

# 40

## DAYS OF DISCERNMENT



*Wrestling with God's Call to Become a Shepherd*

By Rick Bergh, M. Div.

Copyright information

© Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations. All rights reserved.  
Printed in Canada

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means including electronic, mechanical, photocopy, and recording – by an information storage or retrieval system, without the written permission of the publisher.

For more information:  
Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations  
c/o: Grace Lutheran Church  
1162 Hudson Road  
West Kelowna, BC  
V1Z 1J3

Phone: (250) 801-3860 / (250) 769-5685

Email: [info@calc.ca](mailto:info@calc.ca)  
Web address: [calc.ca](http://calc.ca)

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.  
Used by permission. All right reserved worldwide.

## ***Letter to the Local Congregation***

Your involvement in this person's journey of discernment into shepherd ministry is vitally important. Over these next 40 days, you will need to be very present with him or her as he or she determines whether or not his or her call is from the Lord.

When your pastor received his *Call Letter* from your congregation, it included a commitment to "seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel and strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, at home and abroad." You have a candidate and they are asking your pastor and you, as a congregation, to be part of this discernment process into shepherd ministry.

The Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations also asks you to faithfully join this brother or sister in Christ in this process. In the Ministry of Word and Sacrament- Call, Ordination and Installation of a Pastor, Standards, Policies and Disciplinary Procedures, we read on page 81:

*During the 40 days of fasting and prayer, the candidate will examine through a series of devotional readings the important qualities of a shepherd by first looking at what it means to have the 'heart of a pastor'. At this point we are not asking the candidate to explore his or her academic or professional credentials or his/her lived-out experiences. We are not looking at a person and asking, "Do you have the right stuff to be a shepherd? Are you a good speaker, teacher, counselor or leader?" We are, however, asking him/her to consider his/her calling in terms of the heart of a shepherd. Each candidate will identify through God's Word, through the people of God, through family and friends what in fact the "heart attributes" of a servant leader are and, more precisely, how this will guide his/her role as a shepherd.*

Not only will this person approach the pastor during this discernment process, but he or she will also seek wisdom and counsel from others in this particular body of Christ, which he or she has called his or her church home and family.

Please pray for this person each day and mention him or her especially in your Sunday morning prayers.

It is our recommendation that you read through the *40 Days of Discernment* as a local pastor and invite your board to be acquainted with the devotional so that, together, you can join this potential shepherd in one of the most important decisions in his or her life. Yes, we all need to seek God's will. Together.

The *40 Days of Discernment* process should begin on a Sunday. We invite you to include the candidate in a special prayer and time of blessing as he or she begins his or her journey.

## ***Letter to the Candidate***

This discernment process is not just about you sitting and waiting for God to speak into your life and confirm your call to enter into shepherd ministry.

Although your time alone with God will be significant, this will be hard work.

Each of the *40 Days of Discernment* will challenge you to take a look at a specific principle that is important to effective parish ministry.

It's difficult to imagine the challenges of ministry until you are in the midst of serving a body of Christ, as its shepherd. The exercises and reflections found in the devotional are intended to make you experience what it would be like if you were already ministering in a congregation.

In addition, this workbook will help you to focus in upon the "motives of the heart" or "heart attributes" that are necessary for effective shepherd ministry. Through personal reflection, questions and assignments you will be taken to internal places that are uncomfortable but important. You will discover some nuggets of truth about yourself, be affirmed in your gifting and begin to count on God for what is lacking.

The more you embrace this process, the more likely you will be to hear the voice of God. You will need to listen carefully to God, your pastor, your family and the congregation at your church. Each of these individuals or groups will engage you on your journey the next forty days. Allow them to speak into your life and be open to their words, while still protecting your heart.

The question that we will start with is very simple: Do you have the heart of a shepherd?

If you don't find the attributes of a shepherd in your heart, should you back away from ministry then? Not necessarily. Jesus can change our hearts and our motives. That's what He does best. Examining how you need to be changed by Jesus is a very powerful and transformational exercise.

Discerning your vocational call is serious business.

Wouldn't it make discernment so much easier if the Lord would just show up at our jobs like he did with the disciples and say, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men"? We would likely drop everything and go if we had a face-to-face call from Jesus himself.

Perhaps that's exactly what we are asking Jesus to do...

We want Him to show up in the next forty days either to confirm our call or to show us what might be next for us as one of his followers.

We must be aware that following the call of the disciples, Jesus spent three years massaging their hearts and preparing them for their ministry following His ascension.

This is a start. Not an end. This is a beginning but it is intentional. Bless you in the journey!

### ***Further Information for the Shepherd Candidate***

As you begin this process you will soon discover a framework upon which we have built this journey.

Each day focuses on a new lesson. A short scripture will introduce the theme. We encourage you to read what comes before and after the passage of scripture to give it a wider context within that chapter of the Bible.

You will find a quote by Martin Luther, a discernment principle to consider and a scripture for reflection each day. Allow the Word of God to sink into your soul – the lines below the scripture are for you to write your reflections about it.

The discernment principle will be further explored through a series of questions, meditations, and assignments that you will be asked to complete. There is room for you to write notes that come out of intentional time spent each day. Some of these assignments involve others. There is a list below to help you plan ahead.

At the end of each section, there is a space for you to write a personal prayer. This is your response at the end of each day, before you make your way to bed and rest for the evening.

We hope that this can become a journal that you will return to on occasion. Perhaps you will review it at a later date, taking notice of what God said to you during this significant time in your life.

Plan ahead for...

Day 7: Prepare for a day of fasting and secure a quiet location to be alone

Day 9: Let your family know you will meet tonight to talk to them about becoming a pastor

Day 10: Plan ahead to make an appointment with your pastor for private confession

Day 14: Consider three people in your congregation who you would like to visit and talk about prayer

Day 17: Choose a mature, married couple that you and your spouse will go and visit

Day 18: Gather your family together and talk about what it means to be part of a pastor's family

Day 19: Make an appointment with your pastor to talk about anger in the church

Day 26: Make an appointment with your pastor to talk about the challenges of shepherd ministry

Day 30: Ask to join your pastor on a hospital visitation or to visit the dying

Day 31: Go visit a person who is no longer attending worship, who might be discouraged about the church (check with your pastor to see who this should be)

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Rick Bergh (M.Div., CT, NT) was born and raised in Alberta, Canada, and educated at Augustana University College, University of Alberta, and Saskatoon Lutheran Theological Seminary.

He was ordained on June 16, 1985 after finishing his internship in Yellowknife, N.W.T. Rick has served congregations in Marwayne, McLaughlin, Brooks, Westlock, Flatbush, and Cochrane, Alberta.

Rick's ministry experience has been varied – from rural ministry, church planting, team ministry, to multi-staffed positions in larger Lutheran congregations.

During the time he planted two churches, he had added to his portfolio, an additional career: Marketing Director of a large water company. Working for a large corporation, afforded Rick the opportunity to learn from business leaders, develop new skills and travel the world outside the church structure.

In 2008, while serving full time at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Cochrane, Rick led his church through the transition to join Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations (CALC). Rick was commissioned by CALC to design a mid-life pastoral training program in conjunction with the Institute of Lutheran Theology, later to be named *The Shepherd's Pathway*. The *40 Days of Discernment* that you are now reading is an important part of the program's original design.

Rick has experienced the ups and downs of parish ministry, including a five-year cancer journey with his first wife Pam and her death at 47 years of age of ovarian cancer. This journey has certainly coloured his experience as a pastor. You will find his honest and open reflection in these pages as he shares his journey and invites you to look at your own in discerning your call into shepherd ministry.

Rick is also a Certified Thanatologist (CT), a designation bestowed by the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC) after rigorous study in the area of death, dying and grief. He has authored four books on the topic as well as training, equipping and leading workshops across Canada in the areas of loss and bereavement. Rick's method of counseling includes Narrative Therapy, which he applies to his work as an educator, speaker and author.

You can connect with Rick on his popular blogging website ([www.intentionalgrief.com](http://www.intentionalgrief.com)) where he shares his thoughts, stories and resources of practical approaches to loss. You can also check out his many other resources at [www.rickbergh.com](http://www.rickbergh.com).

Rick Bergh and his wife Erica currently live in Cochrane, Alberta, Canada, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

# Table of Contents

**Day 1: Why Humility Is the Starting Point**

*Trust and accept that God has your best interests in mind*

**Day 2: Do You Have a Heart of Compassion?**

*Believe that God places people in your life for His purposes*

**Day 3: Vulnerability Opens Up Unexpected Pathways**

*Be honest with God about what you fear most*

**Day 4: Authenticity Invites Mystery**

*Ask one hard question of God – make it a big one*

**Day 5: My Faith Journey Milestones**

*Recall an experience from the past that changed how you trust God*

**Day 6: Why Am I Considering a Call to Ministry Now?**

*Be honest about your motives – ask God to make them about Him*

**Day 7: An Invitation to Surrender**

*Step out into the desert to hear from God – the ‘ONE’ Thing*

**Day 8: What Are People in My Church Saying to Me About This?**

*Approach people in your church for feedback and ask them to be honest with you*

**Day 9: Are My Family Members on Board?**

*Share your plans with your family and listen to their response*

**Day 10: Un-forgiveness Examined and Met**

*Confess your sin and be specific*

**Day 11: The Toughest Parts of Life Unveiled**

*Ask God to show you where he has been closest to you in your life*

**Day 12: Reliance on God’s Word Connects Us to the Source of Deep Love**

*Read the Bible three times daily and believe it will speak to you*

**Day 13: Trusting in the Holy Spirit Frees Us from Our Own Initiatives**

*Invite the Holy Spirit into your heart every day*

**Day 14: Praying Unceasingly Keeps God at the Fore and Us Following Him**

*Walk and talk with Jesus at every turn*

**Day 15: A Devotional Life That Keeps You Focused on the Most Important Thing**

*Carve out one spot in your day to do deep, focused work with God*

**Day 16: Courageous Faith Adventures Are Awaiting You**

*Take a step of faith without having all the “T”s crossed*

**Day 17: Why Taking Care of Your Marriage Comes Right After Taking Care of Your Relationship with God**

*Cherish your spouse every day in an intentional way*

**Day 18: Why People Will Be Looking at You and Your Family...Can You Take It?**

*In the church and outside the church – both count!*

**Day 19: Examining Your Anger Patterns in Conflict**

*Make it a practice to deal with anger within 48 hours or less*

**Day 20: Listening More Than Speaking**

*The 80%-20% Rule: Give God and others the space to speak*

**Day 21: Why Focusing on the Essentials Leads People to Jesus**

*Take inventory of what you are putting into your mind*

**Day 22: Lone Rangers Are Not a Good Fit for Pastoral Ministry**

*Choose a mentor and talk with them weekly*

**Day 23: Why Trust Is Essential in Ministry**

*Focus on building trust daily*

**Day 24: Where You Stand Has Everything To Do with the Heart**

*Throw away the idols that keep you from God*

**Day 25: On Being Empathetic – Taking Time to Understand People**

*Don't share your story unless asked*

**Day 26: The Outward Signs of a Passionate Faith**

*Show Christ to others today*

**Day 27: Why Your Sheep Want to See You Grow**

*Ask God where you need to grow*

**Day 28: Taking Care of Body Business**

*Exercise each day in order to love both God and care for yourself*

**Day 29: Discerning Without Running Ahead**

*Prepare for both open doors and closed doors*

**Day 30: Transitional Losses – Get Ready for Them!**

*Plan forward for loss experiences*

**Day 31: The Gift of Harmony in Diversity**

*Leave no stone unturned that impedes unity*

**Day 32: Perseverance in the Faith When Others Quit**

*Find a group of people to surround you in prayer*

**Day 33: Being Held Accountable to a Higher Authority**

*Put into place accountability measures*



**Day 34: Word and Sacrament to His People**

*Remember the priority of the Cross in your message*

**Day 35: Encounters by Night**

*Teach for the future, not just the present*

**Day 36: The Need to Return to the “Why?”**

*Ask “why?” and then ask “who?”*

**Day 37: Grabbing Hold of Scripture**

*Proclaim God’s Word at all cost*

**Day 38: Serving Without Compromise**

*Ask God to help you serve others in both love and truth*

**Day 39: Search and Rescue**

*Learn to see others’ needs from God’s perspective*

**Day 40: The Divine Call**

*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*



## Day 1: Why Humility Is the Starting Point

*“Blessed is he who submits to the will of God; he can never be unhappy.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*“Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”  
(Matthew 23:10-12)*

What do You want from me, God? I surrender all and humbly bow down before the cross of Christ and ask that You to do as you please. Your will be done.

