12 OF DECEMBER 2017

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:11.

**" I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep"**
About 3 months ago , I called a woman I know in the faith, to ask how she was faring. She opened up-

" Bro Cole, am not well fed"

I responded, how do you mean?  (though I knew what she meant.)

She put it clearer, that the word of God has been scarced in the Church she attends; hence she left because she needed a
"good shepherd".

From the  foregoing, One can easily deduce that sheep (believers)are naturally defenceless and are totally dependent upon the Shepherd for feeding and total wellbeing.

Jer 3:15, God spoke-
**" I will give you Shepherds after my own heart who shall feed you with knowledge & understanding".**

God has placed huge responsibility on Shepherds (Pastors) over the Sheep (Believers) .

However, my Lord Jesus Christ In John-10: 12 -14,  made a clear distinction between

**" an Hireling" and a Shepherd.**An hireling according to Jesus Christ , does not care for the sheep, he leaves the sheep to be attacked  by wolves.

Consequently, it becomes imperative to distinguish between a shepherd and an hireling in spelling out the duties of a Shepherd over the Sheep.

1. A shepherd feeds the sheep. Psalm 23:1 **-"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want".** In other words, a shepherd cares more on the wellbeing of the sheep.
1 Peter 5:2-3.

In Mark 6:34:The bible says Jesus had compassion towards the people because they were like sheep without shepherd and He began to teach them.(spiritual food) Mathew 15: 32-39: Jesus fed 4000 people proper food as well.

Hireling are business oriented in nature; with their mind set focused on sheep that has plenty of milk, in order to make money off the sheep quickly. They have Judas Iscariot's traits.

Believers should be wary of shepherd who constantly use the:
" empty your pocket " gimmicks.  1 Thess. 5:20.

2. A shepherd protects the sheep. He does not allow them to be vunurable. In 1 Samuel 17:34-36 David narrated to king Saul how protective he has been over the flock of his father (Jesse).

The  Psalmist in Psalm 23:4 says: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.....
However, an hireling actually opens up the sheep to attacks John 10:12. He blames the sheep, after leaving them to be ambushed and wounded. Prov. 24:10.

3.A shepherd gathers the sheep together, while an hireling disperses the  sheep and drive them out of the flock, allowing them to stray.

It is common to see supposed Shepherd ( hireling )whose sheep are declining in number (shrinking congregation) and in order to give himself comforting words; simply labels the stray sheep :sinners, rebels or children of perdition.

In Mathew 18:11 -Jesus says

**"The son of man is come to save that which is lost".**
The 3 parables of the lost in Luke 15: are  crucial here.

A shepherd foster love and  harmony among the sheep; he employs an open relationship approach with everyone, while an hireling promotes discord by using some sheep against  others; creating "super sheep" and spies within the flock.

4. A shepherd provides water for the sheep. Gen 29:3.
An important duty in a shepherd's life is finding water for the sheep.
That brings to bear the significance of water baptism -which is to repentance. Mathew 3:11. A shepherd ensure  sheep under him are born again & are baptised by immersion. Acts 2:41.
Hireling on the other hand is not bothered by such; so far the sheep can produce milk, he is satisfied.

Servanthood is a trait of a true shepherd, while an hireling is a self centered person that preaches "self".rather than Christ .
Apostle Paul (a true Shepherd) in 2 Cor. 4:5  says **-  “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ the Lord;..........”**
Soul winning & Altar call are  alien to hireling. A shepherd places priority on evangelism, & in ensuring sheep under him remain within the flock. John 15:16.

5. A shepherd leads and the sheep follow suit. Shepherds are like sign post that gives direction. John10:27-

**“My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me".**Sheep put so much trust in the Shepherd.

I witnessed a heated argument between two people in the morning of the last General election.(2015).

 One said the former President will win , the other fellow said the present president. So I asked the first person what informed her decision. She simply put it:

**"because my Pastor said so"**

The last time I checked, she has left the Church, all effort to get her back or know the reason she left have proved abortive.

Most people get easily shattered and let down, when their shepherd fell short of thier expectations.

6.Shepherds are meant to be watchful and observant; quickly detecting gifts, calling, traits and character upon the sheep.

1Sam 3:1-18 . Is an account of how Eli the Priest, knew God has started speaking to Samuel.

A shepherd will in the course of discharging his duties discovers   some seemingly difficult sheep among his flock; such sheep are not goats after all, but "special breed of sheep" God uses in putting the shepherd in check.

A true Shepherd must be sensitive in the Spirit to identify them.

The account of Balaam and the Donkey in Numbers 22:21-39. is a clear testament that God can use anybody/ anything to rebuke a shepherd.

An adage says
*" a parent with a stubborn child will never leave him to be devoured by a lion".*

7.Shepherds are to give account of the sheep under them.
A shepherd that was placed over a flock of sheep and after few years increases them significantly will receive crown of glory. 1 Peter 5:4.
A shepherd, whose sheep have reduced and also failed to impact into the sheep will definitely give account to God. 1 Sam 3:13.
Eli was punished by God because he failed to rebuke his sons.

There cannot be a shepherd without a flock of sheep. However, there are many sheep wandering without a shepherd and those that are erroneously placed under an hireling in Shepherd's clothing. Mathew: 9:36.

The Lord will deliver anyone like that in Jesus mighty name.

Meanwhile, I met the same woman two Sundays ago, with all smiles she said :

"I am now enjoying Church  like never before".
She even invited me for their weekly Bible Study Service.

In a nutshell, this is a wake up call to all Shepherds out there. Rise up to the occasion of your calling.
2Tim 3:16 & 17.

Thus says the Lord God : **“woe to shepherds who feed themselves; but feed not my sheep”.** Ezekiel 34.

Shalom.

Signed,Bro Cole.