



Course 7, Session 2 Student Notes: The Bowtie, Getting the Customer Is Only Half

Why the Sale Is the Middle of the Story, Not the End

Big Idea: The old funnel ends at the sale. The recurring revenue Bowtie shows the sale is the middle, not the end. Keeping and growing the customer is the real engine.

How to use these notes. These are yours to study on your own, before or after the session. Read each section slowly. Under every principle there is a **Notes** space to write what stands out to you, and a **Reflect** question to answer honestly in writing. Keep your Bible nearby. Take about 30 minutes, and end in prayer. Bring your notes and questions to the group.

Open in Prayer

Before you begin, pray this simple prayer, or your own: "Good Shepherd, You who know Your sheep by name and stay with them, teach me to serve the people I sell to the way You serve me, faithfully, over time, and not just until the sale is closed. Amen."

The Scripture for This Session

Read these slowly, out loud if you can:

- **John 10:11**, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."
- **John 10:14**, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."
- **Proverbs 27:23**, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds."

Reflect: When you make a sale, what do you usually do next? Be honest. Do you stay with that customer, or do you move on to the next one?

The Big Picture

Last session we planted a flag. We said stop building a business that resets to zero every month, and start building one that provides like manna, fresh and renewing. This session we open the model that makes that

actually work, and the first thing it does is challenge a habit almost every one of us carries: the habit of treating the sale as the end of the story.

Picture the most famous drawing in all of business, the funnel. It is wide at the top where you gather attention, and it narrows down through interest and consideration to a single point at the bottom labeled “the sale.” And then it just stops. Think about what that picture quietly teaches you every time you look at it. The customer is the thing that falls out the bottom, and once they fall out, your job is over. For a one time business, that is almost fine. But we are building recurring businesses now, and for a recurring business the funnel is a lie that will quietly bankrupt you, because the sale is not the end. It is the beginning of the part that actually pays. This session redraws the whole picture.

Principle 1: The Funnel Ends at the Sale. The Bowtie Keeps Going.

The people who study recurring revenue seriously, especially a firm called Winning by Design, threw out the funnel and drew something better. They took the funnel and added a mirror image of it on the other side of the sale, and the shape you get looks exactly like a bowtie. On the left, the familiar narrowing funnel that gets you to the sale. In the middle, the knot, the sale itself. And on the right, a second half that widens back out again, everything you do after the sale to keep and grow that customer.

The reason that right side matters so much comes down to where the money actually is. In a one time business, all the value is made on the left, at the moment of sale. But in a recurring business, most of the value is made on the right, after the sale, month after month, as customers stay and grow. If someone pays you a small amount every month, the sale you closed today is worth almost nothing by itself. It only becomes valuable if they stay for many months, and more valuable still if, over time, they buy more. So the sale is not the payoff. The sale is the down payment on a relationship, and the relationship is where the real value lives. The left side gets you the customer. The right side is the engine.

Reflect: If you drew your own bowtie right now, which side would be fuller, the getting or the keeping? Be honest about the gap.

Notes:

Principle 2: The Money Is Made on the Right Side, After the Sale.

There are four things that happen on the right side of the bowtie, and the rest of this course is built on them. First, **onboarding**, getting the new customer to their first real taste of value as fast as possible, so they do not drift away before they ever see why they said yes. Second, **adoption**, helping them actually use and benefit from what they bought, week after week, until it becomes part of their life. Third, **retention**, keeping them month after month by continuing to deliver value worth paying for, which we will come to call keeping covenant. And fourth, **expansion**, growing the relationship over time and serving them more deeply, which Scripture would call enlarging the tent.

Onboarding, adoption, retention, expansion. That is the right side. If that side of your business is empty, your recurring revenue will leak away faster than you can pour it in. Most of us have spent years getting very good at the left side, the getting, and almost no attention on the right side, the keeping and the growing. We know how to close. We have never really thought about what happens on day two, day thirty, month six. Naming that gap is not a verdict on you. It is an opportunity, because the right side is where a recurring business is actually won.

Reflect: Of the four after the sale activities (onboarding, adoption, retention, expansion), which one is weakest in your business right now, and what would it look like to strengthen it?

Notes:

Principle 3: Know Your Customers the Way a Shepherd Knows His Flock.

Jesus draws the difference for us in John 10. He describes two kinds of people who stand in front of the sheep. One is the hired hand, who is there for the paycheck, and when trouble comes he runs, because the sheep are not really his and he does not truly care about them. The other is the good shepherd, who knows his sheep, who stays, who lays down his life for them. The hired hand closes and leaves. The good shepherd stays and keeps the flock. That is the difference between a business that treats the sale as the end and a business that treats the sale as the start of faithful care.