Humility and confidence go hand in hand in the life of Christ. When we trust Jesus with our next step, we can be confident in our decisions.

The call into ministry will be both exciting and frightening, but it must lead you to a place of peace in the end.

Jesus only wanted to do the will of His Father. He humbled himself in an ultimate way by giving His life for you and me on a cross. He chose humility. To those who wanted Him dead, it may have appeared as though he were giving up. In fact, it was quite the opposite. He was only giving into humility.

In this world, we are told to go out and succeed. Humility is rarely a sought-after character trait. Yet, Jesus requires this of his disciples – a quiet humility that doesn’t seek to dazzle others.

Humility means entrusting the decision-making process to Jesus and accepting the outcomes. Jesus never rejects us, but instead affirms us in the work that He has for us on earth, whether that is as a pastor or in a different capacity.

- Has God called you in the ministry as one of the Shepherds for his sheep?
- Will you listen carefully and trust in God’s final decision for you?

This will become a very uncomfortable and emotionally draining wrestling match for you. You’ll need to be prepared for that. You are not wrestling flesh and blood – your call is a tug-o-war between God and Satan. If you don’t struggle throughout this process, then you are not asking the right questions or considering with “fear and trembling” the significance of this journey.

It is the prayer that during the next forty days, your call into Shepherd ministry will either be confirmed or you will discover God’s alternative purpose for your life in his Kingdom work.

Either way, will you choose to honour God’s plans for the next steps of your life?

Will you begin to prepare yourself now to humbly submit to His will?

**Day #1 – Discernment Principle:**  
**Trust and accept that God has your best interests in mind**

**A. Scripture Reading – Matthew 15:21-28**

*Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."*

*He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."*

*The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.*

*He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."*

*"Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."*

*Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. What does it mean for you to ask the Lord to help you in this discernment process?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Consider how you might submit to God's will even though you don't know the outcome.

---

---

---

---

---

3. Identify other times in your life when you submitted to God's will and discovered peace as a result.

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 2: Do You Have a Heart of Compassion?

*“Whoever sees Christ as a mirror of the Father’s heart, actually walks through the world with new eyes.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)*

A compassionate heart always begins with grace: what God offers you first will overflow from you to others without you even trying.

What allows you to see people through the eyes of Jesus? How do you approach people with the mind of Christ? What compels you to stop and reach out to those in trouble, as Jesus did throughout his life?

It’s God’s amazing grace that captures your heart first and becomes the starting point for compassionate living.

I announced to my congregation one Sunday that my first wife’s (Pam) cancer had returned for the third time and the prognosis was not good. I began to cry softly as I shared the news from the pulpit. Within seconds, 25 people surrounded me in deep prayer.

The extension of grace is a compassionate response.

Compassion extends beyond sympathy and empathy. I was lost at that moment, but people came into my life and showed me God’s grace through an act of compassion.

Compassion is an extension of God’s presence in our lives through believers who show up and bless us when we need it most.

You can’t fake compassion. People would see through it. Compassion is inherently authentic. God moves us towards those who need to experience His heart. It’s not of our choosing; He directs us to the right people.

Compassion is really about caring for the individuals of this world – those who often show up unexpectedly and need your support and it’s usually when you have other plans. But God wants to use you to extend His compassion to a lost and hurting world.

When we have spent quality time with God, we enable “His Song” to play in our hearts. One of the chords of that song is *compassion*. Compassion is a natural outpouring that comes from this “song” and can’t help but be sung to a hurting heart.

We encounter these people every day and don’t even realize who they are.

When we pray each day that God will use us to bless others, He will send people our way. They may seem like an interruption in our plans, but God sees it differently: He may well be sending lost sheep our way.

**Day #2 – Discernment Principle:**  
***Believe that God places people in your life for His purposes***

**A. Scripture Reading – Luke 10:33-34**

*But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. When did God place someone in your path that needed your time and compassionate heart?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Think of a time when someone showed up in your life at just the right time.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Do you believe that God is preparing people to experience His compassion through you?

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---



### Day 3: Vulnerability Opens Up Unexpected Pathways

*“God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” (Matthew 16:22-23)*

I sat around talking to a few guys from the church one afternoon. I said to them, “I have a question.” They looked at me. “Did anyone look lustfully at a woman today? Because I did and I just wanted to confess that to you.” Each one of them around the table confessed they too had been tempted. An amazing conversation ensued – one built on openness and accountability. It led to a new commitment to check in with each other.

A “shepherd” is not the star of the show. Jesus chose a very motley crew of individuals to extend his Kingdom and fulfill His mission.

We come to this discernment process not because we “have our act together”, but because we know that we never will and are totally dependent upon God’s leading.

Vulnerability can often be a missing piece in our ministry. It tells others that we are weak and we can’t depend upon our own strength – and that’s not a nice feeling for someone who is supposed to be a leader.

We have all failed in our lives in a various areas and will continue to do so in the future. We struggle to know ourselves and compare our gifts and shortcomings to those around us.

Our vulnerability as shepherds opens up pathways for others to feel that we are approachable and honest. It allows others to be vulnerable and gives us insight into the fragile human hearts that we are entrusted to care for. It gives them permission to be human and to invite God into those places where they are insecure or ashamed.

Jesus chose Peter to be the rock of the church. Of all Jesus’ disciples, Peter was the most vulnerable. He wore his heart on his sleeve. We always know what Peter is thinking or feeling from his words and actions in scripture. He often puts his foot in his mouth, but at least he was vulnerable. Jesus needed a leader like Peter to take charge after he was gone.

It isn’t necessary to go out of our way to share our deepest struggles, worries and insecurities. We are not called to be inappropriate or have bad boundaries with our emotions or personal information, but in our vulnerability God is often glorified.

God does amazing things with “shepherds” who are open about themselves with their sheep. The message is simple: “In Christ, I can be myself!”

**Day #3 – Discernment Principle:  
Be honest with God about what you fear most**

**A. Scripture Reading – Genesis 3:8**

*They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.*

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. Why is “hiding from who we are” a daily practice for so many?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. How might your vulnerability show others who Christ is in your life?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Consider a time in your life when you were vulnerable and shared openly about your challenge. What happened as a result?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 4: Authenticity Invites Mystery

*"No man understands the Scriptures, unless he be acquainted with the Cross."*

*– Martin Luther*

*Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.  
(Isaiah 64:8)*

"Just be who you are." We have all heard that phrase from the secular world. "Accept people for who they are." We have heard that as well.

How do I want my pastor showing up in front of me? What do I want people in my community saying about my pastor?

Vulnerability and authenticity are the two sides of the same coin.

As human beings, we so often spend time being a "poser" – we are one way with certain people and another way with others.

Jesus was always authentic no matter whom he was addressing – whether He was speaking to a prostitute or a religious leader: "This is who I am. This is what you can expect. I'm not being something I'm not."

People are looking for authenticity in life more than ever. Sadly, people outside the church often speak about the hypocrisy of the institution. Jesus hated hypocrisy too. He was very hard on the religious leaders (the shepherds) of His time. Leaders need to speak honestly. No one has all the answers! We struggle to figure out the Christian life. It's not easy to be a follower of Jesus. Shepherds must be examples of authenticity and integrity.

Authenticity in shepherding invites deeper questions that lead to mystery.

I still don't know why my wife had to die at age 47, leaving our four children without their mom. I would be lying if I said that I understood why that happened. I would not be authentic.

As a pastor, you have questions. I don't understand everything in scripture – either intellectually or emotionally – but I choose to believe and trust God who does have the answers. But to me...it's a mystery.

I'm on a journey of discovery, a treasure hunt, thinking about the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

Authenticity says, "I'm working this faith out. Let's do it together."

Shepherds are life-long treasure seekers who invite others to join them in discovering more about the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

You don't have to be polished, just workable clay.



**Day #4 – Discernment Principle:**  
**Ask one hard question of God – make it a big one**

**A. Scripture Reading – Philippians 3:14**

*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions for God:**

1. This is what I don't understand about you God...

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. This is one big question I have right now....

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. I want to believe that you....

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 5: My Faith Journey Milestones

*"I know not the way God leads me, but well do I know my Guide."*

– Martin Luther

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Psalm 139:13-16)*

God has been with you from the very beginning when He began forming you in the womb of your mother.

He has been shaping and honing you at each important transition in your life. You are trying to discern whether or not your call to move forward into Shepherd ministry is from God.

Perhaps this is not the first time you have considered a call to be a Shepherd. But something has changed. You feel pressed to make the decision this time around. Maybe you are feeling unrest in your life and are wondering why.

God is always at work. He is always preparing you for His plans and purposes. Again, it's not always about whether not, all of a sudden, you have the right skill set to move you forward in this divine exploration. It's much more about finally giving over to God and His will.

It's Kairos time. God's timing.

You want to confirm with God whether or not it's His time now. Are you prepared to position yourself for His movement in your life?

John the Baptist began his public ministry following a time of preparation. So did Jesus at 30 years of age.

The Holy Spirit is moving all the time. And the Spirit has been working in your life – whether or not you have been ignoring His influence and direction. God is patient. But now you have invited God to move and speak intentionally to this calling. You have said as Samuel said thousands of years ago, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears."

A wise, old pastor told me the following when I went to him with my struggle to hear God's voice as I was considering seminary training and a call into ministry: "You will always struggle with your calling as a minister. The devil will not be happy with your decision, so when he comes back to tempt you or discourage you, think back to your faith milestones, those times that God was with you. Remember His promise to go ahead of you on those days that you struggle."

We need to look back in our life to those places where God was present, knowing that He was preparing us for a good work. It is He who will bring it to completion. He is doing something new, something different. It is our work to discover what this "different" looks like.

**Day #5 – Discernment Principle:**  
***Recall an experience from the past that changed how you trust God***

**A. Scripture Reading – John 3:13-14**

*Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.*

---

---

---

---

**B. Reflection and Exercise:**

My Faith Journey Milestones

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Events in Which God Taught Me

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 6: Why Am I Considering a Call to Ministry Now?

“Grace is given to heal the spiritually sick, not to decorate spiritual heroes.”

– Martin Luther

*“So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”  
But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” (Exodus 3:10-12)*

Why now?

- I’m unhappy in my current job.
- All my kids have left home.
- I’m financially stable now.
- I want to finish well with purpose.
- It’s part of my family heritage.
- It’s in my blood – I had relatives who were in the ministry.

These are all wrong entry points in considering a call into ministry.

Confess those reasons now and hand them over to God. Approaching it from a rational perspective may only serve to cloud the discernment process. Moses did not respond to God’s call because it was great timing for him – the man was 80 years old! But it was the right time for God. He was looking for the right person to do the job and wanted Moses. Moses now had a choice to accept the mission or not.

Pastoral ministry involves neither glorification nor grandeur. God calls **all** of His followers into Kingdom work. We **all** have a Christian vocation and specific ministry to respond to that’s unique to us.

Nevertheless, Shepherd ministry puts a person in a position of power just by virtue of its impact on people. If this power or authority is abused, wittingly or unwittingly, it has dire consequences for all of us who are called as Shepherds.

Going into pastoral ministry for the wrong reason can be disastrous. That’s why we need to fear and love God in this process and wrestle hard with this decision.

Think carefully about the reasons why you are considering a call at this juncture in your life.

We need to be reminded that many may feel called, but few are chosen for this vocation. As difficult as this is, we need to trust God. We can’t “play pastor” for our own sake.

A good, solid look into your heart’s motives is an excellent exercise. For the sake of the Bride of Christ, the Church, dig deeply into this now!

**Day #6 – Discernment Principle:**  
***Be honest about your motives – ask God to make them about Him***

**A. Scripture Reading – Mark 1:11**

*And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”*

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Reflection:**

1. Write out all the reasons why you are considering a call to ministry. Ask yourself and God whether there are any wrong motives that you need to confess to Him.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Examine your list. Are there any reasons that put you in control of your final decision? If so, bring them to God now.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Note: Tomorrow you will fast. Find a place to get away by yourself for one day.



