Biblical Shepherding and the Praxis of Ecclesial Leadership

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Abstract

The Bible is replete with metaphorical application, the use of a well-known practice to elucidate and expand the understanding of a secondary practice. Such is the case with the biblical concept of shepherding. This work examines the biblical use of shepherding as a metaphorical explanation of the praxis of ecclesial leadership. The idea of shepherding lends itself to various forms of leadership, the most obvious of which is servant leadership. Jesus identified Himself as the Chief Shepherd in John 10. The apostle Peter then gave explicit instructions to elders on how to shepherd God's flock, based on the example of Jesus (1 Pt. 5:1-4). This work concludes by connecting the metaphor of biblical shepherding to leadership theories known and practiced in contemporary business settings.

Keywords: **shepherd, sheep, servant leader, love, humility, ecclesia**

The shepherd metaphor is perhaps the richest of all metaphors in the Bible when one seeks to describe or present a mental picture of the relationship between God and His people (Golding, 2006). The imagery of shepherding would have been intuitive in the ancient near eastern cultures. In both the Old and New testament cultures, shepherding was a dynamic and vital part of daily life (Tidball, 1986). Contemporary generations, far removed from the original culture, may not recognize the original use that was so evident when the metaphor was given birth. Caird (1997) said a metaphor may become so worn and faded that it loses its original meaning. When the original meaning is lost, new cultural meanings may develop and change the use of the metaphor altogether. This consideration is certainly warranted in the present work as shepherding is far removed from the consciousness of many in present day cultural settings.

Robert Ball, Ph.D.

Though most contemporary cultures are not as familiar with the practical aspects of shepherding, there remains the mental picture of one caring for sheep who cannot care for themselves. Understanding the importance of shepherding as well as the various aspects and challenges of shepherding often help the contemporary reader appreciate the metaphor of shepherding more completely. Sheep, goats, and various breeds of cattle were critical components of sacrificial systems, daily sustenance, clothing, and wealth (Laniak, 2006). The realization of these elements of shepherding lend new comprehension for modern readers of the biblical text.

Concerning ecclesial leadership, the elements of biblical shepherding are gleaned from the various circumstances where the metaphor is used in the biblical text. Each use of the shepherding metaphor has its own context from which to draw rich and valuable insight concerning ecclesial leadership. The shepherd-sheep relationship is deep and wide with the revelation of God's love and care for His people (Strauch, 1995). This work seeks to plumb the depths of the shepherd-sheep relationship by looking at the doctrinal revelation contained in scripture and then applying that doctrinal revelation to current leadership theories and their associated praxis to biblical ecclesial leadership as pastor.

The Metaphor of Shepherding in The Bible

The practice of shepherding is mentioned throughout the Old Testament. The Hebrew word *ro ʿeh* from the primitive root *ra ʿah* is used some 173 times to indicate feeding, shepherding, and herding (Carpenter & Comfort, 2000). When used metaphorically, the word most often refers to leading people or the exercise of leadership in some capacity. For example, the word is used in David's famous passage, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1). David's declaration was a reference to God's compassion as a faithful shepherd (Carpenter & Comfort, 2000). David was speaking of being both led and cared for by God. Not only was the idea of shepherding applied to God's care

for David and Israel, Laniak (2006) devoted an entire chapter to describing the word's metaphorical use concerning kings and leaders of pagan nations as they cared for the people under their rulership. Pagan kings were often viewed as descendants of the gods or at minimum they were viewed as having been appointed by the gods to rule over the people.

The New Testament expression for shepherd is most often found in the word *poimen*. Much like the Hebrew word, the Greek word is used to express many variations of overseeing or caring for a flock (Zodhiates, 2000). The most recognized ecclesial leadership term connected to *poimen* is pastor (Fahlbusch & Bromiley, 2005). Fahlbusch and Bromiley continue by pointing out that *poimen* is used interchangeably by the apostle Paul with the words elder (*presbyteros*) and bishop (*episkopos*). According to Baxter (1830), a pastor is one called of God for the teaching and guiding of a local church and its members, also identified metaphorically as a flock. One can easily see the connection to shepherding as the pastor cares for God's flock. Laniak (2006) points to Jesus as the Chief Shepherd under which the local pastor serves as the under shepherd of his Lord's flock.

