

SHEPHERDING COHORTS

.....
A COMMUNAL JOURNEY OF PRIESTHOOD





Introduction

Every one of us, every day of our lives, occupies some portion of space in this world. Because these spaces are daily, it's easy for them to become ordinary, underwhelming, even boring. So much so, in fact, that when Jesus prays for his Father's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven, we might not be able to imagine such ordinary places being included in such a kingdom. But if God really is bringing his kingdom to earth—to our part of the world, our city, our work, our street, our home—then our daily lives are anything but ordinary! Wherever we work, wherever we live, wherever we spend our time—these are the very places

where the radical claims of the Gospel meet the places in this world that need changing. God is not doing some other work while we do ours; his desire is that our work would be a means of his work! In this sense, the work we do in the spaces we occupy is eternal, even though it is daily. It's cosmic, even though it's local. It's small, incremental steps by which the "kingdoms" of this world become the kingdom of God.

How would one take on such a task? How does one make the ordinary sacred? Perhaps the answer has less to do with how, and more to do with who. Such a task



is the role of a priest (Gen. 1:28; 2:15; Num. 18:4, 6; Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) and one of the most profound and counter-cultural images of priestly work found throughout the biblical narrative, and used by Jesus himself, is that of a shepherd. “I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep and they know me” (John 10:14 ceb), “He will feed his flock like a shepherd” (Isa. 40:11 nrsv), “Like a shepherd God has led me all my life” (Gen. 48:15 ncv), “The Lord is my shepherd, . . . I will not be afraid, . . . your rod and your staff protect and comfort me” (Ps. 23:1, 4 nlt).

Such a priestly role requires a shift in the soul of the believer. We are accustomed to being the “sheep” while Jesus is our “shepherd,” being the laity while our pastor is the priest. So, it’s remarkable to hear Jesus’ voice ringing in our ears when he speaks to Peter at a meal on the beach, “Do you love me? Then take care of my sheep” (John 21:16). Jesus’ desire (which matches the heart of his Father revealed throughout the prophets) is that his sheep would become shepherds. That they would know, feed, lead, and protect the people he has placed within their daily

spaces. (And before you count yourself out on lack of merit, remember, Jesus is saying this to Peter who, only days before, had denied even knowing him).

What might happen if we saw the ordinary places of our daily life as pastures where we’ve been called to shepherd? What if we saw our co-workers, our family, our friends, customers, patients, and clients as the flock we’ve been called to know, feed, lead, and protect? One thing is for sure, we would not be alone in this work. The Spirit of God is already in these places—perhaps uninvited, unnoticed, unseen, sometimes even unwelcome—but God’s invitation is not only to embrace what the Spirit does for us and in us, but to participate with God in what he wants to do for the world through us as his priestly shepherds. Such is the goal of this curriculum. May God use us, the priesthood of all believers, to shepherd his flock—tending and caring for the sheep in our pastures by leading them to the Great Shepherd, and, by his Spirit, bearing the fruit of heaven in the spaces of our daily lives.

— Steve DeNeff & Daniel Rife

HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM:

This curriculum was designed to be used by a small group of people who occupy a similar type of **daily space** in which they're praying for God's kingdom to come. See below for a list of suggested spaces that **cohorts** could be formed around. However, cohorts can *certainly* be formed without this commonality. Whether you're gathering with people from similar spaces, or your cohort is a beautiful mosaic of representatives from numerous spaces, the corporate prayer of this curriculum is that God's kingdom would come to fruition on earth (i.e., our daily spaces) as it is in heaven.

Your kingdom come, your will be done in our...

Office Space *those who work in an office, on a staff, or run a staff*

Team Space *those who work with or play on a team—coaches, athletes, trainers*

School Space *those who work in a school building—K-12 teachers, administrators, staff, and students*

University Space *those who work or live at a university/campus—faculty, administrators, staff, and students*

Community Space *those who work for the betterment of their community—social workers, government officials, law enforcement, friendly neighbors, volunteers, non-profit staff, etc.*

Home Space *those who share a home—spouses, parents, kids, grandparents, roommates, etc.*

Retirement Space *those within the season of retirement*

Job-Site Space *those whose workplace is transient—contractors, engineers, construction workers, plumbers, electricians, landscapers, etc.*

Service-Industry Space *those who work with customers in retail or food services*

Emergency Space *those who work in emergency situations—cops, doctors, nurses, firefighters, etc.*

...as it is in heaven.

The curriculum is made up of **four modules** focused on the primary attributes of a shepherd identified by Jesus in John 10 and by the psalmist in Psalm 23: Know, Feed, Lead, and Protect. Each session is structured to fit within (or even under) an hour. Each module follows a pattern of gathering, discerning, and planning, and each module includes time for whole group discussion, small group discussion, and personal reflection. Typically, cohorts meet **once a week for four weeks**, completing one module per session; but each cohort could determine their own unique schedule. Ideally participants would have at least some time between modules to put into practice the plans they've made within their cohort.

In module 1, participants are invited to identify one to three "sheep" to focus on throughout the curriculum. In the following modules, however, the curriculum is designed for participants to focus specifically on one of their identified "sheep" during the session, to encourage depth rather than breadth. Because of this limitation, modules 1, 2, and 4 have **"at home exercises"** that follow the session material and simply repeat the module's primary activities so that participants are able, if so desired, to consider their other "sheep" after the cohort session.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

GROUP SIZE: Throughout the curriculum, different activities are labeled “WHOLE GROUP” or “GROUP OF 2-3.” These are simply suggestions designed to encourage depth of discussion without consuming a large quantity of time. You’ll know your cohort best; so, if your cohort is larger, it may be helpful to break into smaller groups from time to time. If your cohort is smaller, it may be fine to maintain whole group discussion throughout. Feel the freedom to make these decisions.

TIME: Each activity offers a suggested time frame. These are there to help you fit everything within (or under) an hour. Again, you’ll know your cohort best; so, if people are ready to move on, don’t feel the need to stretch an activity longer than it needs to be. Being familiar with the curriculum will be beneficial in this regard. You’ll be able to discern on the fly when extra time should be spent or when you need to keep moving to get through everything.