## Day 7: An Invitation to Surrender

*“My temptations have been my Masters of Divinity.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. (Matthew 4:1-2)*

When I first began my internship in Yellowknife, I fasted once a week for a 24-hour period. It was tough, but I wanted to honour this spiritual discipline in scripture. I must admit that I have not consistently maintained this discipline throughout my life, but I have returned to it at different times of transition that required an extra measure of discernment.

I can't imagine Jesus fasting for forty days straight; twenty-four hours was always long enough for me! But Jesus' desert experience and temptation have always compelled me to know scripture from memory in order to internalize God's truth. That way I can defend myself against the enemy's lies and stay focused on what God has called me to do next for Him.

Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit to be tempted. There was a reason for this experience. He had just heard from God the Father, “This is my beloved Son with whom I well pleased”. It is almost ironic then that it was the third person of the Godhead – the Holy Spirit – who led Jesus to this wilderness experience to fast for 40 days with nothing but scripture. At the very end, Satan showed up to try to draw Jesus away from His purpose and identity.

What's the practice of fasting all about? Firstly, fasting is always accompanied with prayer. It's an opportunity to put aside something that we consider a life-source – food – and be nourished instead by the Bread of Life. It means that all of our focus is on our relationship with God for a time: listening to Him; conversing with Him; and receiving His Word in our being.

Jesus' desert experience is the only time that we read about Him fasting. The reason was big. It enabled Him to step out into His calling. It allowed Jesus to confront evil head on, to trust in God's Word for His defense and to believe that, even though God the Father seemed distant during the Devil's onslaught, He was in fact just around the corner. He was the Father watching His Son stand up to His enemy and sent His angels to minister to Jesus immediately following the confrontation.

You don't need to be frightened to enter the “desert of fasting”. Jesus has already defeated Satan on your behalf. Facing Satan means confronting him for who he is and not allowing him to take you away from God's presence.

The devil has been described as a liar, a deceiver, an accuser of the brethren, a roaring lion, and an angel of light. These are all terms that describe an enemy who attacks, twists and destroys. So we must go into the desert, trusting that God will speak to us clearly as we move out into what He has planned for us in the future. Prayer and fasting together enhance our ability to listen to God's voice.

This is a step of faith and one of total dependence on God to supply our needs spiritually, physically and emotionally.

**Day #7 – Discernment Principle:  
Step out into the desert to hear from God – the “One” Thing**

**A. Scripture Reading – Ephesians 6:3-18**

*Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Action:**

Take the next 24 hours to focus on God. Go away to a quiet place. Take water and the Bible with you. Nothing else. When you return, write down what God said to you as you prayed and fasted.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 8: What Are People in My Church Saying to Me About This?

*“Anyone who is to find Christ must first find the church. How could anyone know where Christ is and what faith is in him unless he knew where his believers are?”*

– Martin Luther

*So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.*

(Acts 1:23-26)

You do have a church home, don’t you? A big part of your discernment needs to come from the Body of Christ where you are already an active member.

Often a calling comes from the affirmation of God’s people who see something in you that is shepherd-like. They will likely ask if you have ever considered praying about going into the ministry as a brother or sister in Christ, if they see those gifts in you.

If there has never been a person in your church body who has said this to you, “Have you ever considered being a pastor?” then you had better step back and take another look at this calling.

A calling can become very subjective in nature and we can easily fantasize or over-spiritualize the position. We can fabricate an idea in our mind and think it’s a good idea, without others seeing the same potential in us!

To be sure, some do run away from their call, as Jonah did. But God will catch up with them at various times in their lives in order to remind them of His purpose for their lives. The flip side – listening to what the Body of Christ is saying about you in this discernment process – is extremely important. Paul admonishes believers in Romans 12:3, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”

This is why inviting your brothers and sisters to pray for you, asking for their feedback is so important. The apostles presented two candidates to take over Judas’ spot. Then they prayed. And they cast lots. Matthias was chosen. I find it fascinating there is no mention of Barsabbas being upset with not being chosen. I’m assuming he trusted God would speak through the rest of his friends and they could trust God for the ultimate decision required.

Have people been telling you that you are pastor material? When do they talk to you, do they want to speak about faith? Do you find people seeking your advice or opinion on matters of the faith? Although this is primarily not about your gifts, people in your church body will still begin to see how faithful you have been in serving and more importantly Jesus is the most important part of your life. We certainly trust God can speak to us directly, but we also call upon others who know us well not only to pray for us, but also to speak honestly with us as we consider our call into parish ministry.







## Day 9: Are My Family Members on Board?

*“One learns more of Christ in being married and rearing children than in several lifetimes spent in study in a monastery.”  
– Martin Luther*

*Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 3:12-13)*

She said to me, “This is **his** thing. I will come on Sunday morning to support him if I’m available. But that’s about it.” Hearing that made me very sad.

A Shepherd needs the support, encouragement and prayers of his or her family. Timothy is very clear as to what the expectations are for a deacon. So you will need to consider the role of family in your discernment.

When I asked my first wife’s mother if I could marry her daughter, she said, “I don’t know, Rick. It’s really hard to be a pastor’s wife.” My response to her was, “It’s really hard to be a pastor and that’s why I need a good wife!” She smiled and gave me permission.

Your family cannot be ambivalent about this – “If it makes you happy go ahead and do it” – is not a supportive response from those closest to you. A much deeper conversation about the reality of being a pastor is necessary. The support of one’s spouse and family members is crucial.

This is not about what makes you *happy*; it’s about whether or not God has called you into this kind of ministry with your family on board, supporting you as best they can.

If your family is not on board, there are perhaps some good reasons. Or at least some concerns. These need to be examined, prayed over and spoken about during this process.

It’s not that easy to push through the process hoping that your family will eventually jump on board with you as you move forward. There will be times when it will be difficult on the family as well, since pastoral ministry is demanding.

The more “money you have in the bank” (figuratively speaking) by having a supportive family, the more you will be able to keep things moving forward when ministry becomes demanding or difficult.

Praying daily with your family – and particularly your spouse – and believing that God will also speak through them indicates trust that God can also confirm your calling through those who are closest to you.

Listen to your family and what they are saying to you. After God, they know you best!

**Day #9 – Discernment Principle:**  
**Share your plans with your family and listen to their response**

**A. Scripture Reading – Proverbs 18:1**

*Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Action:**

1. Sit down with your family and ask them what they think about you being a pastor

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Ask them what their biggest worries or concerns are as you consider this call.

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Ask them to commit to daily praying with you during this discernment process

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

Note: If your family has grave concerns and you are in conflict over this potential calling, ask to meet with your pastor and talk about some of these matters together.



## Day 10: Un-forgiveness Examined and Met

*“Be a sinner and sin strongly, but more strongly have faith and rejoice in Christ.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.  
(1 John 1:9)*

Forgiveness of sins offered through the empty cross opens up a beautiful pathway to God. We are separated from God because of our sin. We need to hear clearly God’s will for our lives and if there is anything getting in the way, we must come to God, seeking his mercy and grace.

How can you hear God when you have not come clean with Him or with others?

This is hard work. It should be. That’s why you need to be praying and asking for prayer all the time.

The devil does not want to release us. He would rather hold onto us permanently and take us away from the promises of God found in the cross of Christ. And sometimes we let him do that – our sin gets in the way of hearing God. Who likes coming clean about sin? Nobody! We prefer to hide and keep secret those things that we are ashamed to reveal to our Saviour.

Satan interfered with God’s perfect plan for Adam and Eve. He convinced them that God was unfair; that God was unreasonable by telling them not to touch the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; that somehow God was holding out on them. Satan planted seeds of mistrust and deception. They bought in and now they were trying to hide from God in the garden. Sin came into the world. It wasn’t about an apple – it was about people’s hearts and relationship with God.

God is trying to reach your heart. He is trying to speak to you. He has something He needs to tell you.

He wants to draw close to you and, although He knows your heart, He wants you to speak to Him about everything that gets in the way of you receiving all He has for you.

King David knew he had sinned greatly. He had done something *really* bad – several things, actually. But he confessed it to God. It had been holding him back from having a new conversation with God. By repenting, David was able to receive what God had waiting for him in his future.

God is waiting to give you all He has planned for you. He is wanting to draw close to you and whisper into your ear what is next. You are seeking and finding. You are intentional. God likes that you are pursuing Him and His purposes.

It’s important to unplug the pathway to the heart. We must unplug our ears and hearts every day, as the “old Adam” is still very much a part of our lives.

Come clean before God. Confess your sin, known and unknown. Allow God’s grace to fill your heart.

**Day #10 – Discernment Principle:  
Confess your sin and be specific**

**A. Scripture Reading – Psalm 51:1-2**

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Question and Actions:**

1. Is there any sin that you know of that you have been holding onto that is hindering your relationship with God?

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Make an appointment with your pastor and confess openly all your sins and seek absolution.

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Ask God to bring to mind someone whom you have sinned against. Go and ask for forgiveness now.

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 11: The Toughest Parts of Life Unveiled

*“A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing and suffers nothing is worth nothing.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” (Acts 9:3-6)*

It’s important to reflect upon the life you have lived thus far. It has shaped and formed who you are. Although God continues to work in and through you throughout your life, you need to take inventory of those significant, life-shaping events.

You have a story that has shaped you and it is important.

These significant parts of your story sometimes involve the choices you have made in your life and sometimes not. Some of the events in your life may have occurred with little apparent reason.

Regardless of whether significant events were a result of your choices or not, the toughest events in your life will likely be the most important to your ministry. When you have gone through the muck, come out of it on the other side, and recognized the presence of God in the valley, you give hope to others around you.

Our family’s five-year cancer journey with my first wife, Pam, and the grief work that followed her death, has become pivotal in my life and my ministry. The truth that Jesus shared – “I am with you always” – we have lived at so many junctures.

Holding back the tough stories of our lives never honours God, who is in the valleys with us. We need to acknowledge His part in helping us through the murkiness and feelings of loss to experiencing a life that has been transformed for His purposes.

Shepherds need to be able to tell their personal faith story, which includes the pivotal events in their own lives – places where God has been most evident in their day-to-day struggles. Sheep want to hear these stories and need to know that God is at work in their pastor’s life as well as their own.

Consider the Apostle Paul’s story before he was called by God – after he responded to God’s calling him to ministry, he didn’t suddenly forget his former life as a persecutor of Christians. No, he often referred back to it, knowing that these past events shaped his present understanding of God. He now had a platform from which he could effectively share the gospel message – particularly to the Gentiles – based upon his unique experience with God.

Sometimes past events don’t make sense to us. Sometimes we would rather not visit them. But what if they could be used to point others to a Heavenly Father who loves them? Would those stories not be worth sharing?





## Day 12: Reliance on God's Word Connects Us to the Source of Deep Love

*"The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me."  
– Martin Luther*

*But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26)*

If you are not reading the Bible daily, then you need to start doing so right away. If you are not being filled with the Word of God on a daily basis – the source of your teaching, preaching and compassion – then what is filling you?

You need to love God's Word. It's the air that you breathe, the light for your path and your anchor in shifting sand. If it is not your compass, then something else is.

The temptation of Jesus is a powerful example of needing God's Word at the ready in order to take aim and fire when needed. Jesus knew the scriptures inside out and although He **was** the Living Word (Logos), he studied them too and used them to counteract Satan's deceitful words in the desert.

Evil will be lurking at your door as a Shepherd as well. Satan will not be happy with you as you enter the ministry. There will be opposition to your calling – forever. But the devil flees from the Word of God.

Martin Luther experienced the devil in full force as he translated the scriptures into the common everyday language of German. Why? Because the enemy doesn't want us to experience Jesus' presence in our lives.

Unlike modern-day spirituality, which changes with every whim and which people create in their own image, the Bible grabs you, shakes you, moves you, empowers you, and releases you to be transformed for God's purposes. It points to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is working in a mighty way as you read the inspired pages of the Bible. The words fly off the page, entering your heart, mind and spirit and give you what you need – the Bread of Heaven enters your heart afresh and changes your perspective on life.

Experience once again "the Word who became flesh and dwelt amongst us full of grace and truth" as you read God's holy and precious Word.



**Day #12 – Discernment Principle:**  
***Read the Bible three times daily and believe it will speak to you***

**A. Scripture Reading – Hebrew 4:12**

*Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. Write down why you think and believe reading God’s Word is the most important discipline in a Shepherd’s ministry calling.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. When was the last time you read the Bible and it spoke to you about something in your life?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What was the last message you received that you really needed to hear because you asked the Holy Spirit to speak through the word?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 13: Trusting in the Holy Spirit Frees Us from Our Own Initiatives

*“Grant that I may not pray alone with the mouth; help me that I may pray from the depths of my heart.”  
– Martin Luther*

*“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (John 14:26)*

Thank you, Jesus, that when you left this earth, you sent the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts.