Metaphorical Use of Shepherd in The Old Testament

Having briefly connected the metaphorical use of shepherding to both the Old and New Testaments, this work now turns to examine the use of the word as a metaphor in specific texts. One must use caution when interpreting metaphors due to the ease with which a metaphor may be misinterpreted or misapplied. Metaphors are correctly understood by either the direct explanation of the person using the metaphor or by the obvious context in which the metaphor is used. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), it is the use of a metaphor by which the experience or understanding of one thing is applied to another. In this case, it is the use of metaphorical shepherding by which elements of biblical ecclesial leadership are better understood.

Robert Ball, Ph.D.

The First Shepherd: Genesis 4:2

In Genesis 4:2 one finds the first mention of shepherding. The text reads, "And Abel was a keeper of sheep." Cain and Abel were the first two sons born to Adam and Eve. After Adam's sinful disobedience of God's command concerning the forbidden fruit, one finds these two sons bringing an offering to God. One might intuitively presume that since they were bringing an offering to God, they had been instructed on how to do so by God (Perry, 2005). Cain was a tiller of the ground and thus brought an offering from the produce of the ground. Abel, a shepherd, brought of the firstlings of the flock. The text informs the reader that God had respect for Abel's offering and rejected Cain's offering. The focus of this work is not to unravel God's response to the respective offerings of these brothers, but rather to examine elements of Abel's offering as a keeper of sheep.

The idea of being a "keeper of sheep" (Gen. 4:2) presents the reader with the first elements of what it means to be a shepherd. It has been postulated that shepherds are by nature tranquil and peaceful men (Litke, 2003). One can only imagine the hours spent caring for the animals, watching over them, providing for their safety, and simply providing the peace of the presence of their shepherd. Litke further illuminated Abel's opportunity to spend hours in solitary meditation on God and the wonders of His creation. The presumed fellowship between Able and God provides the background for his offering being acceptable before God.

What might one draw from this passage concerning the metaphor of shepherding? Without spiritualizing the text beyond reason, one finds a spiritual picture in that Abel was not an earthly man in the sense he sought to make a name for himself in this life (Paul, 1996). Abel's brother, Cain, produced descendants who built cities and became people of renown in the earth. Shepherding is here connected to a man who was heavenly minded and of heavenly citizenship. One might say Abel represents those who are pilgrims on this earth, just strangers passing through (Paul, 1996). Furthermore, Abel's job description as

a shepherd is more technical than that of Cain who was simply a tiller of the ground (Swenson, 2006). Therefore, one might draw out the technical aspects of shepherding which include feeding, guiding, and caring for the flock (Strong, 2001). It has been articulated that a shepherd's primary responsibilities include guiding the sheep, providing sustenance for the sheep, protecting the sheep from predators, recovering lost sheep, and providing health and medicinal care for the sheep where needed (Golding, 2006). Furthermore, Golding pointed out how shepherds provide the emotional remedy for fear and bring a sense of security and well-being. All these aspects of shepherding were present in the life and practice of the first shepherd, Abel. These duties were carried forward through the patriarchal period and are still the foundation of what shepherds do today (Laniak, 2006).

