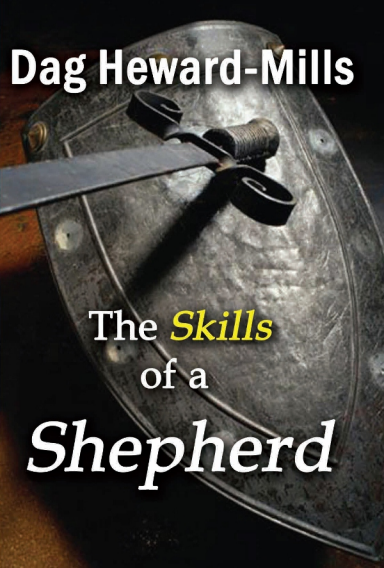




Dag Heward-Mills

The *Skills*
of a
Shepherd

The Skills of a Shepherd

by Dag Heward-Mills

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible

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Contents

[Chapter 1 How to Be a Good Shepherd](#)

[Chapter 2 - Developing into a Good Shepherd](#)

Chapter 1 How to Be a Good Shepherd

In every profession, you have good and bad elements. The Bible says that whatsoever a man finds to do, he should do it with all his might.

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might...

Ecclesiastes 9:10

If you are going to be a pastor, be a good one! Let us use the Word of God to show us exactly who a good pastor is. Some people think a good pastor is someone who is gentle and nice to people. Others think it is someone who is a very good preacher. What does the Word of God say?

Jesus said He was a good shepherd. He spoke extensively about what a good shepherd does in the tenth chapter of John.

Twelve Signs of a Good Shepherd

1. A good shepherd leads his sheep.

To him the porter openeth...and LEADETH THEM OUT.

John 10:3

What does it mean to lead sheep? It means to be practically available for them to see and learn from you in every area of life and ministry. Anything you want your sheep to do, you must first do yourself. They will follow you if they see you doing it first!

A pastor who wants his church members to pray must practically lead them into prayer. When the sheep see the shepherd taking the lead, they are convinced that the ground is safe and can follow confidently.

On the contrary, a bad shepherd would sit at home and send the members to go for a prayer meeting alone.

In our church, I have always tried to do first, what I wanted my people to do. When we were building a basement in our church, we could not afford to hire the necessary machinery. We had to dig ourselves. I needed the help of the entire church to drill and dig very deep into the ground. After that, we needed to carry tons of red sand out of the pit.

I could have easily delegated it to some others, but I decided to dig and carry the sand myself. I believe my decision motivated members of all social standings to get involved.

There were students, lawyers, doctors and businessmen carrying sand like labourers. They worked with all their might. Why was that? They had seen their shepherd taking the lead.

I want you to notice something that made David popular.

But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

1 Samuel 18:16

Why did the subjects of Israel love David? The answer is simple. They could see him practically going in and out with them and doing things with them.

We have a large attendance at our mid-week service. Many people are surprised that so many people attend church on a Tuesday evening. The fact is that I'm always there myself. I consider it an important meeting. The sheep see that, and follow my example.

Sometimes we have long periods of fasting with all-night prayer meetings everyday. You would be surprised to see how many people attend every night. I tell my members

that I am struggling and suffering in the fast just like them, and they love to hear it. The sheep are always happy to identify with the shepherd when the shepherd identifies with them.

Leadership is very spiritual. Even when people do not see you physically, they follow you spiritually. I have found that sheep have a mysterious way of becoming like their shepherd. The reason being, they are following him in the realm of the spirit.

They Caught the Pastor's Anointing

Many years ago, there was a scandal in a large church. The senior pastor of the church had an affair with one of his members. The secret relationship had been ongoing until the lady became pregnant and exposed it. The Christian community was surprised! However, more surprises were to follow.

After the senior pastor finally admitted to his sin, it prompted a series of confessions from other pastors and leaders of the same church. Unknown to one another, the pastors, leaders and sheep were all involved in similar sins.

One evening, the associate pastor announced to the congregation, "I have a confession to make. I am a womanizer. If anyone saw me coming from sister so-and-so's house in the morning, whatever you thought happened, that is what happened. I am sorry to say that I have had affairs with four different girls in the church."