We must trust the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us in a supernatural way. We need to be careful not to rely upon our own gifts, but to always invite the Holy Spirit to do the guiding.

We asked God to “stir up in us the Holy Spirit” on our Confirmation day, but why not ask this of God as we begin each day now?

The Holy Spirit helps us:

- to pray when we don’t know what to pray
- to speak when we have no words
- to give us wisdom when we are drawing a blank
- to discern God’s word when we are wondering what He is saying to us, and
- to give us guidance when we don’t know where to go

What more do we need than to rely on the Holy Spirit to help us lead sheep who are looking for direction from their Shepherd? But it’s not always easy to trust in the Holy Spirit. We often want to take the lead and leave God behind.

If we are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, then we will rely less on our own abilities, because we allow God to work out in us what He has planned. He will give us the resources necessary for the ministry he has entrusted to us. He will not leave us without the resources to accomplish the vocation He has called us into.

He is waiting for us to count on him. We have a God who is so confident of His ability to bless, that He loves to show off what He can do. Trust the Holy Spirit to reveal that to you.

“It is better that I go, so the Holy Spirit can come,” Jesus said. This did not make much sense to the disciples at the time. How could it possibly be better for Jesus to leave this motley crew of believers? I’m sure they questioned this – and then came Pentecost!

Daily we need to say, “Come, Holy Spirit, come.”

**Day #13 – Discernment Principle:  
Invite the Holy Spirit into your heart every day**

**A. Scripture Reading – Acts 1:8**

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Meditation:**

1. Recognize in your life right now how you have tried to take control of your situation or circumstances. Write this list down.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Write down all the ways in which you have been surprised by the ways God has showed up in your life in the past once you trusted the Holy Spirit.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Give over to God what is on the list above (Question #1) and invite the Holy Spirit to take over.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Note: Phone a respected individual in your congregation. Let them know that you have placed the following concerns into God’s hands and are trusting in the Holy Spirit. Ask them to pray over the list and have them contact you in one week.



## Day 14: Praying Unceasingly Keeps God at the Fore and Us Following Him

*“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing”  
– Martin Luther*

*“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5)*

Your sheep will be watching you closely. Your responses to life will be on their radar as their leader. And although you are a sinner, as they are, they need an example to follow.

It's not because of your theological training that they will notice you, although that is important. They will be watching how you live out your faith in your relationship with Jesus and in your interactions with others.

They will mostly wonder about your relationship with Jesus, and if Christ really is worth following and making a priority in their own lives.

- Is Jesus real for my pastor?
- Does my pastor talk about the Lord when we are together?
- Is there evidence of his or her faith and love for Jesus? Is there fruit in his or her life to show that Jesus makes a difference?

Prayer is one of the most powerful gifts given to help us draw close to Jesus. As we converse with the Lord and develop a personal prayer life, we are drawing close to the very One who made us and knows us best. We are given the choice to have a personal relationship with the Lord of the Universe. God wants to talk with us. We were made for this.

Without communication we do not have a relationship.

Although, I am not a huge fan of the social media Face Book, I must admit that one of the wonderful surprises it offers is when a long lost friend, or a relationship from the past invites me to be their friend. This has happened a few times and when I say yes, a conversation begins. Yes, a new relationship begins.

Jesus not only wants to be our Saviour but also our friend. He is waiting for us to connect with him again and to continue that relationship that began at our Baptism. We are children of God. We have been adopted by in him into his family.

What's the old adage? “The family that prays together stays together.”

We are grafted into the family of God. Let's keep sharing our lives with the Lord. He wants to know what's happening in our day.

**Day #14 – Discernment Principle:  
Walk and talk with Jesus at every turn**

**A. Scripture Reading – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Action and Discovery:**

1. Give a description of your current prayer life.

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Go to three individuals in your local congregation and ask them to tell you about their prayer lives.

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What did you learn about prayer from the brothers and sisters in Christ you spoke with?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 15: A Devotional Life That Keeps You Focused on the Most Important Thing

*“Prayer is climbing up into the heart of God.”  
– Martin Luther*

*In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.  
(Mark 1:35)*

Spiritual disciplines are a very important part of our ongoing spiritual nourishment. Deep work can't take place in our lives when there are many distractions. We know that intentional disciplined focus is important for shepherds especially.

Reading scriptures, meditating on a verse, reading a devotional work, or getting away from worldly distractions that interfere with us going deep with God are all important daily choices we need to make.

Jesus was so busy in his daily ministry. Crowds were following him. They wanted to listen to his teaching, bring him their sick and receive what He was offering. Everyone seemed to want a piece of Jesus: his disciples, the religious leaders and everyday people.

So he would go off to a lonely place and pray. He even sent his disciples away on a boat to make sure that he could have focused time alone without their interference. At least for a short time.

The Jewish people understood the importance of daily rituals. God had instructed them on specific ways to keep their focus and the priests implemented these for the people of God as they continued toward the Promised Land.

It helped them to focus on God and His promises and not to get distracted by the world around them.

In today's world, technology is our biggest distraction by far. The evolution of personal cell phones keeps us in constant communication with the world and creates so much diversion in our lives that we rarely have a moment without interruption, unless we choose to just shut everything down for a few hours or more.

More than ever, a devotional life – set apart from all distractions – is necessary for a shepherd who needs to keep his or her focus on the things of God.

A structured devotional life, in which you allow God to speak to you daily, equips you for ministry for the day.

You will find that whatever God has spoken to you during your devotional time becomes applicable to something in your day. It becomes very useful and practical, not just pie in the sky.

You will be amazed at what God will show you in the stillness.

**Day #15 – Discernment Principle:**  
***Carve out one spot in your day to do deep, focused work with God***

**A. Scripture Reading – Matthew 14:22-23**

*Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Action:**

Establish a habit in your day to go for a walk alone to focus on one thought, problem or idea that you need to specifically speak with God about for his direction. Invite the Holy Spirit into this one thought. Don't allow any distractions to take you away from this one focus. Write down what you heard when you return from this time. Do this each day for the remainder of the discernment process.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 16: Courageous Faith Adventures Are Awaiting You

*“Who waits until circumstances completely favour his undertaking, will never accomplish anything.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” (Matthew 14:28-33)*

Courage...

Be bold, be strong. God has gone before us. Take some faith risks that include Jesus.

Are you willing to take some knocks for the sheep that you serve?

Are you ready to go out and find the lost sheep and bring them back to the body of Christ?

Are you ready to engage people in conversations that are important for their “heart”?

Are you willing to have courageous conversations when necessary?

The Christian life is an adventure. It has to be. But do we let it be all that it can be?

A Shepherd must lead people and, with godly vision, inspire the sheep to discover God’s next plan for their individual lives or for the church as a community.

Vision does not come from us. It comes from God. It comes by asking Him what’s next and not being afraid to walk into the new territory he shows us. God really does go before us to prepare circumstances, people and resources in order to further His kingdom. We just need to trust and have courage to take the step and bring people along with us.

Peter may have lacked faith, but he still had courage to step out of the boat.

The fear of failure is the main ingredient preventing us from what God has next for us. Fear of the unknown is part of our relationship with God. It wouldn’t be trust without the unknown.

Jesus tells us not to be anxious for tomorrow (Matt. 6:34) and scripture tells us that God has good plans for us (Jer. 29:11). Who do you want to believe?

People follow leaders who are taking them into something new. Jesus said, “Follow me,” and the disciples stepped into an unknown life. Were they unhappy where they were? We’re not sure. But one thing is certain: they were inspired by this Man who told them to leave everything behind.

Is it time for you to do the same? To leave everything behind and follow Jesus and invite your sheep do the same? Have courage, not control.



**Day #16 – Discernment Principle:**  
**Take a step of faith without having all the “T”s crossed**

**A. Scripture Reading – Numbers 13:4-8**

*And they said to one another, “Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt.” Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephun’neh, who were among those who had spied out the land, rent their clothes, and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.*

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. Write down what you would consider to be the biggest step of faith that you have made in your life.

---

---

---

---

2. Looking back, what parts of this step of faith most frightened you prior to having the courage to go?

---

---

---

---

3. How do you look back on the experience now?

---

---

---

---

4. What still prevents you from seeing the big possibilities that God might have for you in the future?

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

Note: Plan a date night with your spouse if you are married. Do it for tomorrow night. Surprise!



## Day 17: Why Taking Care of Your Marriage Comes Right After Taking Care of Your Relationship with God

*“There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage.”  
– Martin Luther*

*“Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:25)*

If you are married, then this relationship comes right after your relationship with God and before your vocation.

Many pastors have sacrificed their marriages and families for their work in the church. The problem is often due to improper boundaries or a false sense of self. We want approval from our sheep and so we give and give and don't recognize the impact our vocation is having upon our marriage and family.

If you are not caring for your marriage, then you are diminishing the importance of marriage as God sees it in His Word. The institution of marriage is foundational in all of life. It needs your attention daily. If you are single, then you must also be aware of boundaries that are important to your health and ministry.

Unfortunately, many in the church still believe the pastor should be available to them 24/7. When I was first in the ministry, I operated in this unhealthy way. Then I realized that there would always be another ministry opportunity. It never ends. Of course, I responded to emergencies and crises in the church body, but I soon discovered that what my sheep were talking about more often than I realized, was how I treated, interacted and cherished my wife Pam and now Erica.

There are never enough minutes in the day. When I first entered ministry, I know I overworked. I spent too much time away from my wife and family. Thankfully, I learned this lesson sooner rather than later.

What I learned is my example as a leader, with regards to my relationship with my spouse, was hugely significant in my shepherding.

I have been married twice now, and both of my wives have been pastor wives. Whenever I would accept a call to be the pastor of a church, I set out my priorities as follows:

God first. My wife next. My family third. Finally, the Church.

I began to realize marriage ministry began with mine and I needed to be a good example. I also came to believe focusing on my marriage honoured God's Word and exemplified a foundational part of God's plan for the world – the gift of marriage.

**Day #17 – Discernment Principle:**  
***Cherish your spouse every day in an intentional way***

**A. Scripture Reading – Solomon 7:10**

*I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions and Actions:**

1. What does a Christ-centered marriage look like to you?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Go to a couple in your congregation whose marriage you respect and ask them how they include Jesus in their relationship.

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. If you are married, speak to your spouse about how you plan to continue to cherish them and what intentional plans you have in mind to keep this relationship growing and strong.

---

---

---

4. Write down a list of qualities you see you in your spouse and write them a love letter including those above and more.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

Note: This is date night. Decide what you will do and include the information from above in your evening conversation.



## Day 18: Why People Will Be Looking at You and Your Family ... Can You Take It?

*“It is of the greatest importance for every married man to pay closer, more thorough, and continuous attention to the health of his child’s soul than to the body which he has begotten, and to regard his child as nothing else but an eternal treasure God has commanded him to protect, and so prevent the world, the flesh, and the devil from stealing the child away and bringing him to destruction.”*

– Martin Luther

*“Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.”*  
(Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

You will be under a microscope, both you and your family. This is difficult but true. So often, we hear the stories of pastor kids being the worst behaved, largely because they are under scrutiny!

There seems to be a high expectation placed upon a pastor’s family.

My son was a teenager, and he walked into church with some torn jeans and a sweatshirt. He had come to church to worship. A member of the congregation asked him if it was appropriate for him to be wearing such clothing. His reply was, “I think Jesus is happy I’m here.”

The shepherd’s family is carefully watched not only by those in the church but also by people outside the church in the community.

It may not be fair, but it is the truth. Our children are no different than any other people’s kids or teenagers. They are trying to work things out in their lives as they develop and grow as all kids do. A shepherd is a mom or dad first. So your involvement with your children in your community is significant.

Perhaps the word “normalize” is a good one to use here. They are just normal kids with normal parents. That’s why it’s important to be a normal family and be involved in your children’s life outside of the church community.

My children were highly involved in the community, especially in sports. How they acted towards their teammates, their opponents and their coaches was really important. We encouraged them to be a light for Jesus whom they represented. They were not perfect kids, but their faith took priority in how they engaged others in life.

