Pastor/Shepherd - The spiritual gift of pastor or pastor/shepherd is one that carries many different responsibilities. This gift is closely related to the spiritual gifts of leadership and teaching. The Greek word for pastor is Poimen and simply means shepherd or overseer. In the Biblical context, shepherds had several different responsibilities to their sheep and ultimately, to the owner of the sheep. They kept a lookout for predators and protected the sheep from attackers. They cared for wounded and sick sheep, nursing them back to health. They rescued them if they became lost or trapped. They spent enormous amounts of time with them guiding them to the places of nourishment and rest. The result was a trust and relationship that kept the sheep following the shepherd. The sheep were attuned to the shepherd’s voice to the point that even if they were temporarily mixed with another herd, at the call of the shepherd they would separate and follow him.

Pastors are called shepherds because their calling and gifting are much like those who care for sheep. They are called and gifted to care for the spiritual well-being of a local body of God’s people. Pastors are first and foremost servants. They are servants of God and servants of His bride, the church. They are given a mixture of abilities by grace that allows them to serve the needs of an entire community.

The goal of the pastor is to reveal the glory of God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit to a people who need God’s grace for life. The primary way the pastor will do this is by teaching the Word of God to the church. The gift of pastor is directly linked to the gift of teaching in Ephesians 4:11 and elsewhere. In fact, this gift could be called the gift of pastor-teacher. The ability to teach the Scriptures is also one of the many requirements of being an overseer (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). By teaching the Scriptures to the church, the pastor feeds the “sheep” of God.

The Holy Spirit gives the spiritual gift of pastor to some in the church to humbly teach them, guide them, protect them, and to lead them in the mission that God has for His church, namely the Great Commission. The pastor loves the Gospel of Jesus Christ and puts it at the center of his life and ministry. Pastors do not seek fame or recognition for themselves, but they are placed in a position of authority by the Holy Spirit. The role of a pastor is one of humility and service as he is reminded daily of his overwhelming need of God’s grace for the task at hand.

As a gifted shepherd, you have the Spirit-given capacity and desire to serve God by overseeing, training, and caring for the needs of a group of Christians. You are usually very patient, people-centered, and willing to spend time in prayer for others. You tend to be a "Jack of All and Master of ONE," meaning you are usually dominant in one of the speaking gifts (evangelist, prophet, teacher, exhorter) as well. You are often authoritative, more a leader than a follower, and expressive, composed, and sensitive. Your pleasing personality draws people to you.

You have a burden to see others learn and grow and are protective of those under your care. You want to present the whole Word of God and do not like to present the same materials more than once. You are willing to study what is necessary to feed your group
and are more relationship oriented than task oriented. You are a peace-maker and diplomat - very tolerant of people's weaknesses. You tend to remember people's names and faces. You are more concerned with doing for others than others doing for you. You are faithful and devoted and may become a workaholic. You can become an all-purpose person in order to meet needs.

People with the gift of shepherding make the best Sunday school teachers and group leaders because their desire is to go beyond just teaching or leading, to shepherd and minister to the daily needs of their students. The position of Sunday school teacher or group leader is an extension of the pastoral ministry in the church. These groups should be shepherded on a small scale the same as the pastor shepherds the whole congregation on a large scale.

Be careful to involve other people; don't try to do it all yourself. Work on making people accountable. Do not be overly protective of your "flock." Because of these potentially weak areas, other people may think it is your job to do all the work; they rely too heavily on you. You may be expected to be available at all times, know all the answers, and be at every function. Learn when to say no.

Beware of Satan's attack on your gift. He will cause discouragement when the load gets heavy, and pride because your "sheep" look up to you. You may develop family problems because of too little time and attention. You may become selfish when "sheep" feed in other pastures.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS GIFT? This gift is a great help in many areas. You may serve as a Sunday school teacher, small group leader, pastor or assistant pastor, bus captain, special ministry leader (such as youth, children, men, etc.), nursery worker or as a half-way house or other type shelter volunteer. You may consider serving as a dormitory leader in a college, orphanage, children's home, etc. Scout troops would appreciate your assistance as a den leader.