

Shepherd or Hireling?

By Cosima Ybarra

A few weeks ago I found myself reading a newsletter article, "The Next Big Thing," several times. Did I understand correctly that this article was written by a successful worship leader in a thriving church? I went to his web site and looked for confirmation. I checked out the blog ... did I read it right....did he really say, "I'm so impressed with *NBT* I've decided to join them?" I wanted to believe he was quoting someone else.

I was floored! My first response to this statement was, "WHAT?... What about his fellowship? What about his ministry there? Where is the leading of God's Spirit?" Then after I settled down I reasoned, "Maybe this worship leader prayed about it and the Lord led him to join the new church." But, he didn't mention any prayer in the article. He didn't mention the Lord at all. His words were specific, he was "so impressed with *NBT*" that he "decided to join them."

After much prayer I wrote him a long email discussing the implications of his actions. I asked him to stop, count the cost and reconsider his actions and the impact they will have on others.

I received a response a few days later and he explained to me that he had "jumped ship," and left his church and position as worship ministry director because "a certain elder came on board 8 months ago.... There's an "evil elder" in every church" and that, "This rich, influential elder just was not happy about the music, probably because *I* wouldn't allow his wife to sing on the praise team :)"

Being lead to go to a new church is obviously not the point here. I'm sure they are doing a great work. But to leave your post because you are impressed by another church, that just isn't scriptural. And to leave your post because a certain elder is making things difficult for you, well, that seems to me to indicate that you are a hireling.

Jesus said, ... *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hireling is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep.* (John 10:11-13)

Below is a check list that should help you to determine whether you are a hireling and help keep you from temptation to 'Jump Ship'.

- 1.) Ask yourself, "Would I leave my post when things get difficult and run over to the "Next Big Thing" that comes along?"
- 2.) Has God given me the position of worship pastor, leader or director here where I am now? (This is an awesome calling. I don't use the word awesome lightly here; like it was cool to be a director of worship in a church.)
- 3.) Am in awe of the God I serve that He would choose me to serve Him where I am? (The thought of it should bring us to our knees.)
- 4.) Do I arrive on a Sunday morning to lead worship and just tremble at the thought that God picked me for the job?
- 5.) Is God leading me? (If you were given the position at your fellowship have you heard from the Lord otherwise? If you have not been directed by the Lord to go to another fellowship, then are you telling the Lord that what He has ordained for you, where you are, doesn't impress you.)
- 6.) Does this other church need me more than where I serve today? (Am I enticed to leave my fellowship because there is something bigger or better in it for me elsewhere.)
- 7.) What hole will I leave? (Has there been someone specifically discipled to replace you that is led by the Lord and filled with His Spirit. Someone willing to count the cost and love the sheep?)

8.) What affect will this have on the sheep? (How many sheep will get the idea that they can just 'hop on over' to that other church with the greener grass. How many sheep that stay will feel abandoned and need to be reassured, left confused and hurt by your actions?)

9.) Will my actions bless or grieve my pastor and leadership?

Be careful because your enemy, who employed deception at the very first in the Garden, seeks to deceive all God's children. I write to you to warn you not to abandon your post to join the "Next Big Thing" just because you are impressed. Don't abandon your post when you find things have become difficult where your are. It would be a shame if what the sheep in your fellowship remember is that a worship leader was impressed more with the "Next Big Thing" than with God. Or, that the worship leader jumped ship when the waves got too high for him. *That's just not the heart of a worship leader. That's the heart of a hireling.*

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1

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