

The Shepherd-King

In his chapter on the Shepherd-King, Stu Weber leads me on a journey of exploration. He teaches me about Jehovah-Jireh, God my Provider. And then he asks whether I am a similar provider for those around me. He looks at David the Shepherd, and the lessons he learned as a boy that he later applied as a king. He recites the 23rd Psalm, and asks whether I am those things to the ones I love and the ones for whom I am responsible. No, I'm not. I'm not even close - and it's not that I don't want to be, and it's not that God is so perfect that I am bound to fail in the endeavor of imitating him. It's just that I don't take the time to realize who I am, and I don't take the time to ask what it really means to provide for someone as God provides for me. So Stu takes me on that journey of exploration to learn what it's supposed to look like.

A shepherd has the life of his sheep in his hands. He watches over them. He provides for their needs, and their wants, and calms them with his soothing songs. He provides security, rest, and recuperation, instilling confidence in his presence. He heals their wounds, listens for their cries, understands their concerns, and strengthens them. He leads them on paths that will enrich them and nourish them so that they recognize and long for his voice. He is by their side as they walk, and as they feed, and as they sleep. He gets between them and their enemies, coming to their defense even if it means risking himself for them.

No. I haven't always and consistently been that kind of father, nor that kind of husband. I hate to remember how I have used that figurative rod and staff that are supposed to comfort. Boundaries are good things, assigning responsibilities is a good thing, and discipline is a good thing. Yet they must be perceived as a benefit by those I limit and burden and discipline. The people I love and cherish have to understand and trust that I am doing it for their good instead of just being for my own convenience. That's where the consistency comes in, I think. If the people I care for don't know what to expect, then I'm not their shepherd. Or if they have doubts about whether I'm trying to help them find the good path or I'm just out to make it easy on myself, then I'm not their shepherd. I must be very clear why I'm about to take some action, and I must be a living example of what it is I'm asking them to do. I cannot teach what I am not doing. It's a fundamental principle of life.

Stu finishes up by sharing that the Shepherd-King provides mercy, bestows honor, and never ever abandons his flock. A cardinal rule is that we never embarrass anyone under any circumstances. We edify up, and we edify down. We never remember past offences, and we ignore present ones. We always see people as they can be, not as they are. In our eyes are reflected everyone's finest image, because that image is what they will become - for better or for worse. I remember to do that every time I look into my grandchildren's eyes. I need to remember it every time I look into anyone's eyes...