I decided to coach our kids in many sports. Pam was highly involved in the Girl Guide movement. We were engaged with other children in our community. It was very interesting how many of these families who did not have a church home began to check out the church.

It is true – pastors are seen as the professionals in matters of faith. We do have some training to help our kids grow in their faith. And we need to practice – like everyone else in the body of Christ – faith at home and encourage our children to be salt and light in the world. On the flipside, it’s important not to be too hard on ourselves or on our children. We are just a normal family.

**Day #18 – Discernment Principle:**  
***In the church and outside the church – both count!***

**A. Scripture Reading – Matthew 5:16**

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Actions:**

1. If you have children living at home, decide how each member will be involved in life outside of the church.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Talk about how each family member can use their gifts to serve God in the body of Christ.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Decide how you as a family unit will serve God together outside the regular ministries of the church you belong to as a member.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 19: Examining Your Anger Patterns in Conflict

*“This is the most dangerous trial of all, when there is no trial and everything goes well; for then a man is tempted to forget God, to become too bold and to misuse times of prosperity.”*

– Martin Luther

*Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4: 26-32)*

There are some very important emotions that shepherds need to pay special attention to in their ministry. One is anger. Anger has the ability to quickly destroy or create disunity in the Body of Christ.

Anger comes from the heart. It is a response to something someone either said or did that you consider to be unfair or hurtful. Mostly, we need to be able to reframe our emotions and examine them carefully before they wreak havoc in our personal and professional life.

As a young pastor starting out in ministry, I would get easily hurt by comments made by members of the church. At first, I would not say anything. But then, because I allowed these feelings of hurt to fester in my heart and go unchecked, they would seep out as full-blown anger and I didn't always respond in an appropriate way.

The church is one of the most interesting institutions with regards to these hot feelings. We somehow believe all people will act lovingly toward each other. After years of ministry and knowing how people work, I prepare myself for the times when people will be less than Christ-like and I guard my heart...and my response!

There will be periods of wonderful unity in the church and then something will happen. If we are not ready to respond in a healthy manner, we can be taken by surprise.

Jesus puts the emotion of anger in perspective when he links it to murder. The emotion of anger can lead to bigger things detrimental to our lives and those whom we are called to serve.

Taking time to reflect upon the reasons for your anger before you respond is so important. Not dealing with your anger is not an option. Not responding to your flock is also not an option. Developing strategies that allow you to reframe the situation and your response are key.

As a shepherd, you'll need to beware of hot emotions and take appropriate action when necessary.

**Day #19 – Discernment Principle:**  
**Make it a practice to deal with anger within 48 hours or less**

**A. Scripture Reading – James 1:19-21**

*You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.*

---

---

---

**B. Action:**

Next time a hot feeling rises in your life, use the formula below to deal with it quickly.

1. **Stop** and let it simmer. Don’t respond immediately. Sit in the emotion for a moment.
  
2. **Evaluate** it for its content. Examine the situation, background or context when the feeling first became apparent. Was there a reason the conversation took place? Who was speaking when your hot feeling emerged? Why did the conversation take place? Could you have misinterpreted its meaning? Sometimes the reasons for the feeling are fair and reasonable.
  
3. **Ask** yourself: Why am I upset? Is it because...
  - it came from a specific person that I really don’t like or trust?
  - it came in response to something I said that was important to me?
  - my thoughts or feelings were not acknowledged?
  - somebody challenged my opinion and disagreed with me?
  - the response came from a trusted friend who hurt me?
  - a person slandered a value that was really important to me?

No feelings are wrong. What we want to be careful of is allowing the feelings to make us do something harmful to ourselves or to someone else. Regardless of what this hot emotion is telling you, you need to take control of it. No one can change another person, only themselves. But you can choose *your* emotions.

4. **Choose** a response that is smart and healthy. Pray first for direction. If it’s a negative emotion that came about because of something someone said or did, decide if you need to talk to the person. Sometimes you don’t. It may be something you need to examine in your own heart and resolve. Either way, reframe the experience, deal with the emotion, evaluate its ongoing impact and move forward for the greater good of the community.

5. **Write** down an example about a past experience in dealing with anger. Go to your pastor and talk about how you dealt with this in the past, and how you might respond to it now if something similar were to happen.

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---



## Day 20: Listening More Than Speaking

*“If you want to interpret well and confidently, set Christ before you.  
For He is the man to whom it all applies, every bit of it.”  
– Martin Luther*

*Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. (Revelation 3:20)*

Who can debate the significant attribute of listening for a spiritual shepherd? In scripture, listening is always equated with understanding, especially in the Old Testament. As a shepherd you will want to understand your sheep as well as understanding God’s voice. Listening is the key.

Many people will come to share their deep stories and troubles with their pastor. They will come once and, if they feel that they have been heard, they will return.

I was always amazed at how often people outside the church would just stop by and ask for the pastor. They usually asked to see me because they were desperate and needed to be heard.

Some pastors have training in counseling, and offer this added gift to their members or their community.

While listening is a very important skill, a pastor’s main focus should always be to introduce people to Jesus through the Word and sacramental ministry. Straying away from your primary objective, no matter what your gifting, is not being true to the Call.

You are not first and foremost a counselor. Unless you are serving a large church where your position calls you to this specific work, keep to proclamation and focus on the saving nature of Jesus Christ. If you are not passionate about this message when you get up in the morning, then you should question the validity of your call.

He showed up at the door of my office one day. He confessed that he had been having an extramarital relationship. I listened carefully. The Law and the Gospel came into full affect that afternoon and later as we met with his wife.

As a Shepherd you will be interacting with your sheep. If you are a good listener, you have opportunities to share the Gospel through the unique gifts found in scripture. Countless times, I’ve been able to hear deep confession and offer absolution. That’s the Gospel. Pure and simple. What an honour it is to pray with people or find a piece of scripture that is hopeful or sets a boundary that is useful. Pointing people to Jesus is a privilege.

Shepherds in Jesus’ time didn’t have many tools to do their job. Their main asset was their ears. They would listen to the flock and discern danger by what they heard. The shepherd kept his ear attuned to his environment in order to protect the sheep.

Perhaps a good prayer to start each day might be: “Lord help me to be attentive to my sheep.”



**Day #20 – Discernment Principle:  
The 80%-20% Rule: Give space to God and others to speak**

**A. Scripture Reading – John 10:27-28**

*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Reflection and Application:**

Evaluate your conversations and your ability to listen.

When you do a review of what conversations look like in your life, how would you rate them on a scale of 1-10?

1. I had a talk with someone in the last week beyond my work, family, sports or politics.
2. When I have visited with a friend over coffee, I have had a conversation that was totally void of gossip.
3. I had a conversation about an emotion that I experienced this week.
4. I had a conversation about something that I have never talked about before.
5. I took time to have a dedicated conversation with my spouse/partner that challenged something different in my worldview.
6. I had a conversation that started with, “I was wondering about...” or “I am curious about...”
7. I asked another person to tell me more about a certain point of view or perspective that I do not agree with and it did not interfere with my opinion.
8. I had a conversation that was extended because I said, “Tell me more about that.”
9. I had a conversation at work that included, “I’d like to know your thoughts or feelings about...”
10. I engaged a stranger in conversation in order to learn something new about life that I did not know before.

This week engage a person in a conversation. Think intentionally about how you might listen to the story behind the story. Ask if you were able to use the 80-20 rule. That’s 80% them sharing and 20% you speaking.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 21: Why Focusing on the Essentials Leads People to Jesus

*“The truth is mightier than eloquence, the Spirit greater than genius, faith more than education.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*When I came to you, brothers and sisters I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.  
(1 Corinthians 2:1-3)*

A shepherd must focus on what the sheep need to feed on that will nourish their souls. In order to do that, the shepherd, him or herself, must focus on nourishing their own life in order to share that which is essential.

Distractions in this world continue to escalate. We are so easily seduced into spending time doing useless things and thereby forgetting to “seek first the kingdom of God”.

Scripture tells us that our minds need to be renewed. Paul says in Romans 12, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

What we put into our hearts and minds will be externalized toward those we engage and encounter in life. Others can feel what's inside our hearts.

So the question stands: What is essential? The call into ministry as a vocation means that the Gospel message of Jesus Christ (and the Bible as our ultimate authority for preaching and teaching) is the non-negotiable foundation of our ministry to others.

Pastors are blessed to be able to be in God's word daily, to spend time in prayer and to engage people in faith often. The care and feeding of our own souls is a crucial component of healthy ministry and needs our full attention.

I cut off my TV because of its negative influence. I shut down my computer at 6 pm. I choose not to have notifications from social media come into my personal cell phone. The temptation to use these distractions during my down time is significant. So I cut them off.

What has dominion over your life? Where do *you* go to be fed outside your call as a shepherd? What do you do with the extra minutes and how do you feed yourself when you are depleted or empty? What's your go to? How and who do you spend your extra minutes with to feed your soul?

What do you eat?

**Day #21 – Discernment Principle:**  
**Take inventory of what you are putting into your mind**

**A. Scripture Reading – Hebrews 12:1-2**

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Reflection:**

1. Today, take some time to reflect upon what you are putting into your mind that impacts your heart. Make a list of everything you read, watch and listen to today.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Taking a look at this list. Would you make any changes to your choices that that would be helpful?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 22: Lone Rangers Are Not a Good Fit for Pastoral Ministry

*“Reason is the enemy of faith.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”  
(Luke 10:1-3)*

Unfortunately, many pastors tend to do ministry alone. This is a decision that can lead to burn-out and disaster.

The vocation we are called to must not be seen merely as a job, but as a calling and a path on which God leads us as leaders. Following must begin with Jesus in the lead but extend to walking alongside others in the faith.

If you have a tendency to do things on your own, without having a support system outside your church community, then you need to think carefully about the negative consequences for yourself and your sheep.

When I first began as a pastor, I was on fire for the Lord and felt it unnecessary to seek wisdom or feedback on my ministry from others – it was just God and I, taking on the world. There were so many ideas and projects that I wanted to do. Fortunately, God showed me that I needed a mentor and provided one for me and we began to meet once a week. Pastor Jim, down the road, was a mature Christian. He became my coach and my friend. I realized how much I needed his input in my ministry. He saved me so many times from my own ego. Somehow, I had thought that all I needed was God. I presumed that as long as I was doing His will, I could push on forward.

Proverbs tells us there is wisdom in the counsel of many (Prov. 15:22).

Many pastors do not want to seek counsel because they are hampered by their own insecurities or failures. Let’s be honest, many times things don’t go as planned – even in the church – and we become disappointed in ourselves and in others. Attend a clergy gathering or convention and you will hear a lot of success stories, but not very many accounts of failure.

If you have a colleague with whom you can be honest, sharing both your mountains and your valleys, then you don’t have to be a lone ranger or feel alone in your ministry.

A shepherd can feel very isolated in ministry. Choosing not to go it alone is an important decision for health ministry and longevity in kingdom work.

**Day #22 – Discernment Principle:  
Choose a mentor and talk with them weekly**

**A. Scripture Reading – Hebrews 10:24-25**

*And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

---

---

---

**B. Reflection:**

1. Think back to times in your life when you approached a mentor for their advice and wisdom.

---

---

---

---

2. Think back to a time when you did not seek wisdom and things did not turn out so well.

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. In what situation in Shepherd ministry would you seek a mentor for wisdom?

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

Note: Find a pastor outside of the one who is your current Shepherd.  
Invite him or her to be part of your future as a spiritual director.



## Day 23: Why Trust Is Essential in Ministry

*“Christian living does not mean to be good but to become good; not to be well, but to get well; not being but becoming; nor rest but training. We are not yet, but we shall be. It has not yet happened, but it is the way. Not everything shines and sparkles as yet, but everything is getting better.”*

– Martin Luther

*Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? (Matthew 26:40)”*

Every strong relationship is based upon on trust.

Shepherds never left sheep by themselves. They stayed with them and protected them from danger. Sheep could count on the shepherd being there for them at the most crucial times.

Most ministry is crisis ministry. Although we would like to visit our sheep casually, paying pastoral visits, the truth is time impedes this luxury. Most pastoral visits are crisis intervention: hospital beds, marriage troubles, funerals, or hospices. Showing up at the right time and in the right place in an intentional way helps fills the trust bank with sheep.

