an accurate paraphrase of the contents of that section.
 - e. Remember that the title is really the topic statement of the passage. It is a short, crisp summary of the contents of the section we are studying.
4. *Develop an outline.*
 - a. The main body of our study will be developed around our outline.
 - b. We need to show how each part of the passage is connected to the title/main theme.
 - c. In addition, we can bring in any appropriate Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek word studies that will clarify the meaning of the passage.
 - d. We can also share any vital historical, cultural, geographical, or religious background information that sheds light on the passage.

5. *Continually adjust the outline.*

After studying awhile, we may find that the outline needs to be altered. This is fine if the change is based on our study, and not on our desire to make the passage say something that it does not say. For that matter, we may also find that our title or main theme might need to be changed. We should not hesitate in doing so. That way, we remain true to letting the Bible speak for itself rather than forcing our own words or ideas into the passage.

C. Present

This is where the passage is either preached or taught. The following principles applies to both teaching and preaching.

1. *Present the passage from the outline.*
 - a. The title and outline of the passage become the main tools by which we can communicate the passage to others. There are several reasons teaching by an outline is helpful.
 - b. An outline helps the teacher to keep on track instead of straying away from the passage.
 - c. An outline helps the students to listen more attentively. They can more easily follow the teacher's line of reasoning. It will make more sense to them and they will be able to better ascertain if we as the teacher are being accurate to the text in what we are attempting to teach them.
 - d. An outline helps to best expose what the passage is saying, rather than any agenda the teacher may have. The focus of the teaching becomes the Bible, instead of the ideas of the teacher.
2. Introduce the passage in a way that will grab the people's attention and that accurately describes what we will say.
3. Present the passage by means of the outline, underscoring each point separately as we proceed.
4. Periodically review the points in our presentation.
5. Conclude the presentation by summarizing the points we have made.

D. A Word about Teaching

There are at least two ways to teach any given passage of the Bible: lecture or asking questions.

1. *Disadvantages of the Question/Answer Method*

a. More time is necessary.

To be sure this method is not always the quickest way to teach a passage of the Bible. This is simply because it takes time to let the students answer the questions.

b. Extraneous ideas may creep into the study time.

The teacher needs to be skillfully tactful at handling students' ideas that may enter into the discussion, which would clearly be extraneous and sometimes detrimental to the group study.

Of course, the teacher needs to learn how to be tactful at handling these things because he does not want to discourage independent thinking of the students and he does not want to shame or embarrass the person who is answering.

We need to remember that the teacher is there to coach the students as they learn to practice individually the skills of careful and accurate Bible study. One way that the instructor can accomplish this is to remind them of that purpose and carefully redirect them back to the text.

2. *Advantages of the Question/Answer Method*

a. This encourages the students to think for themselves.

b. Sometimes it is better for the students to discover Biblical truths for themselves. The teacher is there to help them to remember to stick to the rules and to practice the skills of properly working on a given passage.

3. *How to ask the right questions.*

a. First do a thorough personal study of the passage as outlined above.

b. Secondly, instead of stating the title or main points, make the statements into questions by utilizing the discovery word such as: *who, what, when where, how, why. etc.*

Experience and prayer can teach us how to formulate good questions from the passage in order to help the students to discover for themselves what we have discovered in our own personal study. We should not be afraid to seek our own growth in your ability to learn how to ask helpful questions.

4. *Be Patient! Wait for the answer to come.*
5. *Make the student give their answer from the biblical text.*
6. *Various Thoughts*
 - a. We cannot succeed unless we ourselves have thoroughly studied the passage.
 - b. It is important for the individual personal growth of our students that they learn to ask questions from the Bible and to find the answers for themselves.
 - c. Rarely ask the group a question for which a “yes” or “no” may be given as the answer. Do so only when that kind of question really is the proper question for the situation.
 - d. Develop the art of properly handling a wrong answer without shaming the student.

E. A Word about Preaching

1. *Good preaching is like good teaching.*
— Follow the same procedure as outline about in preparing and presenting the passage.
2. *Use proper voice inflections.*
3. *Do not scold or yell at the sheep! Always treat them with respect.*
4. *Do not shame the sheep.*
— Avoid saying things like: “What’s wrong with you?” “Why can’t you...?” “You miserable sinners!”
5. *Remember the power of God’s Word* — let the Word be the authority instead of you trying to be!
6. *Do not usurp the role of the Holy Spirit.*
7. When suggesting applications avoid the use of the word “you.” Instead, use “we” thereby including yourself in the application.

V. BOOKS TO FEED THE SHEEP

- A. Some people simply will not use commentaries or study aids when studying the Bible. They say they want God to teach them, not man.
- B. The problem with this statement is that God has specifically blessed certain people in the body of Messiah with the gift of teaching.
- C. We all need to rely on the God-gifted Bible teachers whom the Holy One places in our path.
- D. We must also realize that most commentaries were originally sermons or verbal teachings before they appeared in print.
- E. Moreover, if we are willing to ask another person his or her opinion about a given passage in the Bible, we should be willing to consult a commentary.
 - There is no difference, other than the fact that one is a verbal opinion about the Torah and the other is written.
- F. We are not islands unto ourselves. We are members of the body of Messiah, each equipped with certain areas of understanding which, when combined, help bring to all of us a more complete understanding of the Bible.
 - Thus, we should not throw away all the books and say, "we will just study the Bible."