

Ronald L. Dart Ministries



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NEWSLETTER

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Governing Sheep

By Ronald L. Dart

What is the shape of a flock of sheep? This probably belongs on a list of the world's most meaningless questions, for a flock of sheep has no shape. It is a collection of living things, constantly moving. It may be longer along the axis of movement, it may be constricted crossing a bridge, or it may be scattered over the hills, but it will never be the same from moment to moment.

How is a flock of sheep organized? In the sense that human beings use the word, it is not organized at all. Yet, there is an organization of sorts. A small group of sheep, by going their separate ways, could totally frustrate a sheep dog; but they don't. Their informal organization keeps them together and makes them a unit to a shepherd and his dog.

How is a flock of sheep governed? Most of the time, not at all. When there is no overwhelming reason—protection, movement to new pasture—sheep are left largely ungoverned. They spread over the hills to make maximum use of the grass available. Munching grass and making wool requires very little in the way of governance. The shepherd makes no attempt to keep them together unless there is an immediate threat. They can't eat grass and make wool while they are penned up in fear of attack. But the shepherd can't keep them there too long. Excessive efforts at protection defeat the very purpose of having a flock of sheep.

When the time comes for the whole flock to do something together, then a sort of governance comes into play. Sheep are gathered together by the cooperative efforts of dog and shepherd, and a general direction of march is set. From then on it is a matter of maintaining direction of movement and collecting stragglers. There is nothing we would recognize as structure in a flock of sheep. There are no ranks as they move. They do not line up single file unless constrained by fences. They do not graze in assigned areas.

When Jesus uses terms like sheep, shepherd, flock, and fold to describe his relationship with his disciples, we might do well to think of some of these things. As a church grows ever larger, more and more of its energy can be spent in organizational efforts. There is a greater likelihood that a large flock will attract predators, and can easily exhaust itself trying to protect against them. A wolf may take one or two sheep, but the over-protective shepherd can lose a dozen by keeping them penned up too long where they cannot graze. And ill-fed sheep are more susceptible to disease.

A flock of sheep on the move from one pasture to another can seem chaotic, but this is the way sheep move. In a church, the chaos that results from growth creates an urge to organize, manage, direct, control. The result is that we spend too much of our energy struggling with one another over the shape and movement of the church, and too little doing whatever it is that Christians are supposed to be doing.

What are we supposed to be doing, anyway? A sheep doesn't have to think about his job. All he has to do is to make wool, make mutton, and make more sheep. But we churchgoers can think about what we are supposed to do.

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Why Do False Prophets Succeed?

By Ronald L. Dart

I recently heard a story of a small church group that was splintered by disagreement over doctrine. I'm not suggesting by the title that the people concerned are false prophets, or even that they are necessarily wrong. But when the results are the fragmentation of a church, something is wrong somewhere.

The doctrine under consideration had to do with the calendar of holy days the church observes through the year. It was not as though the ministry had never addressed the question of the sacred calendar. We addressed it in one of the very earliest Ministerial Council meetings and decided to continue with the Hebrew calendar until we learned otherwise. There have been a few calendar submissions over the years, none of them convincing or compelling. No one in the ministry has shown any resistance to changing the calendar—providing there are good and sufficient reasons for doing so. The subject is a matter of ongoing study.

The calendar, however, is not the subject of this piece. What concerns me is why people allow themselves to be polarized and their church to be fractured over issues that are either minor or that people of good will could easily resolve.

That such things would happen is a given. Jesus himself said that false prophets would show signs and wonders with an aim to the seduction of those who would listen to them (Mark 13:22). Peter was quite specific on the subject, saying, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1).

What motivates false prophets? Paul, in his farewell to the Ephesian elders, makes it quite simple: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29–30).

The objective of false prophets and teachers of whatever stripe is, and always has been, power. Money may be a factor, but money is just another kind of power. In the end, the goal is the influence and control of the minds of men. Even when a would-be leader is

motivated by self-aggrandizement, there is no success for him without the response of other people. This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Galatians, "They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them" (Galatians 4:17).

If the motives of the false prophet are simple, the motives of those who listen are more complex. Why would anyone allow himself to be used this way? The answer is deeply rooted in the wants and needs of the people who hear. The truth is that a false prophet cannot succeed unless he touches a chord in the hearts of a class of people. As God said through Jeremiah, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so" (Jeremiah 5:30–31). False prophets and false teachers succeed because they offer people something they want.

