

## Where Do Shepherds Come From?

"But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." (1 Samuel 17:34-36, ESV)

David knew what to do when he encountered Goliath making a mockery of the Living God and of Israel. The youth knew exactly how to enter the situation, although it took courage mustered on his part, and he succeeded where Saul failed. How was this so? David explains his own experience. He was not an old man, but in his life he used to keep his father's sheep and he defended them. David applied his defense of the sheep of his father's flock to his defense of the people of his God. It is not irony or chance that led to this development: David was a man after God's own heart. Through his early training, David had gained a resume of accomplishments: he had struck down both lions and bears! I have trouble avoiding domesticated dogs along my bike route and this guy is slaying bears and lions in plurality?

God trained David for the task at hand for several years before setting him on the throne and handing the reins of the kingdom. There is no substitute for experience and the kingdom which does not train its young princes to be kings and its young herdsmen to be shepherds through experience and example will lack kings and shepherds in later times.

When brethren study the qualification for church leaders in 1 Timothy and Titus, does it seem like a menu in a restaurant: "I'd like three elders, four deacons, and within two years please?" Development necessary to having qualified elders and deacons is just as necessary as David training. We think of shepherds as those who visit the sick, check on absent members, looking for open hearts in the world who will listen to the gospel, hold Bible studies, singings, and other get-togethers in their homes, and do other good deeds. What is the source of these leaders?

Let us realize that future shepherds come from present families of Christians that gain experience doing these good deeds throughout the years and nurturing the young leaders in their midst into older leaders with opportunities to grow. Let us continue to each provoke one another to each do these good deeds and more, from the heart. In the future, whenever the Lord wills it, there may be shepherds appointed from those who have been viewing our good examples and gaining experience nurturing the flock and fighting off bears and lions.