Old Testament Metaphorical Use of Shepherd: Numbers 27:15-17

Abel represents the literal use of the term shepherding. In Numbers 27:15-17 one finds the first metaphorical use of the term shepherding. This passage recounts the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua as the nation of Israel was preparing to enter the promised land. As the transition of leadership drew near, we read Moses' prayer, "let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd" (Num. 27:15-17). Moses knew he would not be allowed to lead the people into the promised land because of his failure at Meribah Kadesh as recorded in Numbers 20:11-13. Moses cared for the welfare of the people as they made the transition into Canaan. Moses knew they would need a strong Godly leader (Brisco, 2002). Moses' deep concern for the people resulted from his long tenure as the under shepherd of God (Laniak, 2006). Furthermore, Laniak noted how Moses was privileged to function as an extension of the hand of God in the life of the nation in a way no one was permitted to do after him. Moses serves as an example of the true Shepherd who was willing many times to give his life for the people.

Moses recognized in Joshua the moral, ethical, and spiritual qualities necessary to lead the people of God. Joshua was a trusted friend whom he knew to be blessed of God. God instructed Moses concerning the process of handing off leadership responsibility to Joshua. The process God provided ensured credibility before the people, proof that Joshua was Moses' replacement. Joshua needed the power of God in his life so he might serve God's people in the same capacity and with the same success that Moses had served them. (Laniak, 2006).

The pertinent part of the narrative to this work regards Moses' use of the shepherd metaphor in his prayerful request for a successor. Moses understood God was not going to allow him to lead the people into the promised land. It seemed to Moses the people would be like sheep without a shepherd (Simeon, 1836). The shepherd-sheep image is an intimately relational picture (Golding, 2006). Moses had been the caring shepherd of the nation for over 40 years. The thought of leaving the people as sheep without a shepherd was deeply troubling to Moses (Rosscup, 2008). Therefore, according to Rosscup, Moses entreated the Lord on behalf of the people, knowing God would be faithful to keep His promises.

Moses' deep concern for the people highlights the intimate relationship of the shepherd to the sheep. According to Golding (2006), sheep and livestock were of great value in the ancient near eastern culture and were incapable of caring for themselves. Golding continued by pointing out how sheep need continual direction, someone to watch over them, and someone to prevent them from straying into danger. Moses was willing to pass to Joshua just such an intimate relationship with the people of Israel. Joshua was God's man who would thus ensure the people would not be without a shepherd (Hindson & Kroll, 1994).

Metaphorical Use of Shepherd in The New Testament

The metaphor of shepherding is carried over into the New Testament with the same contextual application for the church. MacArthur (1989) coined the term *shepherdology* to describe the practice of shepherding

in the New Testament church. Shepherdology is described as studying the art of shepherding, studying the science of leading a flock, and recognizing shepherding as the biblical form of church leadership (Stitzinger, 1995). Of all the metaphors used to describe a pastor in the New Testament, shepherding is the most fitting description of ecclesial leadership for God's church (MacArthur, 1995). Shepherding blends together the ideas of "authority and leadership with self-sacrifice, tenderness, wisdom, hard work, loving care, and constant watchfulness" (Strauch, 1995, pg. 149). The most fitting example of what it means to shepherd in these terms is seen in the life of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Jesus' earthly ministry was performed with all authority because He is and always will be God. Yet Jesus came in His incarnation with tenderness, compassion, wisdom, and a loving self-sacrifice that is the ultimate example of what it means to shepherd His people.

The Chief Shepherd: John 10

According to Laniak (2006), the tenth chapter of John's Gospel "provides the richest example of pastoral imagery" (pg. 207). One finds in this chapter the model shepherd, the good shepherd, and even the noble shepherd, all represented in Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd (Neyrey, 2001). The ultimate and complete example of what it means to be a shepherd in the context of ecclesial leadership is found in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. The emphasis of self-sacrifice permeates this chapter which foreshadows Jesus' purpose to be the Passover Lamb that takes away the sin of the world (Laniak, 2006).

The first 6 verses of John 10 open with an illustration and explanation of common shepherding practice. In the evening, shepherds would bring their sheep into a common fold where a porter or one of the shepherds would stand watch for the evening. The fold was a pen with walls, perhaps 10 feet high, with one opening. The shepherd would lay across the opening which made his body the door. Anyone or anything entering or exiting the fold had to literally pass over or through the shepherd (Wiersbe, 1992). When morning arrived, each shepherd

would call his sheep out of the fold to follow him to pasture. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherd and would only follow him.