The three disciples fell asleep when Jesus needed them most and He asked them, “Could you not keep awake with me one hour?” (Matt. 26:40)

Picking your moments in ministry is really crucial. So many times I have heard parishioners complain about their pastor because he or she was not available during the most critical times in their life. Of course, sometimes these same people expected their pastor just to know what they were going through without phoning their shepherd and letting him or her know. Pastors aren’t mind readers, but it helps to have your ear to the ground and know your sheep too.

Nevertheless, the result of not showing up at the important times in people’s lives prevents trust from developing within the flock.

When a shepherd first enters into ministry, the main objective should be to develop trust. The best way to let people know that you will support them is to be there when they are going through tough times.

People used to wonder why I would not just casually visit people in my congregation. It wasn’t because I did not like visiting. It was because I did not have time – my wife and family had to come first – and I knew that I would eventually meet each member of the flock if I stayed long enough in that church, because everyone eventually goes through difficult times and needs a shepherd. That’s when I would jump in.

Trust was built as a result.

**Day #23 – Discernment Principle:  
Focus on building trust daily**

**A. Scripture Reading – 1 Samuel 20:41-42**

*After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most. Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘The Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.’” Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. When you reflect upon people in your life, what qualities do they have that have helped you to trust them?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Consider these attributes of trust as you reflect upon these trust relationships in your life.

- Keep your word
- Tell the truth
- Be transparent
- Give without any strings attached
- Hold fast to confidentiality
- Walk the talk

---

---

---

---

---

3. When you think about those people whom you trust, do they have some of the above attributes?

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---



## Day 24: Where You Stand Has Everything To Do with the Heart

*“Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. (Matthew 7:24-27)*

We often believe that taking a stand on important theological and biblical principles has little to do with the heart. This couldn't be further from the truth.

We need to be grounded in God's Word and be able to filter our lives carefully through our theological lens. Foundations are significant in how we lead, preach, teach and live our Christian life in relationship to the world.

Deep roots are important and thick foundations are necessary.

God's Word needs to be the foundation on which we build our lives. The message of the Cross is the one biblical truth that does not shift – ever. It can never take a back seat to other intriguing theological principles, no matter how trendy they may appear.

Scripture tells us we should become more like Jesus. Why? Because Jesus loves each individual that has ever walked the face of the earth so deeply that He gave his life on the cross so that, all across history, people's hearts would be turned to Him and know His forgiveness.

Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and life, no one comes to the father but through me.

Luther said that we should become “a little Christ” to a lost and hurting world. I am okay with being a miniature Jesus as long as I get to introduce to others the Lord Jesus who died on the Cross for my sin, defeated the devil, blasted through death into life, and has given me a place in His Kingdom.

If I don't really believe the primordial truth behind the Cross, then ministry is useless and is only a cause for self-aggrandisement.

No! I want to introduce Emmanuel – God with Us – the One who became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth!







## Day 25: On Being Empathetic – Taking Time to Understand People

*“Remove Christ from the Scriptures and there is nothing left.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. (John 8:6-9)*

Understanding others – empathy – is one of the most significant tools that we can offer a hurting world. A shepherd must be careful not to judge others so quickly. There is always a *story behind the story* that needs to be understood and discerned.

However, there is a *huge* difference between “understanding” and “accepting”. Acceptance smarts of “tolerance”. Empathy doesn’t mean that we support a lifestyle choice, a decision, or a worldview that is detrimental to the individual (whether they see it or not), but we must understand where people might be coming from and enter into unique conversations that could lead to the Good News of Jesus Christ and transformation.

A good shepherd needs to take time to understand.

The courage to share both law and gospel is a balancing act that requires discernment from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we dole out “the law” too soon, at other times not soon enough. Truth and love – the balance between the two is always a work in progress.

We know that *sin* has become a hated word in the secular world. Mention the word *sin* to anyone outside the Christian faith and you’ll be pounced on as intolerant.

Jesus took time to listen and then he presented alternatives that would change someone’s life.

He knew that without people recognizing their need for him, they would not respond to his invitation and therefore not receive the healing they needed. The ones that received healing and transformation were the ones who were hungry for it and sought Jesus out to get it. That’s because Jesus understood them and loved them first.

This is where understanding a person’s story first and then revealing God’s Law at an appropriate time to a willing heart makes the transforming Gospel message so much more effective and accepted.

**Day #25 – Discernment Principle:  
Don't share your story unless asked**

**A. Scripture Reading: John 8:16-18**

*Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Reflection:**

Think of times in your life when you need to experience the law first to bring you near to the message of the gospel?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 26: The Outward Signs of a Passionate Faith

*“Should anyone knock at my heart and say, ‘Who lives here?’ I should reply,  
‘Not Martin Luther, but the Lord Jesus Christ.’”  
– Martin Luther*

*Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:7-8)*

People are watching us. Christians are watched by those in the world to see how we live and what we say.

Children learn from their parents. But kids also learn from each other.

We recently visited our three grandchildren and were again reminded of how the younger ones pick up both good and bad behaviours from the older siblings.

Jesus said “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6)

We have to remember what Paul said to the church in Corinth: “I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready.” (1 Corinthians 3:2)

There is great responsibility in the feeding and care of the sheep.

There have been many people who have left the church, deeply questioning the validity of Christian faith because of actions taken by clergy. The Apostle Paul admonishes church leaders to consider the outcomes of their way of life. He sees the importance of living out faith in action not just giving lip service to it. We have to remember that in the early church, people did not have access to the gospel message outside it being spoken orally by a church leader. Paul wanted the leaders of the early church to be examples for their sheep so believers might imitate the faith of those in leadership.

In a world that is becoming more scripturally illiterate every day, the touchstone for many people will be seeing faith in action starting with clergy. How do Christians live out their experience of God and who is the leader who is teaching them?

Shepherds are leaders. But we are also sinners and fall short of the glory of God. We will never be able to please God or people all of the time.

But we should strive to become more like Jesus every day. People will begin to see Jesus in us and become curious about our worldview.

Passionate people draw followers. We don't need a fancy marketing program; we just more of Jesus to shine through us combined with opportunities to introduce others to the person of Jesus Christ

**Day #26 – Discernment Principle:  
Show Christ to others today**

**A. Scripture: Matthew 5:13-16**

*You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Action:**

Today you will interview your pastor. Ask him or her to tell you the most challenging aspects of Shepherd ministry. Then ask what the biggest blessings are of caring for the sheep. At the end of the interview, ask him or her if you could pray for him or her.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 27: Why Your Sheep Want to See You Grow

*“There is no justification without sanctification, no forgiveness without renewal of life, no real faith from which the fruits of new obedience do not grow.”*

– Martin Luther

*Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-16)*

Our relationship with Jesus should not be static. The Holy Scriptures are not static. The Holy Spirit is never stationary.

Growing in our faith and relationship with Jesus cannot be an option for a Shepherd.

If you are not watering your garden, it won't grow. If you are not “watering” your relationship with God, it will remain the same, or worse, devolve from apathy.

We know that God lives in us, so He is not going anywhere. But we can choose to go other places. We minimize our relationship with God by minimizing how much time we give to it.

Jesus wants us to ask, seek and knock. He wants us to come in and out and find pasture with him. He wants to be the Living Bread for us, sent down from heaven. His desire is to be the Living Water that springs up in our soul.

God's grace is unending. Bottom line – God wants to give more of Himself to you. He wants to pour into your life, an unending supply of his love, forgiveness and blessings.

Occasionally on a Sunday morning, following a service in which I'd preached, people would say as they filed out, “You were really on fire today, Pastor!” After giving my ego a good talking to, I would reflect upon my week and be reminded that I went to the Source for my preaching, not my own wisdom. I just needed to ask the simple question, “Did I press in to know the Lord this week?” Then I would again be reminded of the Source of my preaching and God's invitation to me to do His work despite my own limitations.

If you want your sheep to grow in their faith, you need to look at how you draw closer to Christ. Is repurposing an old sermon from another congregation really trusting in the Holy Spirit to make all things new for the flock you are now serving?

Much of our growth is really centered on one word: *TRUST*. Do I really trust Jesus with my life and everything in it?

Growth is about extension. Do people see that I am growing in my relationship with Jesus by the fruit in my life? Are the braches growing on the tree?

**Day #27 – Discernment Principle:  
Ask God where you need to grow**

**A. Scripture Reading – Colossians 1:9-10**

*For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.*

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. What areas of your life do you need cut off now? Let a brother or sister in Christ know about this and ask him or her to pray for you.

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Decide what areas of your life need growth and maturity. Let a brother or sister in Christ know about this and ask him or her to pray for you and hold you accountable each week.

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Put one action step into place today and surround it in prayer. Decide upon a strategy to implement it. Examine this step daily until it becomes a disciplined habit that helps you grow closer to Christ.

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 28: Taking Care of Body Business

*“It is the part of a Christian to take care of his own body for the very purpose that by its soundness and well being he may be enabled to labour... for the aid of those who are in want, that thus the stronger member may serve the weaker member, and we may be children of God, and busy for one another, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.”*

– Martin Luther

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.  
(1 Corinthians 6:19-20)*

Time is a gift and deserves honour. Our minutes count for God. He has given us life and until our last breath, we need to cherish every moment.

We know God will call us home to be with Him in His time, but we also have free choice in terms of caring for our physical health.

I tore cartilage in my knee twice while playing hockey. The first time, I was instructed by my doctor to rest my knee as much as possible and let time heal the injury. The second time, when I had an operation a few years later, the instructions were quite different. As soon as possible I was to get out of bed and start using my leg, weight bearing as much as possible. It was harder work and more painful than the first prescription to rest, but my knee healed much more quickly. The first time around, other parts of my body became weak because I was not using them and they atrophied. The second time around, because I was working on the injury, none of my muscles were inactive. I still remember running down the road limping knowing that the pain experienced was necessary for the strengthening of the leg for the future use.

If we are to love God with heart, mind, *body* and soul, should we not be considering how we take care of our bodies for the advancement of the Kingdom?

Jesus was not on a regular exercise program, but he did spend a lot of time walking from town to town preaching and teaching. He was on the move all the time.

As hard as it may sound, what we put into our bodies nutritionally and how we care for our bodies through proper exercise and how much rest we get is a big key to effective ministry. Neglecting any of those things means that we will be less effective as Shepherds.

We need energy to serve effectively. We need to feed our soul but we also need to seriously consider our physical health and its contribution to our ministry and its effectiveness.

Our bodies are a gift from God and taking care of them is saying something very important to those whom we lead. How often have you heard people say, “If you have your health, you everything”? While this may be a more secular take on life, there is some wisdom to it.

I think God is pleased when we take time to care for our bodies. There is nothing heroic about not taking time to care for your body. God created you in His image and He is pleased with how He made you.



**Day #28 – Discernment Principle:**  
**Exercise each day in order to love both God and care for yourself**

**A. Scripture Reading – Romans 12:1**

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. Write down your daily and weekly exercise patterns and your reflections at the end of the week after following through with them. Were you pleased with the results? What would you do differently?

---

---

---

---

---

2. What obstacles do you face that would prevent you from a daily exercise routine as a regular discipline?

---

---

---

---

3. How might this become different for you if you began to see exercise as a spiritual discipline necessary to do the good work you are called to do as a shepherd?

---

---

---

---

4. What steps will you make to allow taking care of your body to become a daily ritual you cannot do without?

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

*Note: Why not use your time during exercise to pray, think deeply with God, worship to music or listen to an inspiration recording. Be aware, if you are outside in the community getting exercise, that God might put someone into your path for a conversation!*



## Day 29: Discerning Without Running Ahead

*“Pray like it all depends on God, then when you are done, go work like it all depends on you.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. (Acts 16:6-7)*

Our movements and transitions in life deserve discernment. Although this entire document is all about discernment, we need to consider its role in our everyday life and how asking God for direction has been part of our decision-making in the past.

Shepherds will need to move the sheep in new and different directions – God always talks about doing something new: “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland,” (Isaiah 43:19). How will you decide which way to go and if it is the correct path?

Have you included God in your decision-making in the past, regardless how big the decision? Have you trusted in the Holy Spirit to move you forward, stop you cold or steer you in a different direction?

They had a plan to go visit Bithynia, but the Spirit did not allow them to enter into the town. Because of their excitement, they wanted to run ahead of God. He prevented them from making a bad decision.

We have all made bad decisions in the past. Some have caused deep problems with dire consequences. A pastor’s decision impacts many people.

Believing that God wants to be part of each decision we make, whether we see it as big or small is important. Giving Him the permission to put into place the steps necessary to discern the best road is a good prayer. If we ask Him to open and close doors as we go, we trust Him to do what is best for others as well as ourselves.