Notice how often Jesus repeats one word: “know.” “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.” Knowing is the hinge of the whole thing. The hired hand does not know the sheep and does not care to. The shepherd knows them, and because he knows them, he can keep them. You cannot retain what you do not track. You cannot serve a need you never bothered to learn. Pair that with Proverbs 27:23, “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,” and you have the whole discipline in two verses. Most businesses could not tell you which of their current customers is thriving and which is quietly about to leave. The shepherd could. He knows.

Reflect: Could you honestly name your current customers and say who is thriving, who is quiet, and who is at risk? Where are the blanks in your knowledge, and what does that tell you?

Notes:

Principle 4: The Hired Hand Mindset Quietly Kills a Recurring Business.

Most of us recognize ourselves in the hired hand more than we would like to. The hired hand is present for the transaction. He is brilliant at getting the customer and utterly absent after the sale. He closes, he collects, and when a problem comes, when the customer is confused or struggling or quietly unhappy, he is nowhere to be found, because in his mind the job ended at the sale. And the result is exactly what Jesus describes: the flock scatters. The customers drift away, and the seller never even notices, because he was already off hunting the next one.

Here is the encouraging part. The good shepherd model is not only kinder, it is smarter. It is the profitable model in recurring revenue, because the flock that is known and kept and grown is the flock that renews month after month and grows more valuable over time. The modern proof is everywhere. In 2018 the software company HubSpot publicly retired the funnel and replaced it with what they call the flywheel, for exactly this reason: the funnel treats customers as an output that falls out the bottom and disappears, quietly ignoring the enormous value of keeping and delighting the customers you already have. Same conviction as the Bowtie. Same conviction as the good shepherd. The sale is not the end, and the businesses that win are the ones that keep serving after the money changes hands.

Reflect: Where have you acted like the hired hand, closing the sale and moving on? What is one hired hand habit you want to trade for a shepherd's habit this month?

Notes:

The Story: The Good Shepherd (John 10:11 to 14)

Read the passage. Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth ... The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." In a few sentences Jesus lays out two entirely different ways of standing in front of the people in your care, and they map with startling precision onto the two halves of the bowtie.

The hired hand is committed only to the transaction. He is there for the wage, and when the wolf comes he runs, because he never cared for the sheep, only for the pay. In business terms he is the seller whose whole world is the left side of the bowtie, and when a customer struggles, he has already vanished. The good shepherd is committed to the relationship. He knows the sheep individually, he stays through danger, and his care runs all the way to laying down his life. That is the right side of the bowtie in its purest form. The shepherd does not vanish once the flock is gathered. That is when his real work begins: protecting, feeding, leading, staying. Winning by Design built an entire modern framework around this exact insight. The sale is only the knot in the middle, and everything the shepherd does afterward is what makes the whole thing work.

Reflect: Proverbs says be diligent to know the state of your flocks. Which of your customers right now is quietly at risk, and would you even know if they were? What would it take to find out?

Notes:

Put It Into Practice

1. Draw your bowtie. On a page, draw a large bowtie. On the left half, write in a few words everything you currently do to get a customer (how you find people, warm them up, and close). On the right half, write everything you currently do after the sale to keep and grow that customer. The rule is honesty. Write only what you actually do, not what you wish you did.

Which side is emptier, and by how much:

2. Take a flock inventory. List your current or most recent customers by name, as many as you can, and mark each one thriving, quiet, or at risk, based on what you honestly know. If you realize you do not know enough to mark someone, that blank is itself the lesson. A shepherd would know.

3. This week's assignment. Pick the three customers you marked quiet or at risk, and reach out to each one personally this week, not to sell, simply to check on them and learn the state of your flock. Ask how things are going, what is working, what is not. Write down one thing you learned that surprised you.

Go Deeper (Optional)

- **Read:** *Revenue Architecture* by Jacco van der Kooij (Winning by Design), where the Bowtie model is laid out in full.
- **Listen:** the *SaaStr Podcast*, any episode on customer retention.
- **Study:** John 10:1 to 18; Proverbs 27:23 to 27.

Close in Prayer

“Father, thank You for the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep and lays down His life for them. Teach me to see the people I serve not as sales to close but as a flock to know and keep. Make me diligent to know the state of my customers, faithful to stay when trouble comes, and generous to grow the relationship over time. Root out every hired hand instinct in me, and let my business become a place of steady, shepherding care that provides for the mission and reflects Your heart. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

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