Two lesson may be drawn from this illustration (Talbert, 2005). First, anyone who has a right to the sheep will come by way of the door. The true shepherd is the one standing at the door calling his sheep who know his voice. Jesus is the true shepherd who calls all those who belong to Him. Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (Jn. 10:9). Jesus calls those who are His and they follow Him.

The second lesson from this illustration regards the intimacy of the shepherd with the sheep (Talbert, 2005). Jesus said He is the "good shepherd" who gives His life for the sheep and who has an intimate personal relationship with His sheep (Jn. 10:11, 14). It has been suggested that the word "good" is better translated "noble" because of Jesus' sacrificial work on behalf of the sheep (Neyrey, 2001). The enemy is Satan who comes to kill, steal, and destroy the sheep (Jn. 10:10). Jesus is the noble shepherd who is willing to die to deliver the sheep from death and destruction. Neyrey (2001) postulated that Jesus' death was noble on behalf of the sheep for three reasons; (1) He has the ability to conquer death as God, (2) His power is unique, only He has the power to conquer death, and (3) His death was voluntary, He chose to die for the sheep, essentially unconquered and victorious. This position is supported by Jesus' statement concerning His life, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (Jn. 10:18). Jesus is the epitome of what it means to be a shepherd in every positive application of the metaphor in the New Testament.

Furthermore, the relationship of the sheep to the shepherd is set forth in John 10 with the clarity of paired cause and effect. In John 10:27-28 Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." The active pairing

is seen in that the sheep always recognize the shepherd's voice and the shepherd always knows His sheep. Additionally, the sheep always follow the shepherd and in response the shepherd always gives and cares for the sheep (Lenski, 1961).

Under shepherds: 1 Peter 5:1-4

Having examined the application of the metaphor of shepherding to the Chief Shepherd, one finds the metaphor equally applicable to those who represent the Chief Shepherd, ecclesial leaders or under shepherds, those who serve as pastors. The apostle Peter wrote his letters to the leaders of the persecuted churches of Asia Minor. Part of Peter's message to the leaders of the churches of Asia Minor was an exhortation, an encouragement, an instruction concerning how to exercise leadership among the ecclesia. According to Hiebert, the under-shepherd's job is painted in the shepherd-sheep relationship regarding control and devotion. The word "control" seems somewhat strong to this writer, however, there is a control factor when one thinks of the shepherd leading the sheep to a pasture best suited to meet their needs. Elliot (2001) pointed out that courageous pastors were needed to protect the flock from the heat and scorn of society. Furthermore, Jesus' example of leadership teaches ecclesial leaders of every generation that greatness is found in love and service to the sheep (Engstrom, 1976).

The apostle Peter gave specific instruction to those who would serve as an under shepherd over God's church. The first instruction is "feed" (vs. 2) the flock of God, which Alford (2010) translates as tend the flock of God. Tending the flock of God is a comprehensive idea that encompasses all it means to be involved in a shepherding ministry. Witmer (2010) said shepherding must first be biblical. Tending the flock of God must be performed in accord with His instruction. The premise of this work is to set forth just such a pattern. The ecclesial leader is involved in a divine work, ordained and appointed by God's call on a person's life. The ecclesial leader is under obligation to perform God's ministry in God's prescribed and exemplified way. The idea of under shepherd intuitively acknowledges that the sheep belong

to the Chief Shepherd and must be cared for in accord with His instructions. The under shepherd is not at liberty to create and practice his own system of shepherding. Witmer continued by pointing out that comprehensive shepherding is relational. The idea of relation means to know the sheep, protect the sheep, and feed the sheep. An under shepherd who knows the sheep will love the sheep and have a genuine concern for their spiritual safety and well-being.