I have long been fascinated by the versatility of the human mind in finding excuses for believing the things it wants to believe, or for doing the things it wants to do. Years ago, I had a series of counseling sessions with a woman who was afraid she had committed the unpardonable sin. She plainly had not, but she was strangely persistent in her fear that she had. No amount of persuasion, logical or scriptural, seemed to convince her. Each counseling session she seemed more convinced than ever that there was no hope for her. It took a while, but it finally came out that she was involved in a relationship with a man—a relationship she believed was sinful. She believed that if she had committed the unpardonable sin, there was no point in repenting and breaking up the relationship. If she had not committed the unpardonable sin, then she had to break it off. It was easier for her to believe there was no hope than to break off the relationship—and we usually take the easier course.

Those who desire a following have little difficulty in finding an issue, and the issue itself is of little importance. The people who decide to follow on the issue may do so for a variety of reasons. The only thing they have in common is that they want to do something or quit something, and the issue gives them the excuse they need.

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*Governing Sheep
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We can urge with the shepherd and bleat back at the sheep dog. We can take off over the far hill while the shepherd is trying to get everyone together. We can explore instead of feed, and produce inferior wool and weak offspring. We can waste time trying to organize the sheep when all they need is to be left alone to feed.

Jesus' disciples were more concerned about organization than he was. When the mother of two of them requested hierarchical positions for her sons, the other disciples were incensed. Jesus got them together to clarify the matter. He said: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25–28).

Whatever the job of the sheep of Jesus' pasture, it is not to command, direct, and control; not to "structure" the flock. It is not to create an organizational hierarchy.

I had a letter from a friend which made the point well. Discussing the flock, he wrote: "Let's keep enthusiasm, flexibility and joy alive. Let's not kill them with bureaucracy and institutionalization. . . Efficient management sounds like a death-knell for vitality. Our

biggest asset is the Holy Spirit inspiring our membership in diverse and exciting ways. Let's facilitate this, not stifle it."

It may run counter to the conventional wisdom that efficient management is anything but desirable, but remember that Dachau and Buchenwald were models of efficient management. God is not the author of confusion, but the mild disorder that accompanies freedom is something we should learn to live with.

It is true to say that Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom of God was a message about the Government of God. But it would be a mistake to imagine that even the Government of God is a goal or an end. It is when we make government an end in itself that we make our greatest errors. The Government of God is not the goal—it *has* a goal. The objective of the Government of God is the salvation of mankind.

Writing of civil government, Paul told Timothy, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Timothy 2:1–4).

The goal of government, civil or divine, is not the domination of man, but the salvation of man. We might do well then, to spend less time attempting to govern one another, and more time making wool.

Listener Feedback

From Terry in Oklahoma:

"Ron was a huge influence on my life and walk with God."

From Iyve in the Benin Republic:

"I have been listening to your radio programs since last year. I came to know Jesus Christ for the first time."

From Janet from North Carolina:

"Thank you very much for making God's Truth available. We have thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated the messages."

Laffia from Africa:

"I just wanted to write and tell you that I just found your station completely by accident, and it was the best accident ever! I love your Born to Win teachings! Thank you sooooo much!!!"

Why Do False Prophets Succeed?
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I can't escape the words of Jeremiah who said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). If there is a way to deceive ourselves we will find it. If God's way makes us uncomfortable, there will always be an excuse ready at hand to get away from it. If we have trouble finding a reason, sooner or later, a false prophet will come along and provide one. The only thing you can be sure of is that the apparent reason will have little or nothing to do with the real reason.

Why does God allow false prophets to deceive people? It would be easy for him to stop it. There may be a clue in a statement by Paul, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Corinthians 11:19). Inevitably, there are people who follow the teachings of Christ for the wrong reasons. They say all the right things, but their hearts are not right. Paul seems to be saying that allowing heresies is part of God's plan to separate the sheep from the goats.

I have said all that to say this: Jesus made it plain that there would be many, not few, false prophets in the world. He said we would know them, not by their

arguments, but by their fruits. When a theological argument is driving a wedge between brothers, there is reason to question the motives of those involved. But the motives that need the most careful examination are your own. You may never be able to divine the motives of a prophet or teacher, but you should be able to get at your own. What is it that you really want? What are the real issues that concern you? Are you being honest with yourself, your brethren, or with God? It is not fair to let your brethren believe that you are dissatisfied with the church calendar, when the real problem lies elsewhere.

When David found himself at odds with God, there was one thing he never forgot—honesty. In his most heartfelt prayer, he told God, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Psalm 51:6).

If you ever find yourself in one of these doctrinal crossfires, or if you are being tempted irrationally to leave the faith, try this prayer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23–24).

If you ask this in sincerity, you can count on an answer. God will help you see yourself and will give you the strength to overcome.

