

311.1 Healthy Leadership (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 43, Updated)

The Shepherds of Israel

Productive Sunday School

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 - a. Agency, accountability, authority
 - b. Why do we need leaders?
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Not many topics are more important than this one from an institutional point of view, or even from a social point of view.

Reading Review

Class Member Reading: We have of Ezekiel's greatest hits (and trust me, there's some weird disturbing stuff in here too).

Ezekiel 18 I'm glad this lesson covers this important topic! The truth is, both proverbs are true. Our parents behavior and choices DO set our our teeth on edge, in more ways than one. We inherit the issues of our parents and ancestors. At the same time, our lives are our own responsibility. Not our fault, but our responsibility. Note the principles the Lord emphasizes in this chapter: fidelity, loyalty, integrity, fairness (including no interest!). The emphasis on parents and children being judged on their own merits was a big deal, considering that children were considered property and were accounted as such in laws such as Hammurabi's (if a ox kills your child, the owner of the ox's child could be killed to satisfy "justice"). Hope for repentance and change is also emphasized. Strong conclusion to the chapter: **30** "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.^[a] **31** Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? **32** For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live."

34 God condemns leaders in Israel, similar to how Jesus condemned leaders in his day. The language is incredibly vivid, where the leaders are lambasted for not only neglecting the sheep, but exploiting them (described vividly as eating the sheep). This is the relentless temptation of leadership: Do we use leadership to care for those in our stewardship, or do we use our leadership to exploit others and benefit ourselves? Sadly, as D&C 121 comments, the latter state is a universal. We are told God will himself seek the sheep. I think this often happens, when leaders fail, God steps in. I've experienced that. **16** I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy.^[a] I will feed them in justice.

God's condemnation is very specific: Not only have the leaders used up resources, they have ruined them for others! (muddying the stream, in addition to drinking from it). Once again we have a "covenant of peace" and promise of peace and abundance.

37 We have Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones. Note Ezekiel's faith when God asks if the bones can live. He answers, "You know". The dry bones prophecy carries two levels of meaning: 1) the resurrection, as well as Israel's restoration to land and covenant. The covenantal promises are fulfilled. The "two sticks" prophecy refer to the rejoining the Northern Kingdom of Israel and southern kingdom of Judah into one kingdom, the way it was under David. This prophecies a Davidic king, which is striking: Messiah. "Everlasting covenant of peace" is repeated.

Psalm 23 Beautiful Psalm, "Lord is my Shepherd." Glad it is included. (I do wish he had said "anoint" instead of "moisten", but hey) <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57172/psalm-23>

The LORD is my shepherd,

I shall not want.

In grass meadows He makes me lie down,
by quiet waters guides me.

My life He brings back.

He leads me on pathways of justice
for His name's sake.

Though I walk in the vale of death's shadow,
I fear no harm,
for You are with me.

Your rod and Your staff—
it is they that console me.

You set out a table before me
in the face of my foes.

You moisten my head with oil,
my cup overflows.

Let but goodness and kindness pursue me
all the days of my life.
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for many long days.

Alma 5:7-14 Alma 5 is such a great introspective chapter! I love these verses about waking up, waking up from death and darkness to light and life.

Additional Reading: Ezekiel 2 Ezekiel's call. God tells Ezekiel that his call will be difficult, but no matter what happens, he needs to fulfil his role, and he should live righteously.

Other Reading: D&C 121 (So important to include and discuss)

These few verses meditated upon and lived would change the world:

36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

37 That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

38 Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God.

39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

40 Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

41 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

43 Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov'd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

44 That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

45 Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

46 The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

Lesson: How to lead and stay a decent human being

Agency, accountability, authority

Ezekiel talked about agency and accountability. How does that play out? Even what is not our fault, is our responsibility. We need to have authority over/manage first and foremost ourselves. That's our main job. We are in charge of ourselves.

Why do we need leaders?

"Liberals have good ideas but conservatives get things done"

Are hierarchies inevitable?

Hierarchy is a shortcut. Ideally, we made choices based on trust and relationship. Hierarchy and social structure allows us to take a risk and trust people we don't know well enough to rely on them (like a Lyft driver, or the people we buy food from, or we let strangers in our house to repair things...)

So we need structure, but the KIND of structure, and how we behave within those structures... that's everything. And Jesus had VERY strong words about these exact topics.

The winning target: trustworthy behavior within social structure.

What is pastoral care?

Chaplain training changed my life. Two of the most important lessons are:

- 1) We need to become a healing presence. The tool of our trade is our soul and character.
- 2) It is less common than we think that we need to "fix" or "solve" anything for others. Often what we need is others to listen, believe in us, and facilitate our own process.
- 3) Relatedly, the most important training necessary is to be able to "bear their pain without breaking" as Professor X says. We need to be able to hold discomfort and challenge without needing to solve it, in order to be a healing presence, in order not to rush another's process.

Leadership survival kit

Know yourself "Care beyond competence causes harm"

Learn about the position

Get help

Never forget limitations (we are always tempted to shortcut and go the "because I said so!" or "because I am in charge!" route) I made many mistakes parenting, but one thing I'm proud of is I always listened to my children as soon as they could talk, and took them seriously.

Get more help

Treat those you serve as equals

Moral and institutional authority

Institutional authority: Your position says you are in charge

Moral authority: People want to follow you because they respect you

How and why power corrupts (D&C 121) Because it is always easier and more tempting to rely in institutional authority rather than earning moral authority

Conclusion: Responsibility and opportunity, not power and authority

311.2 Healthy Leadership (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 43, Sunday School)

[The Shepherds of Israel](#)

Turns out when you are assigned to care for sheep as a shepherd, eating them instead is not the recipe for success. This episode discusses the attributes of good leadership, how to support leaders, and what to do in the case of shepherds who make mistakes.

311.3 Healthy Leadership (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 43, Study Notes)

[The Shepherds of Israel](#)

Turns out when you are assigned to care for sheep as a shepherd, eating them instead is not the recipe for success. This episode discusses the attributes of good leadership, how to support leaders, and what to do in the case of shepherds who make mistakes. This section explores Ezekiel in historical and literary context and the nature of leadership in the LDS Church.