

## “Shepherd My Sheep”

*Exploring leadership in John through the shepherd metaphor in John 10 and 21*

### **Objectives:**

1. To understand the richness of the shepherd/sheep metaphor
2. To be able to unpack and apply this metaphor in context
  - What does this mean for discipleship?
  - What does this mean for leadership?

### **Key Texts:** John 10:1-30 + John 21:15-22

- “I am the Good Shepherd.”
- “Shepherd my sheep.”
- “Follow me.”



### **Why metaphor?<sup>1</sup>**

- They attract attention
- They add colour or vividness
- They make abstract concepts more concrete
- They help retention
- They abbreviate an idea
- They encourage reflection
- They are emotive as well as intellectual

### **Challenges in interpreting metaphor:**

- Language
- History
- Geography
- Culture

### **Unpacking the Metaphor**

#### **Sheep**

- Sheep are not stupid
  - They can recognise faces and voices and make decisions based on this recognition
- Sheep are defenceless
- Sheep are prone to wander
- Sheep live best in community
- Different sheep have different needs



#### **Food**

- Location
- Quality
- Availability
- Dependence or independence

#### **Dangers**

- Thieves
- Wolves
- Other threats:
  - Weather
  - Not enough food & water
  - Neglect
  - Being driven too hard
  - Disease
  - Terrain

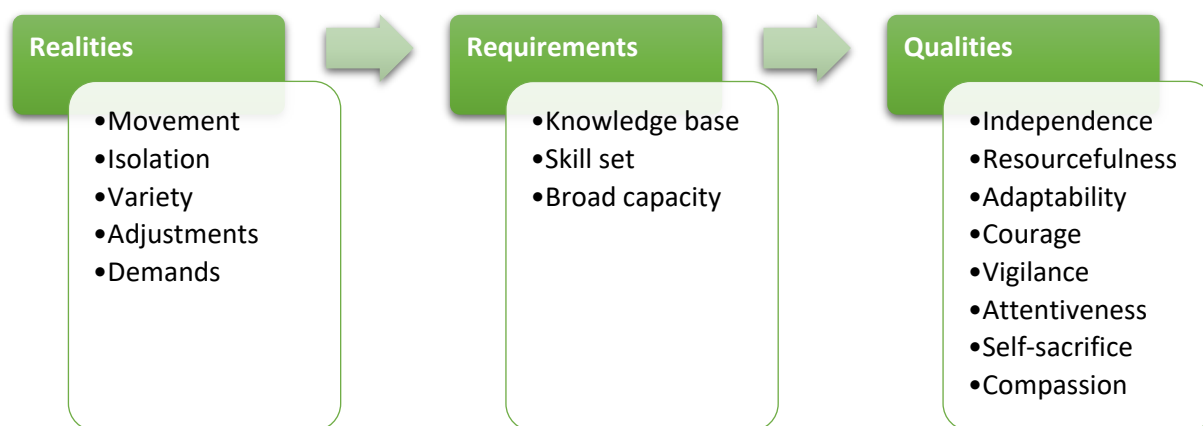
<sup>1</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, pp.144-145

### Questions for reflection

- What does this mean for my relationship to Jesus as Good Shepherd?
- What does this mean for me as a sheep who relates to human shepherds?
- What does this mean for me as someone entrusted with Jesus' sheep to shepherd?

### Intertextual Connections

Old Testament	New Testament
Numbers 27:12-23	Matthew 9:36 / Mark 6:34
1 Samuel 17	Matthew 10:6 & 15:24
Psalms 23	Acts 20:28-35
Psalms 78: 52-53, 70-72	Ephesians 4:11
Isaiah 40:11 & 49:8-10	Hebrews 13:20
Jeremiah 3:15 & 23:1-8	1 Peter 2:25 & 5:1-4
Ezekiel 34	Jude 12
Micah 2:12-13 & 5:2-4	Revelation 7:17
Zechariah 10:3 & 11:4-17	



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**Status: Lowly, ordinary, even despised**

### Shepherding reflections

- What is my self-awareness like as a shepherd?
- Can I honestly evaluate my gifts and gaps?
- How might God be leading me to develop in knowledge, skill, or capacity?

### Further Reading Suggestions:

- *Shepherds after My own Heart* (Timothy Laniak)
- *The Good Shepherd* (Kenneth Bailey)
- *Skilful Shepherds* (Derek Tidball)
- *Redeeming Power* (Diane Langberg)
- *The Shepherd Leader* (Timothy Witmer)
- *Towards a Theological Definition of Spiritual Abuse* (Amy White)

<sup>2</sup> Laniak, Timothy S., *Shepherds after My own Heart*, p.55