DISCUSSION: You can decide the style of discussion that works best for your cohort (it may be related to the size of your group too). Certain groups thrive with “popcorn” style discussion—the more casual style of speaking up when you desire. If “popcorn” style discussion isn’t working as well as you hoped (e.g., either no one is speaking up, or the same person is dominating the conversation), try “round robin” discussion—the more structured style of going around the room, person by person). Since participants are given substantial time to think about the activities in this curriculum, they are typically willing to share in this style (though you can always give people the option to “pass”).

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Each week includes “ON YOUR OWN” activities in which participants are invited to personally reflect on the provided prompts. Depending on the activity and the amount of time it will take, consider curating a reflective space. You could opt to play quiet music (perhaps with minimal or no words), or even invite people to leave the space to find another location to reflect for the assigned time.

ADDITIONAL COHORT PRACTICES: Consider the possibility of including these additional practices (along with other ideas you come up with) for your cohort to use either specifically when you meet, or throughout the entire season of your cohort’s sessions.

- Each module offers portions of Psalm 23 and John 10 you could use to practice Lectio Divina (reading the text aloud multiple times; perhaps even inviting people, after the last reading, to respond with a word or phrase that stood out to them).
- Or, you could read all of Psalm 23 at the start of each session, but read it from a different version every time (e.g., New Living Translation, Common English Bible, New Revised Standard Version, New English Translation).
- Or, perhaps your cohort could determine a spiritual discipline to practice together throughout the entire time/season of your sessions (e.g., solitude, silence, fasting, scripture reading, etc.).

SHEPHERDING COHORTS

A COMMUNAL JOURNEY OF PRIESTHOOD

Cohort: _____

Leader(s): _____

Location: _____

Schedule

Module 1 (Know): _____
Date

Module 2 (Feed): _____
Date

Module 3 (Lead): _____
Date

Module 4 (Protect): _____
Date

Circle the day you'll meet:

Sundays

Mondays

Tuesdays

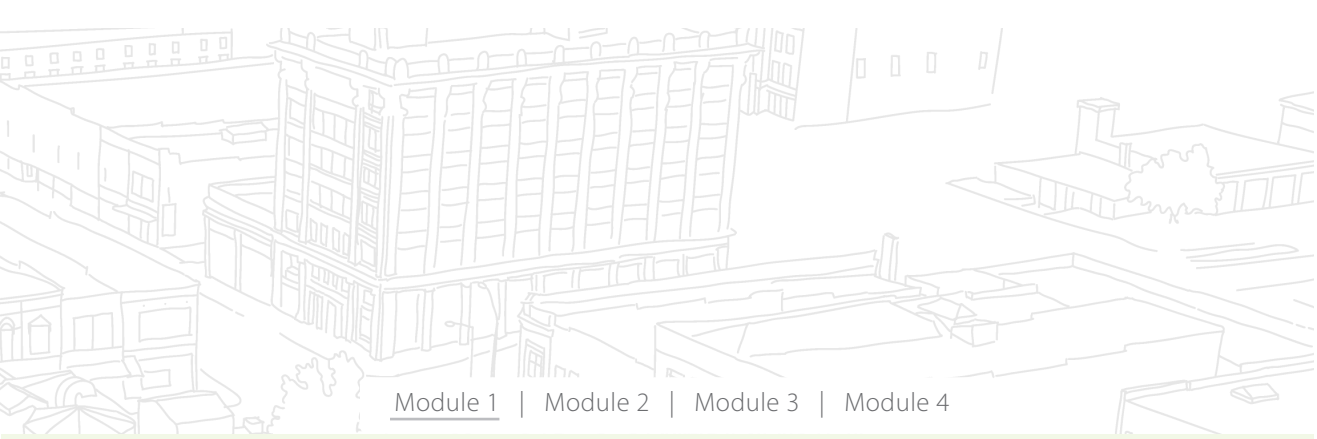
Wednesdays

Thursdays

Fridays

Saturdays

Time: _____



Module 1 | Module 2 | Module 3 | Module 4

KNOW

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. . . .
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the LORD
forever (Ps 23:1, 6).

“I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and they know me,
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father” (John 10:14-15).



GATHER

20 MINUTES

WHOLE GROUP

- 1 Introductions:** Let each person take a moment to introduce themselves to the cohort [5 min].
- 2 Respond** to the questions below, first on your own, then **share** and explain your responses to the whole group (for larger groups, feel free to split into smaller groups) [15 min].

What specific spaces do you regularly occupy (whether in your workplace, community, or home?) *What you write here is what will be meant by “your space” throughout these sessions.*

On a scale of 1-10, circle where you would place yourself in reference to shepherding in your space?

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • 10

I do not know how to shepherd in my space

I regularly shepherd others in my space

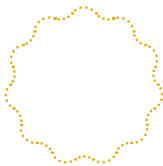
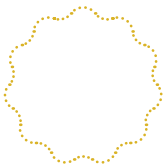
Either by writing or drawing, dream about what your space would look like if it was everything God hoped it would be.

What would be different?
What would the disposition of the people in your space be? How would you be different?

