

ARE YOU A SHADOW? 01-22-12

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I want to extend greetings to you all in the precious name of our Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. I was blessed this morning with the verses the boys picked out. I noticed that I've probably seen more change in them since we started doing that than any time before. A real application. I want to encourage them that I noticed them actually applying the scriptures in their lives and it is a blessing to me. I want to encourage you to continue allowing the word of God to mold your life; that you can continue to be like him.

John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me. Jesus talked a lot about "Follow me." He talked a lot about shepherding. A lot of his parables were about simple things - farming, being a shepherd – things people understood and knew. I want to talk this morning about those things. "My sheep know my voice" you've often heard and we've talked about how it's a real blessing how it's so practical that I can step out into a pen of cows that I'm overseeing and they know my voice. They know when I am calling them; they recognize it and will come running at times. And then there are times they get kind of fat and lazy and they will hear me but are not too interested in following. But if they are a little bit hungry, they will run as soon as they hear the slightest sound from me. I want to encourage us this morning to take from that and be like a hungry sheep. Know the shepherd's voice.

We have an example in Genesis: the servant of Abraham that he sent out to get his son a wife. Whenever he recounts the story to Rebeca's family (how he went into a far country and took 10 camels with him and found Rebeca), he says, "I, being in the way, ..." That has always blessed me. "I, being in the way." The man was a servant; a follower of his master Abraham. We can take several examples of this of being a leader and a follower and how they both go together so well. This servant, being in the way of his master Abraham – are we in the way of our Master? Can our Master just send us on a mission and depend on us? Can he leave us at our station and depend on us to be in the way? Are we determined enough to be like him that he can go off to a far country and prepare a city for us and when he returns, find us in the way, following? Can he start us in the right direction and on the right path and know that we will be determined to stay on that path and follow that path until we hear from him again?

I remember hearing this true story that happened during one of the wars with the Japanese. One of the squads or platoons of Japanese soldiers was sent out and told to guard this certain area. They had learned to survive in the wilderness and were to stay in this particular area till they heard otherwise. One by one they all got killed off until there was only one of them left. He decided he was going to maintain his post. No one came to tell him the war was over; no one told him that two weeks after he was sent to that post, the war ended and he could go home. They forgot about him. Something like 30 years later they found him, and do you know where they found him? Right where he was told to be. Do you think that man is faithful? A lot of people would call him stupid or foolish, but he sure was faithful.

Can the Lord depend on us to be that faithful? Can he depend upon us when we think, "The Lord has forgotten about me; I better go do something else! This is getting pretty boring sitting out here. This is not as fun as it used to be." Can the Lord depend on you to be faithful? Maybe he has put you out on that post; he has not forgot about you. He does not forget like men do. Can he depend on you? Once he

learns to depend on you, he will give you something else. But until he can depend on you, anything you do is going to be a mess. Until he can depend on you, he cannot use you.

We think of the life of Jesus; he is an example. We talked before about how we do not hear anything about him from the time he was 12 years old until the time he was thirty. He was just out in the jungle being faithful, waiting on further instructions. He was just there waiting. We read stories in the bible about how people do great things, we read autobiographies of the high points or exciting points of people's lives, but we do not see the years and years and years that people spent 'paying their dues' to get to where God could use them.

If we have to jump around and hop around and keep everything exciting all the time, God cannot depend on us. God uses men that are dependable and faithful and loyal so that, when he gives someone to you, they can depend on you to be there. You see, if the Lord cannot depend on you to follow him, then someone who would follow you cannot depend on you either ... but they don't know that. A lot of times people talk about being a leader in church or starting churches. They get a little group following them and then it turns out that it's a little harder than what they thought. So they want to run off and go start something else, but if they cannot take care of what God has given them, they cannot go starting something else.

You need to go somewhere and learn how to be dependable; you are of no help to anyone until you can be depended on. Until God can depend on you to be there and take care of that little thing that he has given you to take care of. Sometimes that it pretty hard to learn how to do. It will come with struggles and problems, but the Lord has given you that charge. Take care of it. If someone has given you someone to watch over, take care of them. They may eventually go away, but don't let it be your fault. Don't you go away from them and leave them neglected. Be faithful. What would your baby think if that after you have born them you leave them on a bench somewhere and say, "Well, I've done my part"? They are depending on you. Be faithful.

Can he depend on you?

We can take this application. People often feel like they are lead to do something – to go here or there or to do this or that. If God has given you responsibility where you are at, stay with it. He is not going to lead you off and cause you to trip someone else up.

A lot of people are really concerned about leadership. They do not want to make someone feel like they are following them. God had set you and me to be leaders – leaders in our home, followers of Jesus so that someone else can follow us. You see, when Jesus said, "I'll return again," he will, but that was 2,000 years ago. You don't think he's had shepherds on the earth since then? He still uses men to be leaders. He uses followers to be leaders, and if you want to be a good leader, you need to be a good follower. You need to be a shadow - I thought about how the idea of being a follower is like being a shadow - be a shadow. The servant knew what Abraham wanted and he was a shadow of Abraham so that he didn't have to have Abraham telling him every move to make. He knew what his shepherd/master wanted, and he was a shadow of his master. He was submitted to his master. That master could leave things in his hands and he didn't have to worry about it; it was taken care of.

Wives: You know what your husbands want. Carry it out to the point where he does not have to worry about it being taken care of because he knows you can do it. You be his shadow. That should be the goal of your life – be his shadow. Know his will and carry it out. You know what he wants from the children; carry it out. This is kind of a worldly example, but it fits. I've heard it quite often – a man and

a woman, when they first got married, were really close to each other all the time and she sat next to him all the time. At first, whenever they drove in the car, if she had the opportunity she would sit right beside him. As the years went by she got further and further away and ended up on the other side of the car. She started complaining, "You are just not close to me like you used to be. We are not near as close together as we used to be." He looked at her and said, "I'm still sitting where I was sitting; you are the one that has moved. You have slid way over there to the other door!" You know, a lot of times in your relationships, who has moved?

