

Let's take the next couple of weeks to continue reminding ourselves of the path we've been on together for the past 27 years, and what that looks like.

In December, we will spend a few weeks taking the time for everyone to go back and finish up Reshaping projects (Session 6) for the first four books of the First Principles Series. Remember, completing those are critical for integrating Christ's plan into our personal development, household strategies and ministry opportunities. The Spirit doesn't magically transform us. We aren't transformed by an intellectual experience (although those are a necessary start). The Spirit uses our participation, our creating practical plans and beginning to incrementally adjust our lives and habits around what we are learning in order to transform us. It's not always easy, and it's rarely comfortable to adjust our habits and activities to fit Jesus' plan, but this is what it means to live by faith and renew our minds. And it's why He's empowered us to follow him and given us one another to encourage and build each other up as we do this together.

In January, we will continue our excursus from the First Principles Series, and instead take time to focus on the walk-through, retelling ourselves the story of Scriptures. Then we will work through The Story study together for a few months. As we now have two families focused on creating strategies for planting simple churches in their neighborhoods, it is a good time to pause and focus on God's big story, so that we are able to tell it well, and to tell our stories withing His larger story.

**Audio:** Please listen to the message from Kevin Rhodes, *What is God's Shepherd Worth*, and think about the following questions.

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/q2pyttqaorxh82yskiuqc/2004-1209-What-is-God-s-Shepherd-Worth.mp3?rlkey=rwjcjn0q15be1nhinltj5fmoo&dl=0>

**Issue:** What value do we put on Jesus' sacrifice (the Good Shepherd), and subsequently on following His plan together as simple churches, and as part of a network of simple churches? What value do we put on the leaders (shepherds) that Jesus provides us? Engaging with their teaching? Shaping our lives around our new learning?

**Discussion questions:**

1. What is God's Shepherd/shepherds worth... to you?
2. Do you value Jesus' sacrifice? Are you working hard at understanding His plan (the Way of Christ and His Apostles) and what that means for your life? Are you seriously engaged in shaping your life, plans, and habits around the plan of Christ, within the context of your household and your simple church family? Are you incrementally adjusting and shaping things along the way so that over time, you become transformed by His Spirit?
3. Do you value the shepherds and leaders God has given you? Do your lives and attitudes reflect a response and remuneration to them that is commensurate with their work and sacrifice? Are you paying attention and following through on the things they are teaching you? The things they are devoting their lives to shaping you in? Or, is it possible that you have relied on them too much, as if they are surrogates for you, rather than equippers of you?

**Discussion:** What is your one 'take away' from the teaching? Be prepared to share this with your simple church.