DISCERN 20 MINUTES

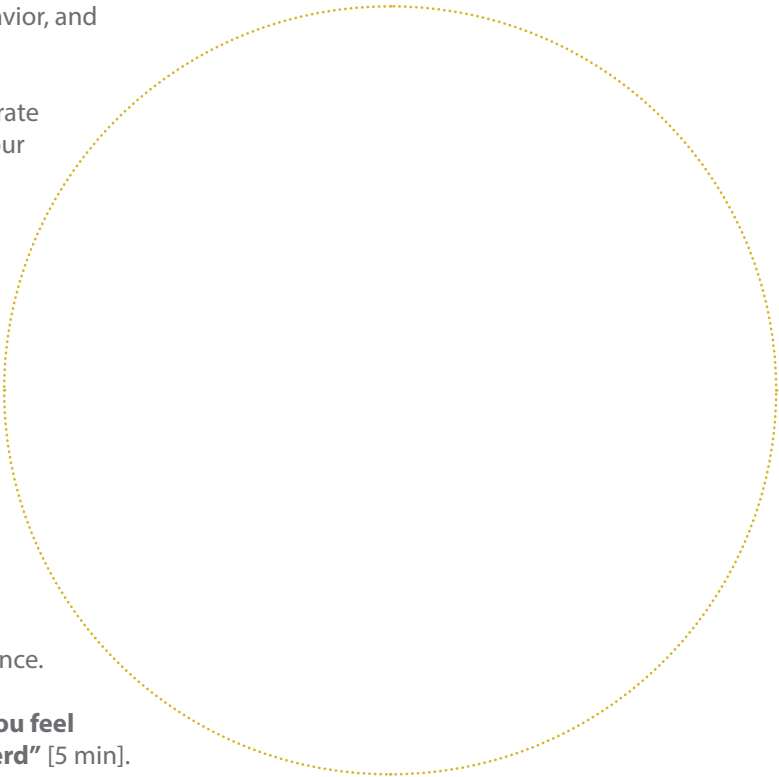
ON YOUR OWN

- 3 Spend a couple minutes considering what your space looks like now in contrast to what you’ve just drawn or described. **What factors hinder your space** from being more kingdom-like? [2-3 min].



- 4 Every space you occupy has a general disposition, mood, or ethos initiated and generated by the situations, conversations, behavior, and people within them.




Who are all the people that curate and influence the culture of your space? Take five minutes to **write the names of all the people within your space.** Organize their names in the circle provide in whatever way makes sense to you [5 min].



- 5 You may not have access to, or influence on, all the people you’ve listed, and it isn’t possible for you to shepherd everyone. But, look over all the names you wrote and listen for the Spirit’s guidance.

Circle 1-3 names of people you feel God is calling you to “shepherd” [5 min].

Once you’ve identified 1-3 people, transfer their names to the spaces provided on the next page.

Name: 	Name: 	Name: 
<p>6 (1) Dream about the names above. What might God hope for them specifically? What might their life look like if they experienced the kingdom of God on earth? (2) What challenges do you foresee in seeking to “shepherd” them? [10 min]</p>		
Dreams:	Dreams:	Dreams:
Challenges:	Challenges:	Challenges:

PLAN 20 MINUTES

GROUP OF 2-3

7 In a smaller group, **discuss**:

1. why you chose these people (*you do not have to share specific names*),
2. what dreams and challenges you perceive (*feel free to summarize*).

Then, help each other come up with one thing you could do this week to more intentionally know your “sheep” (or one in particular). Use the box provided (above) to record this plan.

I will seek to better KNOW the sheep God has placed in my care by...	
IDEA	WHEN

WHOLE GROUP

- 8** Once discussion has waned, the facilitator will offer space for members to share anything from their small group with the whole group. The facilitator will **pray** a final prayer of blessing. The organized time is over, but all are invited to linger as time allows. *For more resources to help you better know your sheep, see the optional **at home exercise** in the following few pages.*



MODULE 1 • AT HOME EXERCISE


KNOW YOUR SHEEP

One essential trait of shepherds is to know their sheep. Use this optional follow-up as a way to continue thinking about the 1-3 people you identified as your “sheep” in module 1.

- 1 Write the name of one of the sheep you identified in module 1 in the space provided (right).

Name of Sheep:

As best you can, answer the questions below about this person. If you don't know an answer, skip it—the next time you interact with that person, you'll have something to learn.

What do they enjoy?	What are their strengths?
	
What do they want/value?	What wearies them?

- 2 Did anything above surprise you? Do you feel you know your “sheep” well? Process through the answers (or absence thereof) and spend some time praying for this person. Then, consider one thing you could do **this week** to better know this “sheep.”

IDEA	WHEN

- 1 Write the name of one of the sheep you identified in module 1 in the space provided (right).

Name of Sheep:

.....

As best you can, answer the questions below about this person. If you don't know an answer, skip it—the next time you interact with that person, you'll have something to learn.

What do they enjoy?	What are their strengths?
What do they want/value?	What wears them?

- 2 Did anything above surprise you? Do you feel you know your “sheep” well? Process through the answers (or absence thereof) and spend some time praying for this person. Then, consider one thing you could do **this week** to better know this “sheep.”

IDEA	WHEN
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- 1 Write the name of one of the sheep you identified in module 1 in the space provided (right).

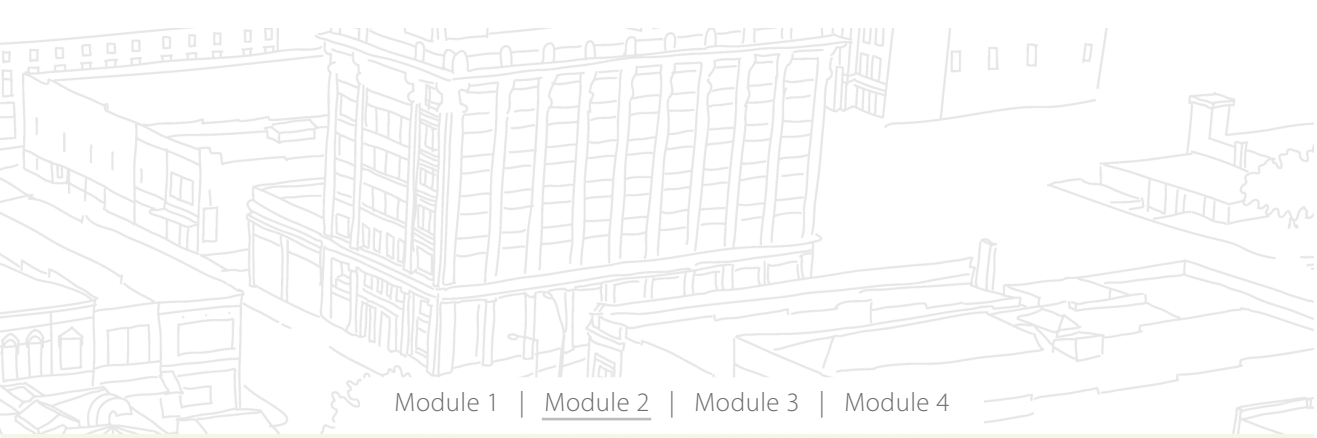
Name of Sheep:

As best you can, answer the questions below about this person. If you don't know an answer, skip it—the next time you interact with that person, you'll have something to learn.