After this confession, many other immoral sins were exposed as being very common in the church.

Brothers and sisters, a pastor is a spiritual leader over a flock. *What you do is what the people will do. They cannot rise above you unless you, as the leader, show the way through righteous living.* That is why it is important for all shepherds to maintain very high standards.

Go ahead of your sheep. Do not operate as an executive, just walking in and out like a "big shot". There is no place for "big shots" in the harvest field. There is no place for "unreal leaders" in the real world of the sheep.

2. A good shepherd knows his sheep by name.

...and he calleth his own sheep by NAME...

John 10:3

If you are a shepherd over a few people, you must know all their names. You must want to know their names and call them by name. Nobody is a number! Nobody wants to be called "Hey!" or "You there!"

You must get to know new people everyday. Keep asking their names until the names stick in your memory. I am not ashamed of asking somebody his name seven times until it sticks. When you know the sheep by name they cannot simply walk out on you.

3. A good pastor is known by the sheep.

...for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow...

John 10:4,5

How do people know the voice of the shepherd? How do you know the voice of someone? It is because you have heard them speak to you time and time again. A good shepherd must speak to his sheep over and over until they know his voice.

I preach to my church all the time. I do not often have guest speakers. I believe in guest speakers, but I believe the best person to preach to my sheep is me because I am their shepherd. I preach about ninety per cent of the time.

When a woman gives birth to a baby, her breasts are full of milk for the new child. So it is with the shepherd. His spirit is full of the Word to give to his children. No other woman's body and breasts are better qualified to feed her own child. Nature made it that way. Because you gave birth, you are naturally primed up to feed what you have brought forth.

When your sheep are used to your voice, they will not follow strangers. If you call yourself a pastor, rise up and feed your sheep regularly.

Preaching and teaching only becomes feeding when it is regular. Preach to them all of the time, and teach them from your heart. They will grow and give birth to others.

They will know your voice on the issues of marriage, business, success and life in general. They will want to hear your voice concerning different aspects of their life. The voice of a true shepherd always rings in the spirit of his sheep. I question whether you are a real shepherd if you do not regularly and consistently feed your sheep.

4. A good pastor stays with the sheep.

The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

John 10:13

Anyone who calls himself a pastor will want to stay around and mingle with the members, talk with them and be interested in them. David said,

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; THAT I MAY DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

Psalms 27:4

David wanted to stay in the house of the Lord. He actually wanted to live there. And you want to rush home! Are you really called?

I question the genuineness of a pastor who has no interest in staying around for a while after service to mingle and chat with the sheep. The Bible says that the hireling flees. This means that he dashes off quickly! He wants to get away from the people!

Such people cannot stand visitors in their homes. They always say things like, "I need my privacy" or "I can't stand having all these people around" and "I can't cook for so many people". Remember that a bishop is supposed to be "given to hospitality" (1 Timothy 3:2).

I once knew a White minister and his wife who were pastoring a large church in a European city. It happened that many of the members of his church were Black people; some Ghanaians, some Nigerians, etc. One day, while having coffee with this pastor and his wife, I got a feeling from certain things they said, that they did not really like Black people.

It was no wonder that even though they had a large church, one day, they abandoned the flock and went elsewhere. The hireling fleeth! (John 10:13).

5. A good shepherd knows his sheep.

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

John 10:14

Knowing your sheep means that you must know their names, where they live and where they work. Know about their health, friends, and school. Know when they are writing exams. Know their family, spouses and who they reside with. Know their financial situation and their occupation. Simply know all aspects of their lives. Know means know! It is only when you know more details about your sheep that you can help or advise them properly.

I once asked a pastor about one of his sheep. I asked, "Is he married?"

He answered, "I don't know."

"Where does he work?"

"I'm not sure." He answered.

"Did he come to church last week."

"I didn't see him," he replied.

In a very large church, you may excuse such a question but in a small community church, the pastor has no excuse when he does not know the details about his sheep.

I recall one brother who belonged to a prominent church in my city. He joined another church, and after being a member of that ministry for a number of years, he became a pastor himself. One day, while at a wedding, he happened to meet his former senior pastor. His senior pastor said to him, "Brother 'X', it is a long time since I saw you."

"Did you come to church last Sunday?" the senior pastor asked.

