

SHEPHERDS Know Their Flock

SHEPHERDS are experts when it comes to guiding, guarding, and grazing sheep. They understand the characteristics of sheep during different seasons and stages of development.

How does this apply to Sunday School teachers?

Shepherd-teachers strive to increase their understanding of the general characteristics of the age-group which their class is assigned to minister.

The growing shepherd-teacher will also seize opportunities to learn more about the generational characteristics of the group they guide. Adult teachers will want to stay abreast of the issues adults face during various life-stages, especially life's frontiers:

career, marriage, parenthood, empty-nest, vocational retirement,

etc. Shepherds will want to read about helping people deal with life's crises: disease, divorce, death, relocation, unemployment, etc. And, of course, effective shepherd-teachers will be sensitive to the differences between boys and girls, men and women, in terms of the ways they learn, interact, and communicate.

Beyond general knowledge about sheep, shepherds get to know their individual sheep. Effective teaching starts with the needs of the learners. In order to teach to meet needs, the shepherd-teacher must become acquainted with each member on his or her class ministry list. A simple way to do that is to keep a notebook, with a page for each member. As you learn things about the individual, make a note of it on their page. Of course, there are some standard items the shepherd will want to include about every member: contact information, birthdays, anniversaries, other significant dates (birth of children, date of new job, death of spouse, etc.), type of work, church and community roles, and perhaps the Bible translation they bring to class. Extra credit goes to shepherds who record other information, like spiritual gifts, temperaments, love languages, favorite things, pet peeves, and the like. The excellent shepherd-teacher will use this notebook as a prayer guide as well, noting prayer concerns and answers to those prayers. In other words, shepherds know their flock's stories, and prepare to teach with those stories in mind.