What do they enjoy?	What are their strengths?
What do they want/value?	What wears them?

- 2 Did anything above surprise you? Do you feel you know your “sheep” well? Process through the answers (or absence thereof) and spend some time praying for this person. Then, consider one thing you could do **this week** to better know this “sheep.”

IDEA	WHEN
------	------



Module 1 | Module 2 | Module 3 | Module 4

FEED

He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He renews my strength. . . .
You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies (Ps 23:2-3a, 5a).

“Those who come in through me will be saved.
They will come and go freely and will find good pastures” (John 10:9).

GATHER 20 MINUTES

WHOLE GROUP

- 1 Respond to the questions below as a whole group (or larger groups could opt to split up) [10 min].

Since the last time your cohort met,

- is anything **encouraging** you (i.e., giving you hope) in regard to shepherding in your space (e.g., did anything previously discussed prove beneficial)?
- is anything **discouraging** you in regard to shepherding in your space (e.g., did anything previously discussed not work and need re-evaluation)?

Encourage one another and have someone pray for your group and this session.

DISCERN 20 MINUTES

ON YOUR OWN

Name of Sheep:

- 2 One essential trait of shepherds is that they feed their sheep. Before discussing what it means for you to “feed” those in your space, consider what your “sheep” are already eating.

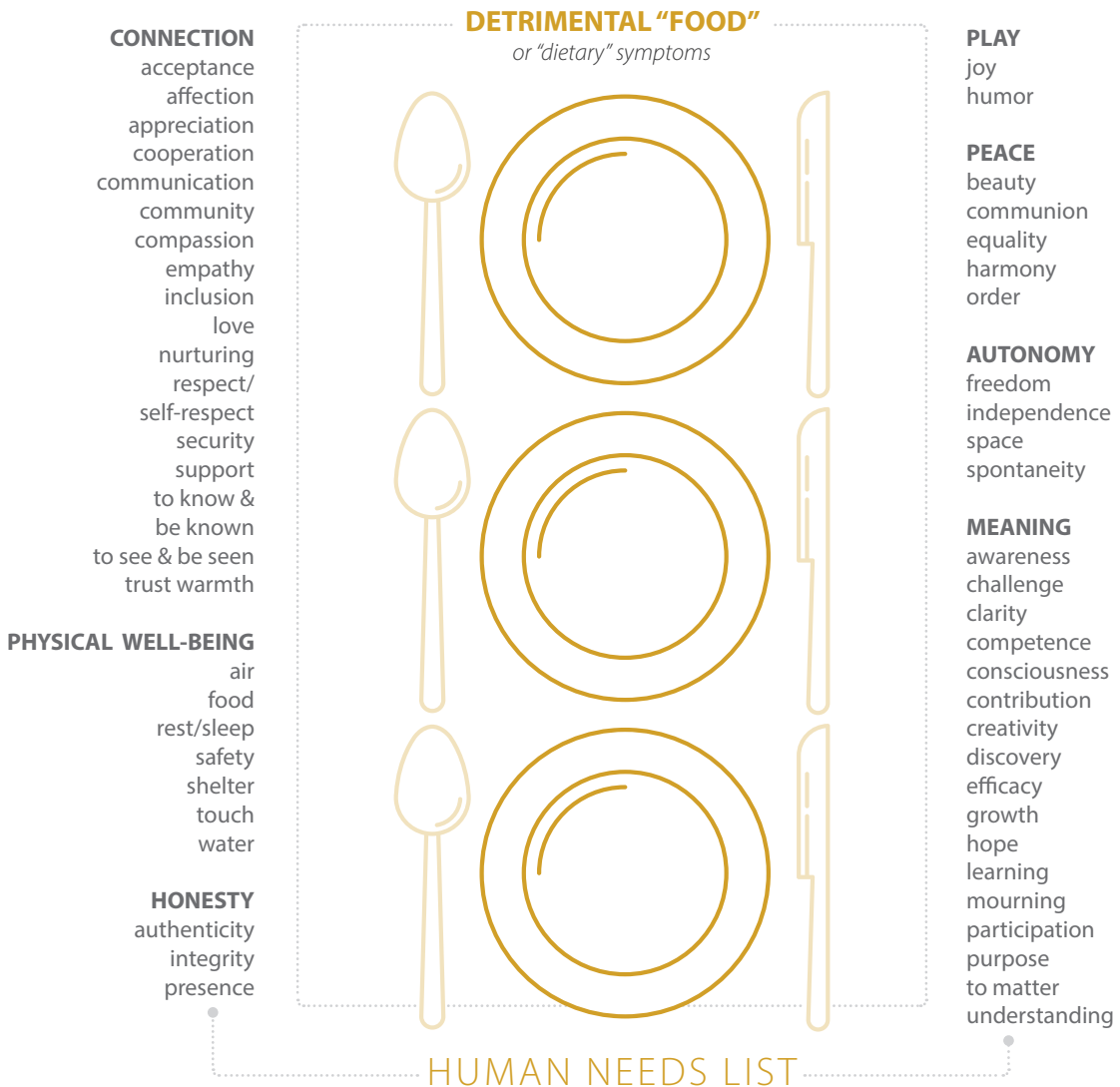
Think back to the sheep you identified last session, and choose one* to focus on for this exercise. Write their name in the space provided.

Fill the food-pyramid (right), with the voices your “sheep” listen to, or behaviors that seem indicative of experiences or ideologies that have influenced them (positively or negatively) [5 min].

- 3 Examine your pyramid. What “food” lacks sustenance, is malnourishing, or even harmful?

Transfer the three most detrimental “foods” (or “dietary symptoms”) to the plates on the next page.

**resources are provided in the pages following this module for you to do this same activity considering the other “sheep” you identified.*



- 4 Examine the **needs list** (left & right above). These needs are often the primary motivator for human behavior. Being a shepherd requires you to see beyond the behaviors of your "sheep" and empathize with their desire to meet a basic human need. **Draw a line** from the "food"/symptom you listed to the corresponding need you think your "sheep" are trying to meet [5 min].

GROUP OF 2-3

- 5 In groups of 2-3, **share** the needs you think your "sheep" are craving (or ask your group's opinion if you're not sure). Then, tally up from which **category** your group's identified needs came from (i.e., Connection, Physical Well-Being, Honesty, Play, Peace, Autonomy, or Meaning). Write the top three categories for your group on the next page, one at the top of each box [5 min].