Brother 'X' (who had now become a pastor in another church) smiled and said, "No pastor I didn't."

This senior pastor did not know that this brother had long stopped attending his church. He did not know that this gentleman had even become a pastor in another ministry. How sad!

Jesus said a good pastor knows his sheep. If God gives you twenty people to look after, make sure you know *all about them*. Do not let any of them slip out of your hands. Jesus kept saying, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost" (John 17:12). It is important to have many junior pastors and shepherds to work with the senior pastor so that none of the sheep get lost. **God will hold us accountable for every single sheep that is lost.** Keep the sheep that God has given to you.

6. A good shepherd is known.

A good shepherd "opens up" his life to the sheep so that they can know about him. The sheep are interested in the shepherd's life. Do not be a mystery figure to your sheep. Let them know how real you are and how you experience the same problems and temptations they do.

Chapter 2 - Developing into a Good Shepherd

Here are additional pointers to help you develop into a good shepherd of God's flock.

1. A good shepherd keeps the church family together.

The sheep of a good pastor are kept together, under his "wings". *One of the cardinal features of the pastoral calling is the ability to keep people together throughout the years.*

The longer a group of people stay together, the more the people step on each other's toes. The conflicts of a family begin to surface. Brothers turn against brothers and sisters against sisters.

But it is a good pastor who keeps everybody together. The pastoral gift keeps employers in the same church with employees. The anointing on the shepherd is able to keep the old in the same room with the young. It keeps the married flowing with the unmarried.

As the church grows, you will even have enemies worshipping together under the same roof. It is the art of shepherding that will keep debtors and creditors within the same fold and prevent them from tearing each other apart.

But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and SCATTERETH THE SHEEP.

John 10:12

2. A good pastor notices the problems of his sheep.

The Bible tells us that the good shepherd can see the wolf coming. He sees the problems of his people and is concerned. He knows when they are doing exams. He knows when they are having marital problems. He knows when their businesses are going through "tough times".

But he that is an hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, SEETH THE WOLF COMING...

John 10:12

When a sheep fails his exams or loses a loved one, a wolf of discouragement and frustration is soon to come. **A good shepherd must be able to see the wolf and move into action.**

The bad shepherd sees the wolves but says, "That's your problem!" The good pastor will always stay with his sheep in their time of trouble.

3. A good pastor delivers his sheep from captivity.

Most of the members of a bad pastor are backslidden and in captivity.

...and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

John 10:12

Pastors, rise up and pray for your sheep! Minister to their needs. Apart from preaching, pray for their deliverance from witchcraft, demons and diseases. People love to be prayed for by their pastor. Pray for them, anointing them with oil. They need this encouragement and ministration.

4. A good shepherd wants to have more sheep.

A hireling is just around for a while, but a true shepherd is like the owner of the sheep. He is interested in them and he wants more.

Every sheep owner wants to have more sheep because that makes him richer, naturally speaking. Yet, the servant or slave in the farm does not care whether there are more or fewer sheep because he is not the shepherd; he is the hireling.

And other sheep I have...THEM ALSO I MUST BRING...

John 10:16

The true pastor is always concerned about bringing in more sheep. That is why Jesus said, "Them also I must bring."

5. A good pastor loves the sheep and not the money.

But he that is an hireling, and NOT THE SHEPHERD...

John 10:12

A true pastor does not work for money. He is interested in the salvation of souls and the growth of the church. **A bad pastor looks forward to some form of physical gain. His input is tied to that which he can get.** He is not concerned about the problems of his sheep. Anyone who cannot do pastoral work voluntarily, without being paid, is not genuine.

6. A good shepherd gives his life.

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

John 10:11

A good shepherd sacrifices his time for the sheep. The bad shepherd is only prepared to give two hours of his time on Sundays. He always wants to get away from the crowd.

If a woman desires to be a good wife, she must give herself fully to her husband. If you want to be a good doctor, you must give yourself fully to medicine. **Similarly, if you want to be a good shepherd, you must give your life and your time to the high calling of the pastoral office. It is worth it at the end of the day.**

Decide to be a good shepherd from today. You do not have to be paid to be a good pastor. In fact, the best pastors are often lay pastors!

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