Discernment is found in movement. You can’t steer a parked car. Nor do we careen out of control at breakneck speed and not observe the speed limit. We put our lives in “drive”, but don’t all of a sudden, tell God to take the back seat because we think, “We got this now!” No, we ask Jesus to be closer than ever, to continue to whisper into our ear, to take our hand and lead us, to stop us when necessary, and if need be, to give us a different path to walk down.

The Israelites had to follow a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to get to the Promised Land. They never knew when that cloud or pillar would start to move and they’d have to pack up and move with it.

Early Christians did the same, but it was the Holy Spirit who did the leading.

There is no play-by-play rulebook or complete instruction manual to decision-making.

But we do have the Holy Spirit. Don’t run. Don’t lag. Just move and trust. God always shows up.

**Day #29 – Discernment Principle:  
Prepare for both open doors and closed doors**

**A. Scripture Reading – Ephesians 2:10**

*For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. As you look back at your life, what movements or decisions did God close the door on or tell you to stop?

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Have you ever experienced God opening a door in such a way that you knew with absolute assurance you were moving in the right direction?

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What things has God shown you in this discernment process so far that encourage you to move forward into Shepherd ministry?

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

NB: God does close and open doors. His timing is perfect. Perhaps you wonder if you should continue this process. Keep on moving. God wants you to give Him a chance to speak. You committed to this process. Finish well. Keep your heart open. Look ahead, you will need to contact your pastor for the next exercise tomorrow.



## Day 30: Transitional Losses – Get Ready for Them!

*“The less I pray, the harder it gets; the more I pray, the better it goes.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)*

A shepherd must always prepare for the unknown. They must get ready for the transitions that accompany life and be prepared to comfort and give hope to the sheep.

As Jesus prepared to go to the cross, he spent much of his time specifically talking with his disciples about what was about to come. He also let them know what they could count on when the most difficult things happened to them.

God promises to make all things new, but that which we miss in life because of a valley experience or loss is important in our faith formation and trust in God. Shepherds need to be in the valley with the people of God.

Jesus invited his special friends during the deepest and most sorrowful time in his life: the night he was taken away by the Roman soldiers to face torture and his death on a cross.

Paul says we grieve but with hope. Jesus wept when he experienced the sadness of Mary and Martha following the death of their brother Lazarus. But that story ended in life and resurrection – which is what Jesus does best.

When you return to a congregation in which you served, you will find that people remember you for stepping into the tough places in their lives. Yes, they will remember that you baptized their babies or married their children, but they will speak most emphatically of the times you visited them in hospital, walked with them through a cancer journey, sat with them at the bedside of a dying loved one or showed up when they were grieving a loss.

That’s when you took care of them.

When Jesus was dying, he wanted to make sure one special person was taken care of when he was gone from this earth: His mom.

From the cross, Jesus looked down and he said: “Woman, behold your son.” (John 19:26)

We read later that John took her home to live with him.

**Day #30 –Discernment Principle:  
Plan forward for loss experiences**

**A. Scripture Reading – 2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Reflection and Application:**

1. A huge part of shepherd ministry is to those who are sick, dying or hurting due to a loss experience. Ask your pastor to bring you along for a visitation. Prior to this, identify important transitional points in people's life cycle and ask your pastor his or her opinion about their involvement in this type of loss ministry.

2. Name typical transitional loss experiences in a parishioner's life. Complete the list below that has been started for you...

- Death of a family member
- Financial loss

---

---

---

---

---

3. What is one transition that you can expect to happen in your own life in the near future? How might you prepare for this transition as you plan ahead? What resources as a believer can you bring to the experience?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 31: The Gift of Harmony in Diversity

*“Peace if possible, truth at all costs.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21)*

Each community of faith has its unique idiosyncrasies. We are a motley crew – a different lot indeed. Being aware and sensitive to differences in the body is a big part of a Shepherd’s ongoing role in the life of the church. Disharmony in the body can happen so quickly and it does – too often!

I was part of a tent-making ministry in a small, abandoned Lutheran church. People of Lutheran heritage wanted to worship and meet. There were only a handful of people. We decided to invite other Christians from various denominational backgrounds to be part of this new Body of Christ. Yes, some raised their hands in worship and others looked down at the floor, but my message was simple: “We are Christians that need to accept each other with our peculiarities and uniqueness. As long we keep Jesus as the focus, we will be fine.” Eight years of doing ‘mighty fine’ were a blessing and an example of a diverse group of people working together with one common goal.

The Holy Spirit is always working things out in other people, not just us. It’s not about us, even though we often think that our preferences are more important than other peoples’. We all have our idea of how a church should function – what its most important ministries should look like – and we tend to push our own agenda. A shepherd is given on loan by God to pastor the Body of Christ to which he or she is privileged to serve. When you leave someday, the people of God will remain and continue to sort things out among themselves without you.

Jesus’ prayer for unity must be an ongoing prayer for us as shepherds. We must be sensitive to the people of God. You cannot always see what is happening in a person’s life, but God does.

One day, James’ and John’s mother asked Jesus to give her sons a special place of honour in His Kingdom: seated right next to Jesus. He knew what she was going to ask before the words ever left her mouth. Her request caused disunity, as we read later, when the other ten disciples heard about the comment and became angry at the thought of being trumped by these two disciples.

It caused disunity – for a moment at least, until Jesus quickly put a stop to their grumbling by reminding the disciples they needed to think differently: the way to up is down; greatness means being a servant; and to be first you must be a slave of all. Then He concluded with the message of the Gospel in Mark 10:45: “the Son of Man came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.” The focus needed to be on the message of the cross and not on what was in it for them. They needed to become servants by observing the example of Jesus. He gave them perspective. He raised the bar. He brought them back to the main thing.

The Shepherd’s role in defending unity is always to bring people back to the main thing and start every troubled conversation or difficult situation with the cross. The theology of the cross is central. Bringing Jesus into the equation is always the answer to real peace.





## Day 32: Perseverance in the Faith When Others Quit

*“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace,  
so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times.”  
– Martin Luther*

*But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:11-12)*

It’s easy to quit when our ministry is in trouble. I did – at least for a short time. I recognized later on, through the help of the Holy Spirit and those of wisdom, I should have hung on and ploughed through. For a while, the devil got just what he wanted: me out of the pulpit and away from shepherding God’s flock.

The pastor’s role is under constant attack because the people whom pastors serve are sinners. We live in a broken world. There are spiritual battles taking place daily. No one is immune from sin or spiritual attack.

When stressors come into our daily life, we usually try to eliminate them as quickly as possible. There will be times in ministry when a situation will cause great stress. Knowing how to handle it before it damages our heart is an important skill.

Learning to reframe is a good skill to develop when we feel as though things are crumbling around us. When you begin to realize that you have been invited into a bigger story than your own – God’s Story – you begin to see other possibilities in the tough times. There is something bigger than you happening.

If you have been faithful to trust this “bigger story”, then you can also count on God who will give you what you need to be a good and faithful servant till the end of your life.

How do you keep going when you feel like quitting?

The answer is quite basic. Go back to Jesus.

Allow Him to love on you. Be still and experience the breadth and depth of His love for you.

Reflect on His grace for you and know deeply that it is sufficient for you.

Allow the One who created you to meet you again and fill you full with His spirit.

When everything feels as though it is breaking up around you, you have the audience of One.

Remember your community and allow people to pray for you and with you.



**Day #32 – Discernment Principle:  
Find a group of people to surround you in prayer**

**A. Scripture Reading – Philippians 1:23-26**

*I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Assignment:**

Approach 3 people in your life whom you trust and respect to be praying for you each day. Let them know that you will check in with them with specific prayer concerns. You need prayer warriors now.

Contact your three prayer warriors today:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Here are your immediate prayer concerns. Share them with your prayer team*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---



## Day 33: Being Held Accountable to a Higher Authority

*“For where God built a church, there the Devil would also build a chapel.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Galatians 2:11-14)*

Paul Rebukes Peter (Cephas) at Antioch. He wanted to hold him accountable for some of his actions and decisions. To whom are we accountable? We have all unfortunately heard horror stories of church leaders who have fallen and who have said they are “only accountable to God”. This is terrible theology and contrary to scripture that says repeatedly that we need to submit to earthly authority.

This entire discernment process includes not only you listening to God, but also involves you asking people to pray for you. Assuming that you have chosen mature, wise and godly Christians to pray for you and give you feedback, you need to be open to their words and thoughts as you discern. You also need to be held accountable for the words you speak and your actions that represent Christ and your vocation. Your “team” needs to hold the mirror up to you in order to help you see yourself clearly.

Shepherds must continue to be accountable to God and to the body in which they are called to serve. Accountability is simply asking the question on earth that God would ask in heaven.

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to the disciples, He prefaced it with “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” Notice that he gives the commission to a *group* of people, not just to one person. The entire group of disciples was chosen. They were given the collective purpose of making disciples in Jesus’ authority.

Yes, Jesus called Peter as a very important leader within the group of twelve disciples. But even Peter, as shown in the above scripture, needed to be accountable when Paul challenged his theology with regards to circumcision.

We see another example of accountability when Jesus sends out his disciples two by two. They were not sent out on their mission alone, but with another person. The benefits of this are two-fold: 1) they would not have to make decisions alone or act alone, and 2) they would be moral supports for each other.

Without accountability, we are positioning ourselves for a fall.

One of the three temptations Jesus was subjected to by Satan was the offering to Him of ultimate power. Jesus refused to play the game. His Father in Heaven was the final authority in his life, not the Deceiver. As shepherds, we might be tempted to play the game with parishioners who want something from us. Wise council and accountability to mature leaders help keep us from that pitfall. Yes, it’s God first, but including others in your ministry and being accountable to those in authority in both the local and the wider church you serve must be honoured.

**Day #33 – Discernment Principle:  
Put into place accountability measures**

**A. Scripture Reading – Acts 15:39-40**

*The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord.*

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. In what areas of your life do you feel you need an accountability partner?

---

---

---

---

2. Are there areas of a pastor's ministry that you believe would specifically require accountability and protection for the Church, the Bride of Christ?

---

---

---

---

3. If you do not have an accountability partner, then choose one now and ask that person to check in with you in the following areas. This person could also be the mentor you have chosen previously.

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 34: Word and Sacrament to His People

*“We need to hear the Gospel every day, because we forget it every day.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. (1 Corinthians 2:1-4)*

What do I really bring?

What we are asked to bring to the people of God is not complicated. We just tend to make it more complicated than what it really is.

We need to feed the sheep and bring people to Christ.

Often the “main thing” becomes embellished with things getting in the way of us doing what we are called to do as pastors in our local congregation.

The focus should always be in bringing the word and sacrament to the people for the purpose of saving faith through Jesus Christ. That’s our biggest priority.

Saving faith as experienced in our own life overflows into our calling.

The office of the keys, which includes sacramental ministry and offering forgiveness (absolution), must be taken seriously. It is an honour to proclaim the message each Sunday as people gather for worship – a privilege we need to come to in complete humility and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Certainly we need to visit the sick and imprisoned, teach parishioners, confirm young Christians, baptize babies or new believers, marry couples and bury the dead. But each of these pastoral responsibilities only serves to encapsulate the Gospel in miniature. They are all signs given by God that reflect His very being. What we really need most is the breaking through of light into darkness, setting us free from the dungeons of our lives and giving us hope to be transformed through Christ death and resurrection.

Hallelujah! The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!

By grace you have been saved through faith. You have done nothing to gain this gift. It is all grace, first and foremost.

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,” says Jesus. Let everything flow from the cross.

Everything!

**Day #34 – Discernment Principle:  
Remember the priority of the Cross in your message**

**A. Scripture Reading – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

*For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Action:**

Faith comes from hearing the word of God. Today's exercise is to share the gospel with one person in your life and to remind them of the wonderful good news of Jesus Christ and what he has done for all of us.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 35: Encounters by Night

*“Like the early Christians, we must move into a sometimes hostile world armed with the revolutionary gospel of Jesus Christ. With this powerful gospel we shall boldly challenge the status quo.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above. ‘The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can these things be?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? (John 3:7-10)*

Following my first wife’s death at 47 years of age, I came to see my days differently. I seemed to count each day as a gift and number them with thanksgiving.