PLAN 20 MINUTES

- 6 After writing below the three primary categories of human need your group identified, work together to **brainstorm healthy ways** you could seek to meet such need for the “sheep” in your space [10 min].

HUMAN NEED			
HEALTHY “FOOD”			

- 7 After brainstorming, choose one idea in each column to share with the whole group. Consider the following principles to help you determine which three ideas are “menu” worthy.

The most formative menus include food that is:

1. relational (i.e., does it require/invite conversation between you and your sheep?)
2. attainable (i.e., do you actually have the time and capacity to do this?)
3. measurable (i.e., how will you know you’ve done what you set out to do?)

WHOLE GROUP

- 8 Small groups **share** their menus with the large group discussing as desired [10 min].

As you hear all the responses, list one thing that you want to commit to doing before the next meeting. When will you do this?

<i>I will seek to better FEED the sheep God has placed in my care by...</i>	
IDEA	WHEN

- 9 Once every group has shared and discussion has waned, the facilitator will **pray** a final prayer of blessing over the cohort. The organized time is over, but all are invited to linger as time allows.



MODULE 2 • AT HOME EXERCISE

FEED YOUR SHEEP

One essential trait of shepherds is that they feed their sheep. Before considering how you might “feed” those in your context, consider what your “sheep” are already eating. As a follow-up to module 2, use this activity to consider how you might feed the other “sheep” you identified in module 1.

- 1 Consider one of the sheep you identified in module 1. Fill in the box (below), with the **voices** your “sheep” listen to, or **behaviors** that seem indicative of experiences or ideologies that have influenced them (positively or negatively).
- 2 After you’ve identified the “food” your “sheep” has been “eating” (or the behavioral effects of their “diet”), circle 1-3 of the most concerning/malnourishing things.
- 3 Draw a line from each circled item to the human need you believe your “sheep” is trying to meet.

CONNECTION

- acceptance
- affection
- appreciation
- cooperation
- communication
- community
- compassion
- empathy
- inclusion
- love
- nurturing
- respect/
- self-respect
- security
- support
- to know &
- be known
- to see & be seen
- trust warmth

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

- air
- food
- rest/sleep
- safety
- shelter
- touch
- water

HONESTY

- authenticity
- integrity
- presence

Name of Sheep

PLAY

- joy
- humor

PEACE

- beauty
- communion
- equality
- harmony
- order

AUTONOMY

- freedom
- independence
- space
- spontaneity

MEANING

- awareness
- challenge
- clarity
- competence
- consciousness
- contribution
- creativity
- discovery
- efficacy
- growth
- hope
- learning
- mourning
- participation
- purpose
- to matter
- understanding

..... HUMAN NEEDS LIST

- 4 Spend some time praying about how you might healthily satisfy these needs. Write one thing (right) you could do this week to intentionally feed this “sheep.”

- 1 Consider one of the sheep you identified in module 1. Fill in the box (below), with the **voices** your “sheep” listen to, or **behaviors** that seem indicative of experiences or ideologies that have influenced them (positively or negatively).
- 2 After you’ve identified the “food” your “sheep” has be “eating” (or the behavioral effects of their “diet”), circle 1-3 of the most concerning/malnourishing things.
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CONNECTION

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PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

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Name of Sheep

PLAY

- joy
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PEACE

- beauty
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AUTONOMY

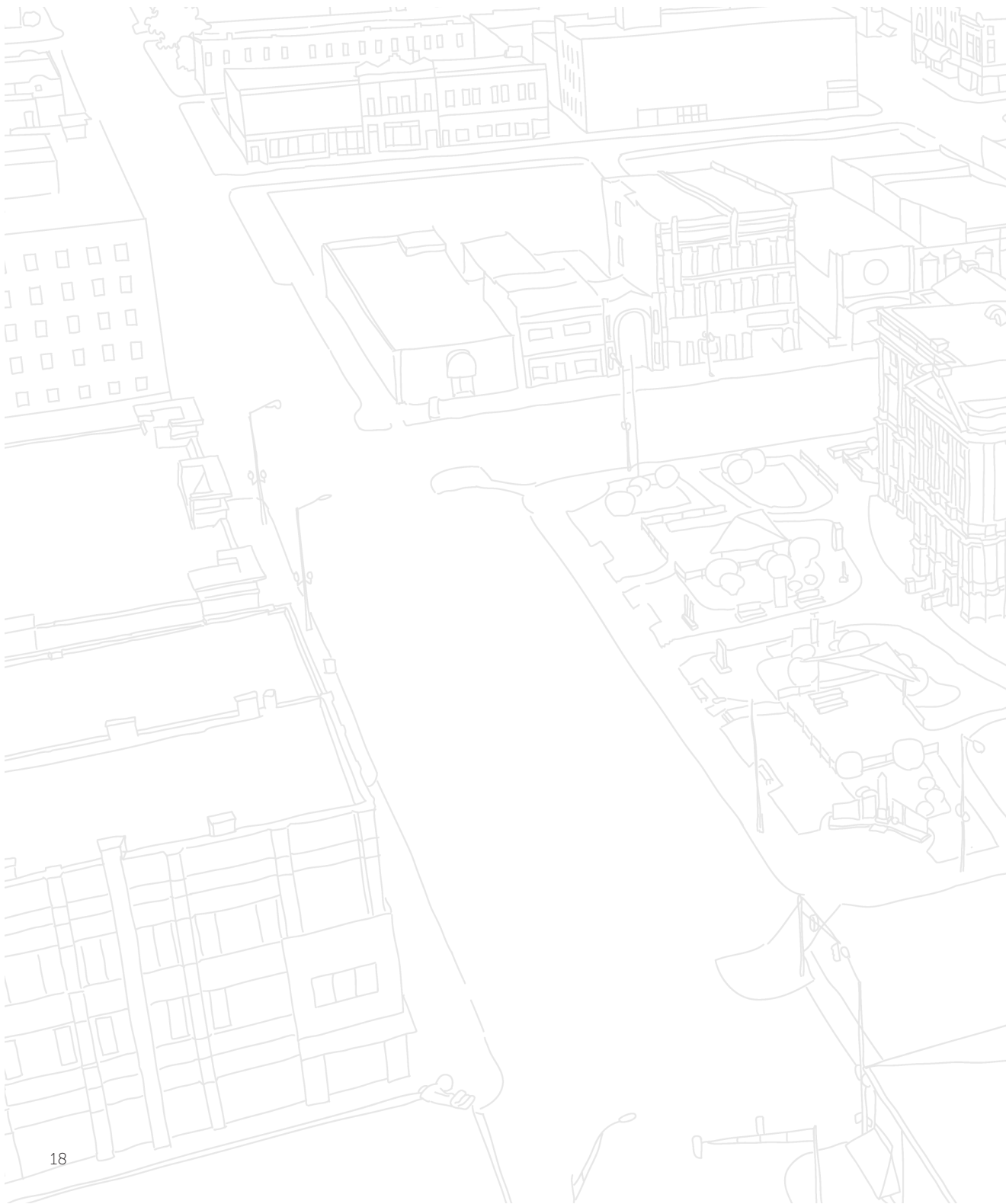
- freedom
- independence
- space
- spontaneity