For the shepherding ministry of the ecclesial leader to be both biblical and comprehensive, the motive for service must be correct (Hiebert, 1982). According to Hiebert, there are three areas of motive one should be concerned with when considering ecclesial leadership. The first area of concern is the ecclesial leader's attitude toward the ministry. The apostle Peter said a pastor is not to take oversight of God's flock by "constraint" (1 Pt. 5:2). The word "constraint" is also translated as compulsion, meaning to serve out of some feeling of pressure or obligation (Hiebert, 1982). Hiebert noted that an ecclesial leader should not, "occupy the office as a reluctant draftee," but rather should serve willingly (pg. 335). God is concerned with the motive of the heart more than He is with religious works performed out of some feeling of rote obligation. God does not want, "unwilling shepherds to care for His people" (Strauch, 1995, pg. 245). No ecclesial leader should serve simply because they have been hired or perceive the place of service as a job. The ministry of the ecclesial leader should be in accord with God's call (Zodhiates, 2000).

A second area of motive for service as a pastor concerns an appropriate view of money. Ecclesial leaders should never serve in an "avaricious manner" where material gain is the primary objective (Hiebert, 1982, pg. 336). The apostle Paul established that a laborer is worthy of his hire (1 Tim. 5:18) which means it is acceptable for an ecclesial leader, a pastor, to receive financial remuneration from the flock where service is rendered. However, an infatuation with money or a love of money will eventually be destructive and will serve as a poor example to the ecclesial body (Strauch, 1995).

The third area of motive for service has to do with the ecclesial leader's relationship to the sheep (Hiebert, 1982). According to 1 Peter 5:3, the under shepherd is not to assume a position of authority over the flock that is unilateral or dictatorial. It is completely inappropriate for the under shepherd to treat brothers and sisters in Christ like subjects over which they rule (Strauch, 1995). Ecclesial leaders are called of God to serve as under shepherds over His flock with a servant's heart (Maciariello, 2003). A servant's heart is observed by both God and the people being served (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

The Praxis of Ecclesial Leadership as Pastor and Current Leadership Theories

Thus far this work has examined the biblical metaphor of shepherding with regard to ecclesial leadership. The above review and analysis of selected biblical passages shows a consistent pattern of the role of the ecclesial leader as an under shepherd who ministers to and cares for God's people. This paradigm was true in the Old Testament and is clearly seen as carried over into the New Testament in the pastor congregation relationship. According to Maddix (2009), the pastor cares for God's people by serving them, a perfect example of shepherding.

Leadership in general is more easily conceptualized than defined. According to Northouse (2019), leadership is a relationship whereby influence takes place. Northouse continued by stating that influence is "concerned with how the leader affects the followers" (p. 5). With regard to ecclesial leadership, influence is the dominate element above all. It is through influence the ecclesial leader encourages and inspires the follower (Fasol, 1987). The overarching idea of influence leads one to consider leadership theories built upon the concept of influence or that are built in large part on the concept of influence. The following are a few contemporary leadership theories that are based on influence and that share many of the elements found in the biblical shepherding model.

Robert Ball, Ph.D.

Trait Leadership Theory

The trait approach of leadership, often referred to as the great man theory, was among the first leadership theories postulated (Northouse, 2007). This theory focuses on the idea that leaders possess traits or abilities that non-leaders lack (Johns & Moser, 1989). Among the traits and abilities that separate leaders from non-leaders, six have been specifically identified (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991). These traits include drive, desire, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business. One readily recognizes some of these same traits as biblically essential for the ecclesial leader.

According to Hiebert (1982), a pastor's motive, his personal desire to serve in the ministry, is derived from God's call upon his life. The ecclesial leader serves out of a heart of obedience to God's call (1 Pt. 5:1-4). If the desire to serve in the ministry is absent, one might reasonably presume the call of God is absent as well. According to MacArthur (1995), ecclesial leadership is as much a spiritual matter between God and the leader as it is about an organizational matter in the church body (MacArthur, 1995). Motive is critically important in ecclesial leadership. A pastor cannot serve as an under shepherd if his motive is wrong.