YEA Update



Does your church or home fellowship need a resource for Sabbath School lessons for your Sabbath and holy day services? We are currently updating YEA lessons for the 2018 Feast of Tabernacles and the holy day supplements that have lessons for all of the holy days. Please call our office, 1-888-BIBLE-44 (1-888-242-5344) to order your lessons for the fall holy days or to request samples of the ongoing lessons that can help you teach your youth.

Orders need to be placed by August 15.

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That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.

August Scripture Writing Plan

We encourage you to read each day's scripture and then write it down in a notebook, a journal, on index cards, in a text message or whatever method you know works best for you. If you can't write it down, consider speaking the scripture and recording it on your cell phone or voice recorder. Our goal is to have read and written down a minimum of 365 scriptures by the end of 2018. Let's do this and see the value it brings to our lives.



August 1	Jeremiah 9:24	August 11	Genesis 32:10	August 21	1 Corinthians 13:4
August 2	Luke 6:35	August 12	Isaiah 54:10	August 22	2 Corinthians 6:4-10
August 3	Isaiah 63:7	August 13	Job 10:12	August 23	2 Timothy 2:24
August 4	Ephesians 4:32	August 14	2 Samuel 9:1-13	August 24	Psalms 89:26-33
August 5	Ephesians 2:4-7	August 15	Titus 3:4-5	August 25	2 Peter 1:5-7
August 6	Ezra 9:9	August 16	Romans 11:22	August 26	Psalms 117:2
August 7	Isaiah 54:8	August 17	Colossians 3:12	August 27	Acts 28:2
August 8	1 Kings 3:6	August 18	Psalms 106:7	August 28	Psalms 63:1-3
August 9	Proverbs 3:3	August 19	Romans 2:4	August 29	1 Corinthians 13:4
August 10	Genesis 24:27	August 20	Proverbs 31:26	August 30	Ruth 3:10
				August 31	Acts 9:36

CEM Mission Statement

Christian Educational Ministries (CEM) was founded in November 1995 by Ron and Allie Dart as an independent, non-denominational ministry to serve the public and individual Christians of every kind through the ministry of Ronald L. Dart. Mr. Dart, an ordained minister and evangelist, has served God through hundreds of sermons, broadcasts, Bible Studies, and books—bringing clarity and simplicity to topics.

CEM promotes Ron Dart's radio ministry, *Born to Win*, which is heard from coast-to-coast. His clear, conversational, and inviting style can be heard the world over. The *Born to Win* website, www.borntowin.net, features more than 1000 of Mr. Dart's timeless sermons and studies at any one time.

Our mission is:

- First, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. (Matthew 28).
- Second, to teach the disciples of Jesus Christ so that they may be "proficient and equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:17).
- Third, to teach and train this generation and the next with studies and programs focused on youth, through the Dart's special passion, Youth Educational Adventures (YEA). (Deuteronomy 11:19, Proverbs 22:6).
- Fourth, to bring God's people closer together, through cooperative efforts wherever they may be. (2 Corinthians 5:18).

To this end, we teach the Bible and its Truth, with a goal of helping people make their own lives work while they are a positive influence and blessing to those around them. Follow Mr. Dart and CEM at www.borntowin.net, Facebook, YouTube, and other media.

Born to Win

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So Great a Salvation (FREE CD)

Ron Dart examines the origins and the destiny of man. Man alone was made in God's image; he alone can have a relationship with God; he alone has dominion over "everything". Man was created for a special purpose and God grants incredible liberty to us. Knowing this, how should we live? What should we do?

Leadership Lost (FREE CD)

As a nation, we probably expect too much of our leaders and too little of ourselves. I would like to take you back to another time and place, to a nation surprisingly like us. They were like us in spite of changes in technology and an explosion of knowledge and information. The place is Jerusalem; the time is the days of Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah was quite young when he had his first vision and volunteered to be a prophet. He had no idea what he was letting himself in for. And in chapter three of his book, he touches on what bothers me most about the political climate we are looking at. What happened to cause this? Are there lessons for us to learn?

Leadership & Freedom Bundle



Leadership & Politics-Some use their leadership skills to persuade men in the ways of peace and bring hope; some use panic, confusion, and fear to control people. There is a leadership crisis in our country, and in the world at large. It is the rebirth of a very old religion that has nothing to do with the Creator God. These 10 messages by Ron Dart will make many things clear. Regular Price \$19.95.



Let Freedom Ring - Israel lost its freedom at the end of what may have been a period of unparalleled freedom. What did they do to lose it? Are there similarities between Germans losing their freedom under Hitler and what is happening to our nation today? Ten programs on five CDs \$24.95.

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