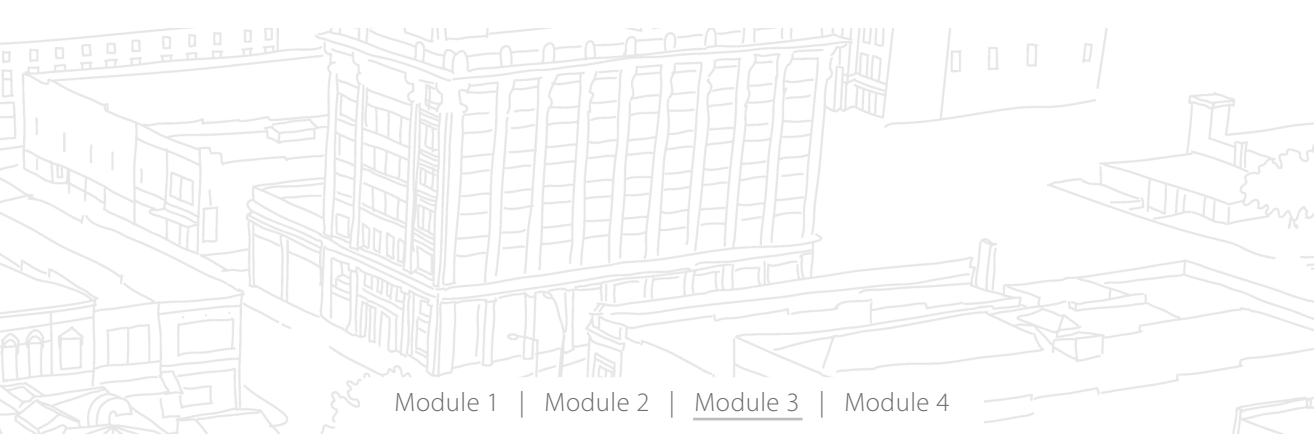
MEANING

- awareness
- challenge
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..... HUMAN NEEDS LIST

- 4 Spend some time praying about how you might healthily satisfy these needs. Write one thing (right) you could do this week to intentionally feed this “sheep.”





Module 1 | Module 2 | Module 3 | Module 4

LEAD

He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name. . . .
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings (Ps 23:3b, 5b).

“The sheep recognize [the shepherd’s] voice and come to him.
He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them,
and they follow him because they know his voice.
They won’t follow a stranger;
they will run from him because they don’t know his voice” (John 10:2-5).



GATHER 20 MINUTES

WHOLE GROUP

- 1 **Respond** to the questions below as a whole group (or larger groups could opt to split up) [10 min].

Since the last time your cohort met,

- is anything **encouraging** you (i.e., giving you hope) in regard to shepherding in your space (*e.g., did anything previously discussed prove beneficial*)?
- is anything **discouraging** you in regard to shepherding in your space (*e.g., did anything previously discussed not work and need re-evaluation*)?

Encourage one another and have someone pray for your group and this session.

ON YOUR OWN

- 2 After sharing your responses above, **reflect** on your life by responding to the questions below [5 min].

Who is one person whose voice you value(d) and listen(ed) to?

Why do/did you listen to them?

What do/did they do in order to cultivate this rapport with you (i.e., what are/were their character traits and habits)?

GROUP OF 2-3

- 3 **Share** your responses in groups of 2-3 [5 min].

DISCERN 5 MINUTES

ON YOUR OWN

- 4 One essential trait of a shepherd is that they **lead** their sheep. The ability to lead, however, is less dependent on a set of skills and more dependent on the trustworthiness of the shepherd's voice. Sheep will only follow a voice they trust.

The following prompts illustrate dispositions prone to cultivating trust. Answer to what degree you agree or disagree with the prompts as they relate to your disposition in your space. You will not be asked to share your scores with anyone.

	Disagree	Agree
HONEST		
I speak honorably about others in their presence and absence (i.e. I'm not two-faced).	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ =	
I tell the truth without any modification or agenda.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ =	
I am sincere & appropriately transparent (i.e., I do not falsely present myself to prove something or impress someone).	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ =	
		Total:
HUMBLE		
I admit when I'm wrong.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ =	
I've had a respectful conversation with someone who has a different point of view than me.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ =	
I've asked someone for help in the last month.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ =	
		Total:
HELPFUL		
I make other people's lives easier.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ =	
I regularly show people I care about them.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ =	
I communicate consistently and effectively.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ =	
		Total:

- 5 Add up the **total** score based on your selections and write your total in the space provided here:

	37-45 Highly Trustworthy Voice
	28-36 Trustworthy Voice
	19-27 Somewhat Trustworthy Voice
	0-18 Untrustworthy Voice

PLAN 20 MINUTES

6 Considering the previous pages, answer the following prompts on your own. Be as specific as you want. After you've responded, **pass your entire worksheet to the right**.

What character trait is God inviting you to cultivate in order to have a greater shepherding voice?

What is difficult or scares you the most about trying to cultivate this?

