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## 'Feed My Lambs' - How to do it

The best of the church are none too good for this work. Do not think because you have other service to do that therefore you should take no interest in this form of holy work, but kindly, according to your opportunities, stand ready to help the little ones, and to cheer those whose chief calling is to attend to them. To us all this message comes: 'Feed My lambs'. To the minister, and to all who have any knowledge of the things of God, the commission is given. See to it that you look after the children that are in Christ Jesus. Peter was a leader among believers, yet he must feed the lambs.

The lambs are the young of the flock. So, then, we ought to look specially and carefully after those who are young in grace. They may be old in years, and yet they may be mere babes in grace as to the length of



their spiritual life, and therefore they need to be under a good shepherd. As soon as a person is converted and added to the church, he should become the object of the care and kindness of his fellow-members. He has but newly come among us, and has no familiar friends among the saints, therefore let us all be friendly to him. Even should we leave our older comrades, we must be doubly kind towards those who are newly escaped from the world, and have come to find a refuge with the Almighty and His people. Watch with ceaseless care over those new-born babes who are strong in desires, but strong in nothing else. They have but just crept out of darkness, and their eyes can scarcely bear the light; let us be a shade to them until they grow accustomed to the blaze of gospel day. Addict yourselves to the holy work of caring for the feeble and despondent. Peter himself that morning must have felt like a newly-enlisted soldier, for he had in a sense ended his public Christian life by denying his Lord, and he had begun it again when he 'went out and wept bitterly'. He was now making a new confession of his faith before his Lord and his brethren, and, therefore, because he was thus made to sympathise with recruits he is commissioned to act as a guardian to them. Young converts are too timid to ask our help, and so our Lord introduces them to us, and with an emphatic word of command He says, 'Feed My lambs.' This shall be our reward: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.'

However young a believer may be, he should make an open confession of his faith, and be folded with the rest of the flock of Christ. We are not among those

who are suspicious of youthful piety: we could never see more reason for such suspicions in the case of the young than in the case of those who repent late in life. Of the two we think the latter are more to be questioned than the former: for a selfish fear of punishment and dread of death are more likely to produce a counterfeit faith than mere childishness would be. How much has the child missed which might have spoiled it! How much it does not know which, please God, we hope it never may know! Oh, how much there is of brightness and trustfulness about children when converted to God which is not seen in elder converts! Our Lord Jesus evidently felt deep sympathy with children, and he is but little like Christ who looks upon them as a trouble in the world, and treats them as if they must needs be either little deceivers or foolish simpletons. To you who teach in our schools is given this joyous privilege of finding out where these young disciples are who are truly the lambs of Christ's flock, and to you He saith, 'Feed My lambs'; that is, instruct such as are truly gracious, but young in years.

It is very remarkable that the word used here for 'feed My lambs' is very different from the word employed in the precept, 'feed My sheep'. I will not trouble you with Greek words, but the second 'feed' means exercise the office of a shepherd, rule, regulate, lead, manage them, do all that a shepherd has to do towards a flock; but this first feed does not include all that: it means distinctly *feed*, and it directs teachers to a duty which they may, perhaps, neglect - namely, that of instructing children in the faith. The lambs do not so much need keeping in order as we do who know

so much, and yet know so little: who think we are so far advanced that we judge one another, and contend and emulate. Christian children mainly need to be taught the doctrine, precept, and life of the gospel: they require to have Divine truth put before them clearly and forcibly. Why should the higher doctrines, the doctrines of grace, be kept back from them? They are not as some say, bones; or if they be bones, they are full of marrow, and covered with fatness. If there be any doctrine too difficult for a child, it is rather the fault of the teacher's conception of it than of the child's power to receive it, provided that child be really converted to God. It is ours to make doctrine simple; this is to be a main part of our work. Teach the little ones the whole truth and nothing but the truth; for instruction is the great want of the child's nature. A child has not only to live as you and I have, but also to grow; hence he has double need of food. When fathers say of their boys, 'What appetites they have!' they should remember that we also would have great appetites if we had not only to keep the machinery going, but to enlarge it at the same time. Children in grace have to grow, rising to greater capacity in knowing, being, doing, and feeling, and to greater power from God; therefore above all things they must be fed. They must be well fed or instructed, because they are in danger of having their cravings perversely satisfied with error. Youth is susceptible to evil doctrine. Whether *we* teach young Christians truth or not, the devil will be sure to teach them error. They will hear of it somehow, even if they are watched by the most careful guardians. The only way to keep chaff out of the child's little measure is to fill it brimful with good

wheat. Oh, that the Spirit of God may help us to do this! The more the young are taught the better; it will keep them from being misled.

We are specially exhorted to feed them because they are so likely to be overlooked. I am afraid our sermons often go over the heads of the younger folk - who, nevertheless, may be as true Christians as the older ones. Blessed is he who can so speak as to be understood by a child! Blessed is that godly woman who in her class so adapts herself to girlish modes of thought that the truth from her heart streams into the children's hearts without let or hindrance.

We are specially exhorted to feed the young because this work is so profitable. Do what we may with persons converted late in life, we can never make much of them. We are very glad of them for their own sakes; but at seventy what remains even if they live another ten years? Train up a child, and he may have fifty years of holy service before him. We are glad to welcome those who come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, but they have hardly taken their pruning-hook and their spade before the sun goes down, and their short day's work is ended. The time spent in training the late convert is greater than the space reserved for his actual service: but you take a child-convert and teach him well, and as early piety often becomes eminent piety, and that eminent piety may have a stretch of years before it in which God may be glorified and others may be blessed, such work is profitable in a high degree. It is also most beneficial work to ourselves. It exercises our humility and helps to keep us lowly and meek. It also trains our patience; let those who doubt this try it; for even young

Christians exercise the patience of those who believe in them, and are therefore anxious that they should justify their confidence. If you want big-souled, large-hearted men or women, look for them among those who are much engaged among the young, bearing with their follies, and sympathising with their weaknesses for Jesus' sake.