

A LOVING PEOPLE

—WEEK 3—

Sheep are interesting animals. They don't do well alone. They must be led to food. They are really stubborn. They are absolutely pathetic at protecting themselves. They are highly emotional. Left alone they will never survive. This is why they need shepherds.

Like it or not, we are like sheep. We don't do well alone. Left alone, we will never survive as believers. We need help learning how to feed on God's Word. We need others to see our blindspots of sin and call us to repentance. We need help watching out for the enemy who prowls around seeking someone to devour.

The good news is that God has not left us alone. By his grace, he has given us shepherds to watch over our souls. Shepherds after God's own heart that care for the flock of God. These shepherds lead us to feed off of God's Word and they protect us from false wolves. But pastors aren't the only ones called to shepherd in the church. Most of the New Testament letters are not written just to pastors but to churches. They were written to teach us the gospel and how we are to live together in light of the gospel. They teach us as the family of God how to love and care for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Our Church Covenant reads: *"We will walk together in brotherly love, exercising an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully encourage and exhort one another as we await the returning of our Lord."*

Think about all the "one another" passages that the Lord gives us in the Bible:

- Love One Another (John 13:34)
- Be devoted to One Another (Romans 12:5)
- Honor One Another (Romans 12:10)
- Serve One Another (Galatians 5:13)
- Admonish One Another (Romans 15:14)
- Carry One Another's Burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Pray for One Another (James 5:16)
- Encourage One Another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

None of these commands are given just to pastors. They are given to the whole church. And just as our Good Shepherd watches over us, Jesus wants us to watch over one another too. The Lord knows that you can not live the Christian life alone. He knows we need sisters to

encourage us when we want to give up on parenting or give into anxiety. He knows we need brothers who will exhort us when we are short with our wives or discontent with work.

Socrates said that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” The Bible is telling us the un-shepherded life is not worth living. In fact, it is spiritually dangerous for us. We need the family of God close enough to our lives where they can see our hurts, hear our emotions, know our struggles, and lead us back to the gospel again and again.

Meditate on God’s Word

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.” —1 John 4:7-12

“Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more” —1 Thess 4:9-10

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”
—1 Thess 5:11

Questions for Application

1. What are the things that keep you from loving your brothers and sisters in Christ in a deeper and more intentional way?
2. One of the central marks of being a Christian in the Scriptures is that we love one another. How does the gospel empower us to love and watch over one another?
3. How can we grow in giving encouragement to one another as a church family? How can we grow in giving exhortation (and receiving it!) as a church family?

Close by praying as a group that we would love as Jesus, our Good Shepherd, has loved us.