7 Read the above answers. Sit with their dilemma for a moment; **write a simple idea** about how they might step into God's invitation—or if you can't think of anything, just write a note of encouragement or a prayer [3 min]. Then, pass the whole worksheet to the right again (until all the boxes are filled).

IDEA 1

IDEA 2

IDEA 3

GROUP OF 2-3

8 Read through the ideas above. Make a **plan** of action (right)—whether an idea above, or one inspired by them. **Share** your response with a person (or two) that didn't already see your worksheet [5 min].

I will cultivate my voice to better LEAD the sheep God has placed in my care by...

IDEA

WHEN

WHOLE GROUP

9 Once discussion has waned, the facilitator will **pray** a final prayer of blessing over the cohort. The organized time is over, but all are invited to linger as time allows.

PROTECT

Even when I walk through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me (Ps 23:4).

“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy.
My purpose is to give [my sheep] a rich and satisfying life.
I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.
A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming.
He will abandon the sheep because they don’t belong to him
and he isn’t their shepherd” (John 10:10-12a).



GATHER 10 MINUTES

WHOLE GROUP

- 1 Respond to the questions below as a whole group (or larger groups could opt to split up) [10 min].

Since the last time your cohort met,

- is anything **encouraging** you (i.e., giving you hope) in regard to shepherding in your space (e.g., *did anything previously discussed prove beneficial*)?
- is anything **discouraging** you in regard to shepherding in your space (e.g., *did anything previously discussed not work and need re-evaluation*)?

Encourage one another and have someone pray for your group and this session.

DISCERN 10 MINUTES

Name of Sheep:

ON YOUR OWN

- 2 One essential trait of shepherds is that they **protect** their sheep. To be prepared to protect their sheep a shepherd must first discern what threatens their sheep. Consider one* of the "sheep" you identified in module 1 (write their name above). What threatens them emotionally, spiritually, mentally, & physically?

Organize these threats as either **controllable threats** (e.g., self-inflicted factors, relationships, habits, beliefs, etc.) or **uncontrollable threats** (e.g., external factors, family, past wounds, etc.) [5 min].

CONTROLLABLE THREATS

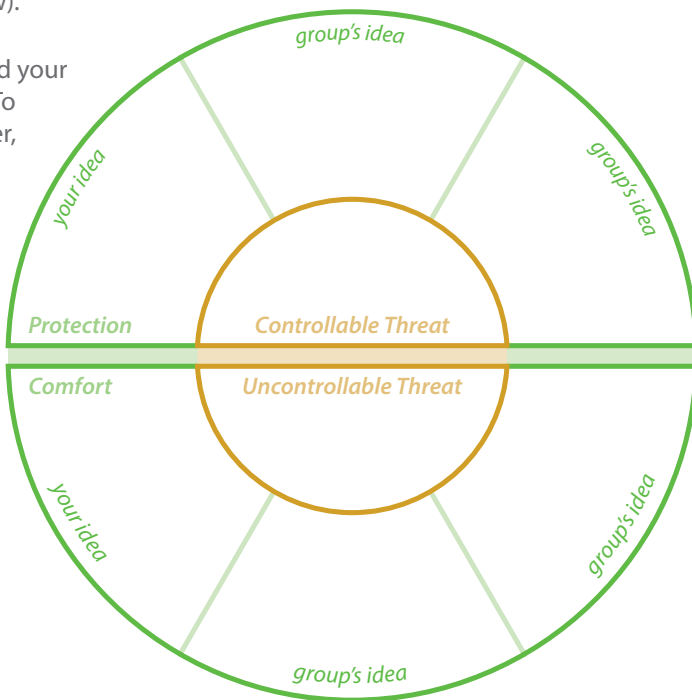
UNCONTROLLABLE THREATS

*resources are provided in the pages following this module for you to do this same activity considering the other "sheep" you identified.

3 Of all the threats you identified, *select one from both lists* to focus on. Write them in the assigned center sectors of the circle below (yellow).

4 The psalmist writes of God, “Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me” (Ps 23:4). To **protect** your sheep is to preempt danger, and ward it off when it is present. But protection can also mean to **comfort** your sheep when they have already been hurt or when a threat is simply unavoidable.

Think of **one way you could protect** your sheep from the controllable threat you selected *and one way you could comfort* them amidst the uncontrollable threat. Write these responses in the assigned outer sectors of the circle (green)[5 min].



PLAN 20 MINUTES

GROUP OF 2-3

5 In a group of 2-3 persons, **share** your identified threats as well as your one idea of protection and your one idea of comfort—be as general or specific as you want. Ask your group to give you **two more ideas** for both protection and comfort (so the outer sectors of your circle are completely filled).

ON YOUR OWN

6 After everyone in your group has shared, take a moment to **choose one protection idea and one comfort idea** that you believe would be possible to accomplish (or at least start) this week [5 min].

*I will PROTECT & COMFORT the sheep
God has placed in my care by...*

Protection

Comfort

COMMISSION 20 MINUTES

WHOLE GROUP

- 7 Hear Jesus' **summation** of the Church's call from the Gospel according to John (the facilitator will read **John 21:15-17**).
- 8 As a sign of God's empowerment by his Spirit to fulfill the call to feed his sheep, all are invited to be **anointed** with the sign of the cross on their foreheads. Upon being anointed each person is invited to anoint the person next to them with these words:

The Spirit of God is upon you—feed his sheep.

- 9 After everyone has been anointed, three members, along with the facilitator, read aloud selections from Isaiah 61 (*to the right*) as an **affirmation** of your cohort's commissioning.

- 10 The facilitator invites everyone to stand and prays the following **prayer of blessing** over them:

Reader 1: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,
for the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

Reader 2: He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted
and to proclaim that captives will be released
and prisoners will be freed.

Reader 3: He has sent me to tell those who mourn
that the time of the LORD's favor has come,
and with it,
the day of God's anger against their enemies.

Facilitator: You will be called priests of the LORD,
ministers of our God.

All: The Word of the LORD
Thanks be to God!