I began to feel an urgency to share the message of the Gospel with people who were looking for something different in their lives but weren’t sure what it was they were looking for. I desperately wanted people to ask me about Jesus. I wanted to tell them what God had done in my life.

A top ranking Pharisee named Nicodemus, a great teacher, wanted to know more about Jesus. Even though those around him were skeptical and even plotting to get rid of this man, Nicodemus wanted to know more about what this young rabbi was teaching. So he came secretly at night to engage Jesus in conversation about His identity.

When couples get engaged, a ring is usually placed on the woman’s finger. It says, “I’m taken.” This commitment changes the relationship entirely. There are two individuals that expect something to be different because of the promises made – the ring is merely a symbol of those promises.

As Christians, we go through this incredibly wonderful process of baptism and confirmation – both important events in the church that bring the Holy Spirit into our lives in fresh and amazing ways. God promises first; we promise in response. We make a commitment to our Lord and ask him to be a larger part of our life. It is a Covenant relationship.

We begin to learn about this Jesus through our involvement in church and our family and we should be like Nicodemus, curious and want to know more and discover deeper things about the Lord.

When Nicodemus approached Jesus at night, he engaged him in a bigger conversation that changed his life forever. It was part of God’s plan.

You don’t know what God’s plan is for the people whom He puts in your path, but every single person that comes to you by night (or by day) is brought to you by God.

What will you tell them about God?

**Day #35 – Discernment Principle:  
Teach for the future, not just the present**

**A. Scripture: Matthew 13:1-9**

*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Reflection:**

1. Recall an experience where someone shared the message of the Gospel with you and it took root years later.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Think back to experience where you shared something about faith with a person and later on they came back and talked to you about how important this was for them at this moment in their life.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 36: The Need to Return to the “Why?”

*“Christ ought to be preached, with this goal in mind- that we might be moved to faith in him so that he is not just a distant historical figure but actually Christ for you an me.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)*

A Shepherd is compelled to teach the Truth from God’s Holy Word. We need to protect and honour the integrity of the Bible. We need these words to be taught accurately to the followers of Christ.

Modern day disciples need equipping as they step out into this complicated world. Followers of Jesus need clear teaching that helps them to continue the commission that was given by Jesus to his disciples and has been passed on to subsequent generations of believers.

Jesus’ last instruction to his disciples was to “go and make disciples”. Our first response may be a resounding, “NO!” to this call, fearing that it would bring with it numerous rejections. In fact, Jesus only confirms that when He said in His Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.” (Matthew 5:11) Regardless, shepherds must equip the people of God for the ministry they have been called to and to specifically challenge each follower to determine what it means for each one to be a “witness to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.”

If all we hear from those who teach us is an interesting idea or perspective, then we are really not allowing the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to change people from the inside out. A good idea does not motivate us to share the gospel. An excitement about a living and active relationship with the God of the universe does!

Jesus invited his disciples to join him for three years. He taught them, showed them and challenged them to apply his teachings to their own lives.

Teaching is closely connected with discipleship. We must teach for a reason. We should always return to the *why*: Why are we doing this?”

The bottom line, it’s not only about us.

We teach so others may carry on the Great Commission.

There are so many people, apart from us, who need the Lord in their life right now.



**Day #36 – Discernment Principle:  
Ask “why?” then ask “who?”**

**A. Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 20:9**

*If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.*

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. Whose faith experience are you building into right now?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Write down all those individuals who have been most influential in your own faith development.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Why do you want to be a Shepherd?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---



## Day 37: Grabbing Hold of Scripture

*“You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for what you do not say.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. (John 26:46-48)*

I played baseball when I was young. I played back-catcher because I loved to catch the ball and block it with my body when necessary. I was also a goaltender in hockey, so this position made sense to me.

There was nothing like the feel of the ball in a leather glove or a puck that was going for the top corner of the net being caught at the last moment. I wanted to hold onto it for a second and look at it before giving it away in order to savour the moment.

I wonder sometimes if we don’t grab hold of the Word of God and give it time to penetrate our hearts. We just throw it out without examining it or allowing it to sink deeply into our souls.

I visited a parishioner a few years ago. I had forgotten my Bible. So I asked for hers. She came back after a few minutes but as she handed it to me, she tripped on the carpet which sent the old family Bible tumbling to the ground. As it hit the floor, it emitted a dust cloud as if it had just been unearthed after a millennium. She was embarrassed. “Don’t worry,” I said. “At least you have a Bible in your home, many don’t.” She smiled.

Where do you place your Bible in your home? Is it the most important book in your life? Is it your guide? Is it your Living Water?

Throughout this discernment process, you have reflected upon numerous scriptures. As you have read the God’s Word, the Holy Spirit has taken these inspired scriptures and massaged areas of your life. Sometimes a deep massage was required in order to get out the knots. Other times it was a still, small voice. God knew what you needed and through his Holy Spirit brought the words of the pages and illuminated them in your heart.

These are wonderful Words of Life.

The three biggest influencers in our lives are the books we read, the movies we watch and the people with whom we hang out. That being said, the Bible needs to be our first choice for reading. What has the strongest voice in your life? Do you bring “every thought captive” to the Lord Jesus?

I used to watch action movies before I went to bed, until I began to notice a pattern – I would always have fitful nights of sleep when I did. I realized that whatever I fed my heart and mind with before I fell asleep had a huge impact on how restful my sleep was. I began to choose God’s life-changing words over Hollywood films.

In God’s economy, all things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. Feeding on God’s Word has been helpful in shaping my very being and my message – a message that is so desperately needed in our world and to the ends of the earth.

**Day #37 – Discernment Principle:  
Proclaim God’s Word at all cost**

**A. Scripture Reading – John 3:16**

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Questions:**

1. What is your favourite memory verse from the Bible?

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. What are some favourite quotes that you have used that are found outside of the Bible?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Who are some of your favourite Christian authors?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---



## Day 38: Serving Without Compromising

*“A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none;  
a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone.  
– Martin Luther*

*Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?” (Matthew 20:20)*

My first response to this scripture would be, “I don’t think so, but I will try.” The disciples did not know that many of them would die violent deaths. They had no inkling of course that their Lord would be ridiculed, flogged, mercilessly nailed to a cross, and hung outside a busy city gate to die publicly with onlookers hurling insults at him. That’s not an invitation that many would say “yes” to.

Nevertheless, history tells us that 11/12 of these disciples died in a similar fashion to their Master. So Jesus’ question to the Sons of Zebedee in Matthew 20 was rather prophetic in nature in hindsight.

I find it so fascinating that as far as we know, only one disciple (John) was near the cross when Jesus was suffering and dying. Perhaps others watched from a distance. We certainly know some ran and hid because they did not want to be associated with Jesus and suffer the same fate. No, it wasn’t until after Pentecost that these disciples experienced the strength of God’s Holy Spirit to stand up and proclaim the message of Christ, crucified and risen.

There is no human rationale for following Jesus. If we thought hard about this, we might come to the same conclusion as the rich young ruler – deciding that the cost of following Jesus is just too great. But then we would miss out on the benefits of knowing forgiveness and eternal life.

We don’t naturally run toward suffering and pain. This “cup of suffering” takes many forms for believers. For many people, in countries where Christians are persecuted severely for their faith, it literally means giving up your life for the sake of the Gospel. Even in North America, with its Christian foundation initially, following Jesus is becoming less favorable and even frowned upon as intolerant.

Being a member of clergy used to be a respected position. More and more, pastors are being ostracized in their communities, unless of course they embrace a politically correct stance and tolerant worldview that turns a blind eye to sin and brokenness. Our profession is viewed more and more suspiciously by the secular world. I have noticed this change particularly in institutions like hospitals, hospices or care centers for the aged, in which a general spirituality has replaced religious affiliation.

We will need to be careful not to get caught up in a tolerant-friendly society. We can quickly water down the message of Jesus and the importance of understanding sin as the separation from God. A caveat here though, it does not mean that we do not love and care for all individuals with whom we come into contact. But God’s message is a life-transforming one, not a relativistic coexistence of neutrality.

We follow Jesus because we love Him and have said “yes” to the message of Grace. We have decided to follow Jesus and die for him if necessary. We have recognized that as broken humans, we need Jesus.

As a pastor, you need to be on the front lines leading battle. Will you go first? Are you ready to drink this cup?





## Day 39: Search and Rescue

*“But know that to serve God is nothing else than to serve your neighbor and do good to him in love, be it a child, wife, servant, enemy, friend...If you do not find yourself among the needy and the poor, where the Gospel shows us Christ, then you may know that your faith is not right, and that you have not yet tasted of Christ's benevolence and work for you.”*

*– Martin Luther*

*Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.” (Matthew 10:41-42)*

If we are not reaching out with the message of the Gospel in order to find the lost and hurting of this world, then we are not being like Jesus.

Jesus went out of his way to find one lost sheep to bring it back to the fold. He taught his disciples that reaching out to our neighbours with love and compassion is a priority. He knew how much people needed something different than what they had, and He knew He had the answer.

He would win them over with empathy.

He reached out to outcast of his society: the widows, the children, the women, and the lepers. They were sitting outside of the city, not near it, for fear they would infect everyone else.

But Jesus touched them. Not just figuratively or emotionally. But actually touched them.

Who are the lepers of your community?

We can take care of our own. But who takes care of the vulnerable in this society?

The unborn, the aged, the disabled, the dying.

The single mom, the fatherless child, the grieving widow, the men addicted to porn.

Do you have any of those in your church? Yes...you do. They will always be with you. They give you and your church community an opportunity to minister compassionately in Jesus' name as His hands and feet.

**Day #39 – Discernment Principle:**  
**Learn to see others' needs from God's perspective**

**A. Scripture Reading – James 1:27**

*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Action:**

1. Take a good look at who in your community needs to experience the extension of Christ through you.

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Begin to pray about this group of people and ask God to place on your heart a ministry of compassion to the “lepers” of your community.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Talk to members of the church you are part of and get their feedback.

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 40: The Divine Call

“I have done nothing; the Word has done and accomplished everything...I let the Word do its work!”

– Martin Luther

*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)*

If a call to ministry sounds a little frightening, it should!

This is not to be taken lightly. The combination of the internal call and the external verification is imperative for those entering into pastoral ministry. This is God’s business. This is serious stuff. Few are chosen for this role as Shepherd.

Pastoring is not about limelight. Being a shepherd compels us to look even more intently at God in order to understand the responsibility that He has placed in our hearts.

Think about it as a father entrusting you with his children. Whom would you want to take care of your children if you were no longer around? Our Heavenly Father asks us to care for his children with that much care.

My daughter and son-in-law looked at the question of guardianship of their children as they discussed their will. What if they both were to die? Whom would they ask to care for their children? What attributes were they looking for in surrogate parents? Think about the importance of this decision for God. We cannot get in the way of God’s plan for us or His children. Asking God to shine His light at each juncture of life is important – especially at this point. Is it God who has placed you on the path to shepherd ministry? If it is, ask Him to show you your next step.

If you feel unprepared for ministry but are willing to enter in, then God, through his Holy Spirit, has done a good work in you. He has softened your heart and the Holy Spirit will show you what He wants to do next in your life.

You have needed prayer during this time – you will need it even more moving forward. If the peace that I spoke about at the beginning of this 40-day discernment has entered your heart, then you know that you are truly called to shepherd ministry.

If you think that you are beyond temptation, know that this is just the beginning. If you think that you are immune to discouragement, then get ready for it to arrive at your doorstep.

You will need to wrestle with God and ask for His blessing on your ministry. He owns this ministry. He is allowing you to borrow some of his children, entrusting you with their very souls. Why? Because he has called you.

And if He hasn’t called you specifically to ministry, then He has something else waiting for you. Either way – step into what is next with God. You can’t lose.



**Day #40 – Discernment Principle:  
Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling**

**A. Scripture Reading – Jeremiah 29:11**

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**B. Reflection and Decision:**

Take some time to think and reflect upon this discernment process. If you need more time, then be patient. Review the days. Keep praying. If you feel at peace about continuing, then Following the 40 days of discernment, the candidate will meet with the congregation and CALC’s Pastoral Personnel Director to speak openly about the possibility of the next step. A candidate feeling called to continue will proceed with the application process. Contact the Pastoral Review Panel and ask about the next steps.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Let your pastor and congregation know of your decision regarding ministry. Ask your pastor if you can share with your brothers and sisters in Christ what God has spoken to you in the past 40 days.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**C. My Prayer:**

---

---

---

---