



# Shepherd's Path

## A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

### Lookin' for a Leader Series, Lesson 5

**Lesson Title:** The Ark Is Captured and Returned

**Take Home Point:** God leads us; pay attention to him!

#### **Warm-Up:**

A number of my acquaintances are musicians who frequently perform before the public. A few have personal rituals they always follow as part of getting ready to perform. But none of them believe these are a substitute for practice, practice, practice. They know that practice is the only sure preparation for a successful performance. In fact, a few years ago I overheard a stagehand say "Good luck!" as the musician was going on stage. He wheeled around and barked, "Luck is for the unprepared!"—then continued on to the stage for his performance.

**Read:** 1 Samuel 4-7

#### **Observation (What happened?):**

What caused the Israelites to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the battle?

What happened to the Philistines while they kept the ark?

#### **Interpretation (What does it mean?):**

What was God teaching the Israelites in allowing the ark to be captured? What was he teaching the Philistines?

What indication do we have in this account that the Israelites learned their lesson (at least temporarily)?

#### **Insight:**

Does it sometimes seem difficult to hear what God is leading you to do? Perhaps this is not true for you, but we know that even devoted believers struggle with clearly knowing God's direction. Do you wonder why that is so? There are two reasons. Sometimes it is deliberate on God's part. It is part of his training. He seeks to develop trust, patience, faithfulness, and time in relationship with you. One way he does that is to speak with a gentle voice; if you don't take time to quiet your heart and focus on his word and ways, you may not hear him. Which leads to the second reason—distractions of the world. This is deliberate on Satan's part. He tempts you with "busyness" and the constant pull of entertainment. It requires genuine spiritual and mental discipline and awareness on your part to discern and overcome these temptations. Listening for the voice of God requires time and practice. But he promises he will guide you through this life.

#### **Application (What does it mean to me?):**

What are some ways that you make sure you are paying attention to God's direction?

Can you think of a time in your life that you tried to lead God? What was the result?