In your relationship with the Lord, who do you think it is that moves? Who is the follower? Does he belong to you or do you belong to him? Do you want a better relationship? Make your life patterned after the one you are following and you will become the shadow and be close together. If you want to be closer together with someone and build a better relationship, look where you are at. That is the whole idea of repentance - getting back to where I am the shadow. I am the servant. Getting back to being in his [the Lord's] way. If things begin to grow cold, get right back up there and become the shadow. Make it the goal of your life - to be as close as you can. Return! It is your opportunity. When he can depend on you to do his will, he can give you more and more freedom. Whenever you become a good shadow and a good follower, you can become a good leader because he can trust you to lead. When you become a good follower, those who are following after you can depend on you and they will follow too.

We do not become leaders just because we have a title. Titles do not mean anything, and I think that is why the Lord said you don't need one. The world gives titles so it can know who to follow, but a real leader inspires people to follow. Not everyone will follow. My sheep know my voice, and they know my voice even whenever someone else is speaking it. We've talked about our conscience. Whenever we are tempted to do what is wrong and we have this voice speaking to us in our minds, who's voice does it sound like? Whenever God speaks, does he speak with a 'godlike voice' with vibrations? And when the Devil speaks, does he speak with a very wicked voice? No. They all sound just like us. It's all our voice we hear when these voices come to our mind and conscience. But we know when we hear the Shepherd's voice that it's the Shepherd. So when someone else comes along and speaks the Shepherd's will, we know that even though it's another voice we know that the Shepherd is there. We recognize the Shepherd's imprint on his life.

My cows know my voice. It's not until one of the cows hear my voice (her ears perk up and she stands) and starts walking towards me that the other cows will look and see that she is walking towards me; then they will all start getting up and start walking towards me. You know what I am thankful for when I am trying to get my cows to follow me? It's that first one that will jump up and start following me - because until she does, they will all just stand there and look. They will all stand there and look, but as soon as that cow takes the first step towards me, then another one begins to move and another until pretty soon the whole herd is coming down the hill towards me. Except for those few stragglers, the dawdlers that are looking off the other way. And they are usually the ones that have the biggest problem getting through the gate and finding the hole without going off in the other direction and ending up on the wrong side of the fence, bawling and crying, wondering how they are ever going to get back to the rest of the herd. They haven't learned how to be followers.

There are a lot of people with titles that might tell you to follow them, but a leader does not need a title. He doesn't need that special name, "Reverend", or whatever. He is just a leader. He is just following. He has learned to be faithful, to be in the way and following. Learn to be dependable and then pretty soon there are people following and listening, and then you'll find yourself in a place where people depend on you. Can he depend on you? We've had a message or two about that - can he depend on

you? And then, can those who would follow depend on you?

Praise the Lord. We could go several different directions there. We all have a place to fill. Sometimes that place is pretty obscure for a while. Sometimes it might be in a place that isn't too comfortable. Sometimes it's in a situation that is not too good. And if someone leaves or the problem dries up, then you can see what you are supposed to do next. Be faithful.

Does anyone have comments/questions to share? It does not appear that that was very clear to me.

Wilbur – it was a blessing and it was right on; real clear. I thought about how God know what we each need. Moses needed forty years in the back side of a desert with no one looking on and he ended up being the meekest man – so maybe he had to work on some pride or something? You know how in Egypt there he killed those two men. So, our place sometimes may seem pretty obscure, but the Lord is trying to teach us something in it. Trust the Lord.

David V – I think of the words Jesus said: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The man that is poor in spirit (I cannot hear this part)

David K – one thought I had – if you cannot be dependable where you are, you better submit yourself to someone and learn how to be dependable under someone. You do not have business trying to start something new or trying to find someone else to teach or lead if you are not willing to be dependable where you are at. I get a lot of calls about people who do not feel like they ought to be a leader. They do not want to be a leader. Well, they better get somewhere and get under someone. They just need to be faithful.

Steve – As fathers and husbands, we need to be dependable and faithful. We want to go do this or go do that, but we have children to raise up in the kingdom. How can we do this if we are out preaching 7 days a week, never home, looking for a handout or something because we cannot get things done ourselves? It's just a shipwreck waiting to happen. And then the children are just going to fail. Jesus said you who are faithful in little will be faithful in much.

David K – the mark of a leader (one that I appreciate anyway) is being able to have those who are following you carry on without you. Whenever you can leave your house and be gone and your wife is where she is supposed to be, she can take care of things. The virtuous woman in Proverbs talks about how the husband can go out to the gate and know that his wife is carrying on like he needs her to. She does not have to bother him all day long asking, “What do I do now?” he can be there at the gate taking care of other business. He has trained her how to be a leader too.

Kevn – a verse in the Septuagint that is not in the Masoretic text talks about how her husband is not anxious about those left at home when he spends time away from home because “all that are hers are being clothed”.

David K – Amen. He does not have to worry about it. That is the mark of a good leader. It takes each one doing their part.

Bracken – something you were sharing with me the other day that came to mind. If Jesus were to call us to die the death of a martyr, I pray that we would all drop our lives and die. But if he were to call us to do ten or twenty years just sitting somewhere waiting for someone to preach to, we would probably say, “Oh man!” We must be dependable just sitting and waiting and not complain about it.

David K. - Amen.