Not only does the ecclesial leader possess a specific motive or call to ministry, the ecclesial leader is called to the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and ethical biblical conduct. Carter (2009) pointed out that both the end and the means of ecclesial leadership must be Christlike. The Bible is specific concerning the moral and ethical standards of one who is called to serve as an under shepherd of God's people. The list of qualifications is found in both 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Any man who does not possess or exemplify these standards is not qualified to serve as pastor (MacArthur, 1995).

Transformational Leadership Theory

Burns (1978) postulated that true leadership is from the inside out with the ultimate goal of transforming both the organization and workers. Bass and Avolio (1994) further expanded the concept which has become known as transformational leadership. Transformational leadership has been defined as the "process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality" (Northouse, 2007, pg. 176). This process of increased motivation and morality result from a combination of idealized influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Yukl, 2002). The overall process of transformational leadership not only improves follower performance, but seeks to develop the follower to their full potential (Northouse, 2007).

The concept of transformational leadership is contained in the biblical paradigm of ecclesial leadership and the metaphor of shepherding. To motivate and develop the followers of Christ is the overarching desire and work of the pastor. Idealized influence and inspirational motivation come from the example of the under shepherd to the ecclesial body. Haroutunian, (1960) posited that each believer in Christ is responsible for expressing to all believers the same grace God has extended to them in their individual lives. Colarelli (2007) further stated that the pastor is responsible for being a healer, consoler, encourager, counselor, empower, and supporter of all those they serve. A pastor's Christ-like demeanor is a powerful influence and motivator in the lives of those he serves.

Intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration originate from God's Word. The apostle Paul said, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). The Greek word for renew is *anakaínōsis* which means to make a renovation, to become a new person, to be different from the past (Zodhiates, 2000). Intellectual stimulation is realized through the renewing of one's mind which addresses the individualized need to be

conformed or transformed into the image of Christ (Hughes, 1991). Furthermore, it is the pastor's responsibility to feed the church spiritually through a steady diet of God's Word (Colarelli, 2007).

Servant Leadership Theory

Of the many leadership theories postulated, none describe the biblical model of leadership as clearly and precisely as servant leadership. Greenleaf (1991) said the servant leader is a servant first and a leader second. The idea of servant first, according to Greenleaf, is the placing of the needs of others first. Greenleaf described servant leadership with a question, "Do others around the servant-leader become wiser, freer, more autonomous, healthier, and better able themselves to become servants" (Gonzaga University & Robert K. Greenleaf Center, 2005, pg. 7)? In other words, has the leader served others in a way that promotes them being all they can be?

Waddell (2006) described the elements of servant leadership as including *agapao* love, humility, and altruism. It is appropriate that the list starts with *agapao* love for this is the love of God to man (Friberg, Friberg, & Miller, 2000). These authors continue by identifying *agapao* love as that attitude which is derived from a conscious choice. In other words, God loves man, not because man deserves to be loved, but because He chooses to love. In like manner, the servant leader makes a conscious choice to esteem others of great value and hold them in high regard. This love is consistent with the principle of seeking the best for others before self. Chung (2011) said the core of servant leadership is love.

The second essential element of servant leadership is humility (Waddell, 2006). Fahlbusch and Bromiley (1999-2003) said humility has three doctrinal understandings, (1) a readiness to be directed by God, (2) a concern over being true to self, and (3) a social application of service to others. All three of these doctrinal positions are true in ecclesial servant leadership. The ecclesial servant leader is being obedient to God while being true to self when they serve those God has

placed under their care. Strauch (1995) identified the entire ecclesia as a community of humble servants. Therefore, one might understand how the pastor is to be a model of humility among the humble.

