



We have a constant flow of leaders through the retreat centre who share their stories with us. They are all doing incredible work but at the same time facing huge challenges. We find there is an amazing energy and drive among the leaders we meet, to do great exploits for the Lord and they are passionate about accomplishing the great commission in their specific aspect of ministry – leading teams and bases, reaching families, working with children, helping refugees, planting churches, teaching and training, and on the list goes. As a leader myself, I know there are so many opportunities out there – the needs never stop and it can feel overwhelming.

We are all learning that the needs themselves don't guide us, otherwise we would be in constant burnout. We know that boundaries are important in our lives to protect our calling and energy, so that we can focus on God's priorities. However, we still have a tendency as mission organisations, teams and individuals to have a workaholic task emphasis. YWAM has been called to 'Know God and make Him known.' We are focused on project 4K – reaching into the four thousand omega zones worldwide. We want to see the book that transforms nations, in every home around the globe. We want to see every team and base connected in some way with the refugee crisis worldwide. We want to see.... Project after project implemented, multiplied and changing our world.

The task before us is huge and as good YWAMers we all want to keep moving in faith and praying, as long as we have breath, for God to breakthrough in his power and glory in the nations! AMEN?

A few years ago, I was chatting with a long term YWAMer and friend, and as we were talking about this task orientation, she commented that we should be looking at David, and making the 'Shepherd Warrior' our model of ministry. It is unusual to place these two characteristics together. Often shepherds and warriors don't see eye to eye. In our teams, it's the visionary task leaders that keep us inspired with the sight of the harvest lacking labourers and they motivate us to keep moving forward and putting our hand to the plough (excuse the agricultural metaphors for warrior exploits). It's the pastors who want to take care of the flock, feed them, help them grow, develop them and protect them from all the dangers that come across their paths.

God knew of our great tendency as mission leaders, visionaries, pioneers and ministry leaders to be task oriented and that's why he gave us two major rules for life – the great commission, to go into all the world; and the great commandment, to love one another. That's why he encourages us to function in teams where we find both gifts of the warrior risk taker and the caring shepherd. However, David

gives us another model. David grew up as a shepherd and then found his calling as a warrior. There is a sense that we need these two arms of leadership (visionary risk taker and pastor) in the same leader. Some will be more one than the other but we need both. We all need to be 'Shepherd Warriors.'

I remember a senior YWAM leader years ago, who had a strength in being a visionary leader, share that he heard God speak to him about taking on the heart of a shepherd. He responded with an, 'Oh No!' That can be our response too, when we are asked to spend more time and energy on caring for our sheep, if we are purely concentrating on the task.

Sometimes task oriented, apostolic types prefer not to use the term pastor – they like to think that the term is for the local situation but not for pioneering and establishing the vision! So, let's talk about being "relational."

Actually, we are ALL called to be relational – to love one another – to fulfil all the 'one another's' of scripture. If we aren't relational we probably won't be spending the time to become intimate with God either. In fact, the great commission and the call of God comes out of our love and worship of the Lord. So, perhaps we need to be relational before we are visionary – thus the shepherd-warrior.

The first person I have always recruited for my leadership team is a pastor. Does that mean that I don't need to think about people? Definitely not. As a leader, I am to be responsible for and motivated to be a good shepherd to the sheep God gives – to protect, care for and develop them to their full potential. However, my main gifting and calling will always be to see, clarify and implement the vision of developing leaders and teams. The establishing and completion of the goal always has the upper hand but I endeavour to love people, be available to them and spur them on in their service for God. This is where the model of the shepherd warrior needs to be firmly implanted in our hearts – so that whatever we do, both the vision and the people will be kept in mind.

Moses knew what it was to be a warrior in his early days living in Pharaoh's palace. He then learned to be a shepherd in the wilderness for 40 years. So now he prayed for a leader of the community, who could care and protect them and lead them into battle:

Numbers 27:17 Then Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, you are the God who gives breath to all creatures. Please appoint a new man as leader for the community. Give them someone who will guide them wherever they go and will lead them into battle, so the community of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

David who started out as a shepherd boy, became a warrior and was made king of Israel. 2 Samuel 5:2 *Then all the tribes of Israel went to David at Hebron and told him, "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, when Saul was our king, you were the one who really led the forces of Israel. And the Lord told you, 'You will be the shepherd of my people Israel. You will be Israel's leader.'"*

Jesus was also a 'Shepherd Warrior'. David calls Jesus, 'my shepherd', in Psalm 23. He comes to seek and save the lost, to serve and not to be served. But we also see the warrior in him as he battles the Pharisees and challenges their self-righteousness and hypocrisy.

The name often given to kings and leaders was 'shepherd'. Here is an example of a sharp word to leaders that weren't living out their role as shepherds: Ezekiel 34:1-5:

Then this message came to me from the Lord: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds, the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: What sorrow awaits you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep? You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve. You have not taken care of the weak. You have not tended the sick or bound up the injured. You have not gone looking for those who have wandered away and are lost. Instead, you have ruled them with harshness and cruelty. So, my sheep have been scattered without a shepherd, and they are easy prey for any wild animal.

How much time do you spend relating with people rather than simply working with them? Talking with them about vision alone doesn't count! How much do you know about the upbringing and history of your team? Are you aware of what is happening in the lives of your team members at a personal level? How approachable are you as a leader? How easily can people speak about things that concern them? How merciful are you? How do you cover a multitude of sins in your love for people?

Does the shepherd role need to be restored in your YWAM community? We can't fight all the time, we need time for refreshment and encouragement. The warrior becomes a shepherd through his or her love and affirmation of their sheep. Loving our people can't be delegated. We need men and women who understand and use their two arms of leadership well.

Until next month,

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P.S. Perhaps you are lacking the warrior aspect of leadership – we will leave that for another letter!