

# Thought For The Week

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## God's Sheep: Biblical Shepherding

### And Our Call to Follow

#### Introduction: A Workplace Encounter Sparks Reflection

Spiritual discussions can arise in unexpected places, like the workplace. In a compelling sermon titled "God's Sheep," the preacher, Mike, shares a personal story from his time in the job force, where he engaged in Bible studies with colleagues. One individual stood out, as they conversed extensively about faith. This man believed in speaking in tongues, a topic that led to a pivotal exchange.

Mike recounts asking if these "tongues" could be used anywhere in the world to teach God's word. The colleague admitted no. Probing further, Mike questioned their utility. He explained that tongues are merely languages of the world, as evidenced by the King James Version Bible, which notes its translation "out of the tongues"—referring to the original Hebrew and Greek.

Referencing Acts 2, Mike highlights the amazement of the crowds: Galilean apostles spoke in foreign languages, understood by listeners from various regions, all praising God. The apostles might not have known these languages naturally, but the miracle allowed clear communication. As the conversation wrapped up, the colleague, sensing Mike's logic gaining ground, warned, "Don't steal my sheep."

This quip intrigued Mike. Who were this man's sheep? The goal of these studies wasn't to claim followers but to inspire young men to become God's sheep—part of His flock. This anecdote sets the stage for a deeper exploration of biblical shepherding, drawing from Old and New Testament scriptures to contrast failed leadership with God's redemptive plan.

#### The Failures of Israel's Shepherds: Insights from Ezekiel 34

To ground the lesson, Mike turns to Ezekiel 34, reading verses 1-4: "The word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel... Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat, clothe yourselves with the wool. You slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost. But with force and cruelty you have ruled them."

This passage depicts a tragic failure. Israel's leaders, called shepherds by God, were meant to guide the people through His word. Instead, they were selfish: feeding and clothing themselves at the flock's expense, ignoring the weak, sick, broken, driven away, and lost. Their cruelty scattered the sheep, making them vulnerable to beasts.

Mike emphasizes the sadness of this image. These shepherds didn't offer "medical aid" (a modern paraphrase for healing the sick) or care for the flock's needs. God condemns their self-centeredness, highlighting a key principle: true leadership prioritizes the flock.

Continuing in Ezekiel 34:5-6, the consequences unfold: "So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the beasts of the field... My sheep wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill. Yes, my flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them."

God doesn't stop at condemnation. In verses 11-16, He declares: "Indeed, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out, as a shepherd seeks out his flock... I will seek out my sheep and deliver them... I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries... I will feed them in good pasture... There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture."

God promises personal intervention: searching, gathering, feeding, and judging between sheep. He rebukes those who trample pastures and foul waters, forcing the flock to consume the remnants. This vivid imagery underscores God's commitment to justice and care, a theme that bridges to the New Testament.

## **New Testament Parallels: Elders as Shepherds in Acts 20**

Transitioning forward, the sermon references Acts 20:28, read earlier: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood."

Providing context, Paul summons Ephesian elders to Miletus for exhortation. Mike notes that "elder," "pastor," and "shepherd" refer to the same role—a plurality in each congregation. These men must avoid Israel's mistakes. Paul urges self-examination: "Take heed to yourselves," lest they become uncaring like Old Testament shepherds.

The church is God's spiritual Israel, His flock. Elders must shepherd it, feeding spiritually (as in KJV: "feed the church") while addressing physical needs—praying for the sick, ensuring provisions. The Holy Spirit appoints them as overseers, granting authority not from translations like KJV, but from divine mandate.

Mike addresses objections to elder authority, affirming Paul's words: the Holy Spirit made them overseers. This church was "purchased with his own blood," equating Jesus with God, as He shed blood for redemption.

Paul warns in verses 29-30: "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."

History proves this true—false teachers arose. Yet, in verse 32, Paul commends them: "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

Even non-elders should heed themselves, turning to God's word for building up and inheritance.

## **Fulfillment in Christ: Seeking the Lost in Luke 19**

Linking back to Ezekiel's promise, the sermon cites Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Jesus, God's only begotten Son, embodies the seeking Shepherd. He came not to condemn but to save (John 3:17 implied). As God vowed to search out His sheep, Jesus fulfills this by seeking the lost, feeding with judgment, and bringing justice to neglectful shepherds.

Mike warns against possessive leadership: if sheep follow a man, they're not God's. True shepherds point to Christ. Elders must follow God as sheep themselves, leading rightly to prevent scattering.

## **Conclusion: Becoming God's Sheep Today**

Ultimately, the call is clear: Do you want to be God's sheep? Follow Jesus' voice, not man's. Believe He is God's Son, whose blood washes sins. If astray, return—repent, let the church pray. God seeks you out; join His flock for goodness, mercy, and eternal inheritance. As sheep, we're vulnerable alone but safe under the Good Shepherd.

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# God's Sheep

## Lessons from Scripture on True Shepherding

In a world where spiritual leadership often falters, the biblical metaphor of sheep and shepherds offers profound insights. Drawing from a recent sermon, let's explore how God calls us to be His sheep, protected by faithful overseers, and the dangers of poor leadership.

The sermon begins with a personal anecdote: during a workplace Bible study, a colleague defended speaking in tongues but admitted it couldn't spread God's word globally. The preacher, Mike, clarified that "tongues" simply mean languages, as seen in Acts 2, where apostles miraculously spoke in understandable dialects to praise God. When challenged, the colleague quipped, "Don't steal my sheep," highlighting a possessive view of followers—one Mike rejected, aiming instead to guide people toward becoming God's sheep.

Turning to Ezekiel 34:1-4, the sermon paints a grim picture of Israel's selfish shepherds. These leaders fed themselves, clothed in wool from the flock, and slaughtered the fatlings without tending to the weak, sick, or lost. They ruled with cruelty, scattering the sheep to become prey. God condemns this neglect, emphasizing that true shepherds must prioritize the flock's well-being.

Fast-forward to the New Testament in Acts 20:28, where Paul urges Ephesian elders—synonymous with pastors or overseers—to heed themselves and the flock. The Holy Spirit appoints them to shepherd God's church, purchased with Christ's blood. Elders must feed, heal, and protect, addressing both physical and spiritual needs. Paul warns of "savage wolves" from outside and perverse men from within, who draw disciples away.

God promises in Ezekiel 34:11-16 to personally search for His scattered sheep, gathering them to good pastures. This prophecy fulfills in Luke 19:10: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus, as the ultimate Shepherd, seeks us out, not to condemn but to save.

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