The third element of servant leadership is altruism (Waddell,2006). Altruism has been defined as the intent and desire to help others, even when doing so may bring harm to self (Monroe, 1994). Furthermore, actions designed to promote the best interests of others are not only considered moral, but altruistic as well (Northouse, 2007). Sosik (2000) has suggested these definitions of altruism are in keeping with the practice of one who is a servant leader.

According to Manala (2010), there are six traits of a pastor that identify true servant leadership; (1) Those with the greatest authority have the greatest responsibility to serve, (2) Servant leadership is about relationship, (3) Servant leadership seeks to support, not control, (4) Servant leaders point to others before self, (5) Servant leaders don't need titles or status, and (6) Authority is based on one's relationship to Jesus, not a position. These six traits coincide with Waddell's (2006) list of love, humility, and altruism.

Conclusion

This work has set forth the biblical perspective of the metaphorical shepherd-sheep relationship as it pertains to the pastor's role in ecclesial leadership. When this biblical perspective is understood in light of contemporary leadership theory, one gains a new and richer perspective on what it means to serve as a pastor among God's people. Ecclesial leadership is a divine work as it originates with a call of God upon the heart of the pastor. In John 10 Jesus identified Himself as the Chief Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. Therefore, the pastor serves as an under shepherd of Jesus Christ. Receiving oversight of God's flock includes guiding, feeding, protecting, recovering, and mending, all in the spiritual realm of the Christian life. Spiritual shepherding is performed through the Word of God, as empowered and applied by the Holy Spirit. (Ferguson, 2006).

Robert Ball, Ph.D.

Though ecclesial leadership entails a divine calling and equipping, it is leadership non-the-less. One finds a more comprehensive understanding of ecclesial leadership when understood in light of contemporary leadership models. Trait leadership theory and transformational leadership theory both lend clarity and insight into biblical elements of ecclesial leadership. Trait leadership identifies specific personal gifts or skills that enable a person to be a good leader. According to MacArthur (1995), those whom God calls to ministry, He also equips for ministry. Therefore, those characteristics set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 should be evident in the life of one who serves as an ecclesial leader.

Transformational leaders see themselves as change agents in any organization, (Moser, 2001). Ecclesial leaders serve as change agents in the lives of those whom they minister to. The ecclesial leader professes the Gospel of Jesus Christ so lost men and women might be saved. Furthermore, the ecclesial leader shepherds God's flock through the faithful and consistent exposition and explanation of God's Word. The ecclesial leader is a transformational leader.

The most relevant leadership theory, as regards ecclesial leadership, is servant leadership. Maddix (2009) said there is a degree in which every born-again believer in the church is a servant. Smith (1986) said all servant leadership is first and foremost serving God. Smith went on to point out that a correct biblical concept of leadership is paramount to a correct praxis of leadership in the ecclesia. One might conclude from these observations that serving others comes primarily from an honest surrender and service to God.

This work set forth the connection between the biblical metaphor of shepherding and the praxis of ecclesial leadership in light of contemporary leadership models. Ecclesial leadership is unique from the perspective of the divine call and the spiritual endowment to do what God has called one to do. However, to be an ecclesial leader also includes the traits and elements of leadership identified in contemporary leadership models. Therefore, one can continue to grow in ecclesial leadership effectiveness as one learns and understands the various aspects of

leadership in general. A pastor who understands that his spiritual abilities and natural talents are gifts from God will be inclined to serve with humility and faithfulness. A pastor who understands God's call upon his life to serve as a change agent in the lives of others will be more conscious of the incredible privilege it is to serve in such a capacity. The pastor who understands what it means to serve others will then and only then realize what it means to truly lead others. Biblical shepherding is enhanced when one understands the biblical metaphor in light of contemporary leadership models. All knowledge originates from God. May those who serve God's church apply the knowledge of contemporary leadership models and thus prayerfully seek to shepherd God's people in ways that bless and encourage them in Christ.

Robert Ball, Ph.D.

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