*O Holy God, you raise up priests to cultivate the spaces of this world,
to plant the Good News of your kingdom, and to be caretakers of new life.
Bless us, your servants, in our work of knowing, feeding, leading, and protecting
the "sheep" you so dearly love and have placed in our care.
Use us, by your Spirit, to bear heavenly fruit in the spaces you've called us,
and to bear the image of your Son, Jesus Christ,
so we may all know you more and participate in your kingdom coming work.
Equip us for service, enliven us with your joy,
and help us remember and trust that it is you who will make this happen
through Jesus Christ your Son, by the power of your Spirit, for the glory of your name.*

Amen.

The organized time is over, but all are invited to linger as time allows.



MODULE 4 • AT HOME EXERCISE

PROTECT YOUR SHEEP

One essential trait of shepherds is that they protect their sheep. To be prepared to protect their sheep a shepherd must first discern what threatens their sheep. As a follow-up to module 4, use this activity to consider how you might protect the other “sheep” you identified in module 1.

- 1 Consider one of the other “sheep” you identified in module 1—write their name in the space provided.

Name of Sheep:

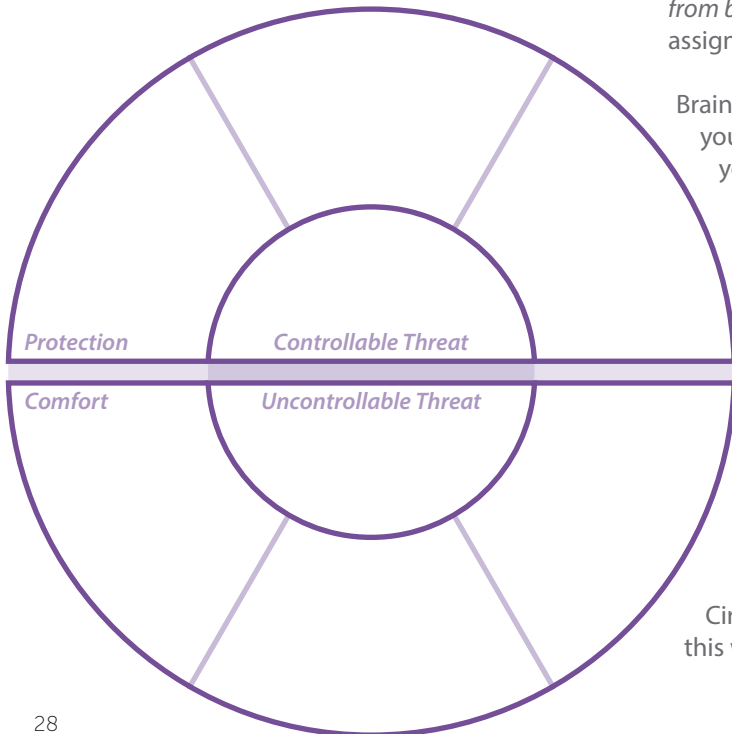
What threatens them emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically? Organize these threats as either **controllable threats** (e.g., self-inflicted factors, relationships, habits, beliefs, etc.) or **uncontrollable threats** (e.g., external factors, family, past wounds, etc.).

CONTROLLABLE THREATS	UNCONTROLLABLE THREATS

- 2 Of all the threats you identified, *select one from both lists* to focus on. Write them in the assigned center sectors of the circle (left).

Brainstorm **three ways you could protect** your sheep from the controllable threat you selected & **three ways you could comfort** them amidst the uncontrollable threat.

Write these responses in the assigned outer sectors of the circle.



- 3 Spend some time praying for this person. Ask God to help you discern which of your ideas is a best first step in your pursuit to better protect & comfort this “sheep.”

Circle the ideas you want to begin or try this week.

- 1 Consider one of the other “sheep” you identified in module 1—write their name in the space provided.

Name of Sheep:

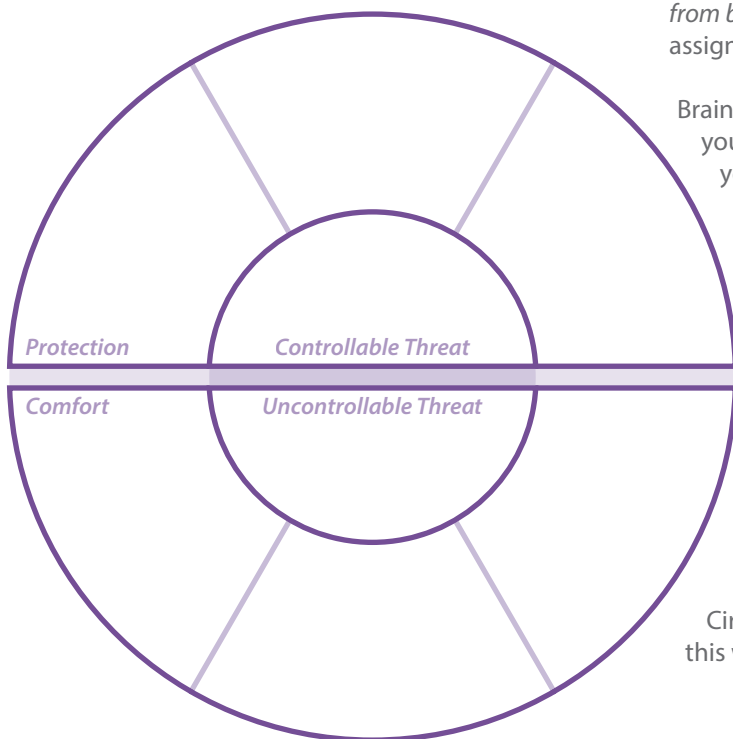
What threatens them emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically? Organize these threats as either **controllable threats** (e.g., self-inflicted factors, relationships, habits, beliefs, etc.) or **uncontrollable threats** (e.g., external factors, family, past wounds, etc.).

CONTROLLABLE THREATS	UNCONTROLLABLE THREATS

- 2 Of all the threats you identified, *select one from both lists* to focus on. Write them in the assigned center sectors of the circle (left).

Brainstorm **three ways you could protect** your sheep from the controllable threat you selected & **three ways you could comfort** them amidst the uncontrollable threat.

Write these responses in the assigned outer sectors of the circle.



- 3 Spend some time praying for this person. Ask God to help you discern which of your ideas is a best first step in your pursuit to better protect & comfort this “sheep.”

Circle the ideas you want to begin or try this week.



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