
BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP IS SHEPHERDING

*Four Dimensions of Servant Leadership
in the Spirit of Christ*



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Four Dimensions of Servant Leadership in the Spirit of Christ
A Theological Monograph

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DEDICATION

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”
— John 10:11

*To every shepherd-leader who has chosen the harder path,
who has watched over, walked alongside, led into, and sent off,
in the name and spirit of the Good Shepherd.*

Soli Deo gloria.

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Preface

The question of leadership is one of the most pressing questions of our age. Churches, organizations, families, and communities are in desperate need of leaders who lead not by domination but by devotion, not by power but by pastoral care. Yet the models the world offers are insufficient. They swing like a pendulum between the autocratic ruler who commands from above and the democratic facilitator who merely follows consensus from below. Neither model satisfies the deepest longing of the people entrusted to our care.

This short volume is an attempt to recover the biblical model. The model is not a management theory. It is a Person. Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, the Great Shepherd of the sheep. He showed us what leadership looks like when it is exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God, and for the genuine welfare of God's people.

The word at the heart of this book is shepherding. It is not a new word; it is an ancient word, rooted in the life of the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets, and brought to its fullest expression in the person and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was entrusted by the Holy Spirit to every overseer of God's church, and it is the paradigm this volume seeks to recover and commend.

Four dimensions of shepherding leadership are explored in these pages: overseeing, walking alongside, leading into, and sending off. These are not merely management techniques. They are expressions of the pastoral heart of God Himself. The Apostle Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders remains the foundational text for every leader who takes seriously the call of God upon their life: "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

It is my prayer that every leader who reads these pages will be renewed in their calling, deepened in their theological understanding, and inspired to lead, as the Good Shepherd leads, with love, wisdom, and unwavering commitment to the glory of God.

Soli Deo gloria.

Introduction

There is a crisis in leadership. It is not a new crisis, but it is an acute one. The forms of leadership that have dominated human institutions swing between two poles: the autocratic, top-down pyramid, in which power flows from one commanding figure downward to all others; and the democratic, inverted pyramid, in which the leader is nothing more than the servant of the majority's preferences. Between these poles, organizations have experimented with amorphous, flat, and collaborative structures that often produce confusion rather than clarity, drift rather than direction.

The church of Jesus Christ has not been immune to this confusion. Well-meaning leaders have imported corporate management theories, personality-driven platforms, or therapeutic facilitation models into the life of the church. The results have been mixed at best, and damaging at worst. For the church is not a corporation; it is not a self-help community; it is not a democracy. The church is the flock of God, purchased with the blood of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and entrusted to the care of shepherds who answer to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ Himself, when He appears (1 Pet. 5:4).

The purpose of this book is to recover the biblical model of leadership, which is shepherding, and to demonstrate that it is not merely one model among many, but the paradigmatic model given by God Himself. When God describes His own care for His people, He reaches for the image of the shepherd. When He indicts Israel's failing leaders, He condemns them as false shepherds who have scattered rather than gathered the flock (Ezek. 34:1–6). When Jesus describes Himself, He declares, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11). When the risen Lord restores and recommissions Peter, He repeats a single charge three times: "Feed my lambs... Tend my sheep... Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17). The model is unmistakable. The calling is clear.

"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."

— Acts 20:28

But what does shepherding look like as a concrete practice of leadership? This book identifies four essential dimensions, drawn from the apostolic example in Acts 20:28 and the broader witness of Holy Scripture.

First, overseeing: the shepherd-leader exercises responsible management. This is not autocratic control but superintending care: maintaining order, ensuring safety, and attending to the governance of the community in a way that reflects the wisdom and character of God.

Second, walking alongside: the shepherd-leader journeys with the flock. This is the work of mentoring and mending: discerning the health of those entrusted to our care, addressing wounds and weaknesses with compassion and truth, and cultivating the intellectual and spiritual growth that God intends for every member of His people.

Third, leading into: the shepherd-leader motivates and directs. This is not manipulation but invitation: showing the way to green pasture, training the flock to understand and feed on the Word of God, and inspiring them to carry the Gospel of the Kingdom into the world that so desperately needs it.

Fourth, sending off: the shepherd-leader equips and releases. This is the maximization of the gifts and callings that God has placed in the flock: equipping them for service, encouraging them with the love and friendship that reflect God's own encouragement, and trusting them to carry the Great Commission forward beyond the reach of any single leader.

Each of these four dimensions corresponds to a reality about the nature of leadership that Christ embodies and commissions us to imitate. The shepherd leads not from a position of power but from a posture of love. It is the love that laid down its life for the sheep (John 10:15). This book is an invitation to that love, and to the leadership it produces.

A note on method: the theological reflection in these pages is drawn from the whole counsel of God, with particular attention to the biblical texts that most directly address the theme of shepherding leadership. I stand within the Reformed evangelical tradition, and readers familiar with that tradition will recognize its marks: the sovereignty of God in all things, the sufficiency and authority of Holy Scripture, the centrality of Christ in every dimension of life, and the call to exercise every sphere of human existence under the lordship of Jesus Christ. These convictions

are not argued for in these pages; they are the framework from which all the arguments proceed.

The reader is invited not to mistake this book for a management manual. It is a theological reflection on a deeply practical truth. And the truth is this: if you lead, you have been called to shepherd. To shepherd is to oversee, to walk alongside, to lead into, and to send off, and to do all of this in the power of the same Holy Spirit who made the elders of Ephesus overseers of God's own flock, purchased at infinite cost. There is no higher calling, and no more demanding task. Let us take it up with joy.

CHAPTER 1

Overseeing: The Shepherd-Manager

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

— Acts 20:28

The Greek word translated “overseer” in Acts 20:28 is *episkopos*, from which the church developed the office of bishop. But long before the word entered the formal vocabulary of church governance, the concept was expressed in the simplest and most earthy image possible: the shepherd watching over the flock. The shepherd does not manage from a distance. He watches, attends, and acts, because the sheep are always in need, and danger is never far away.

Overseeing is not surveillance. It is not the cold gaze of the administrator checking boxes on a compliance form. It is the watchful, caring attention of someone who knows the sheep by name, who understands their vulnerabilities, and who is prepared to act on their behalf. The Greek root *skopeo* (to look, to attend, to watch with purposeful intent) carries within it the idea of a gaze that is both concerned and responsible. The overseer sees not merely what is visible on the surface but what lies beneath: the spiritual condition, the relational health, the doctrinal soundness of the community entrusted to his care.

It is no coincidence that Paul’s charge in Acts 20:28 begins with a reflexive instruction: “Pay careful attention to yourselves...” The shepherd-manager must first attend to his own soul before he can attend faithfully to the souls of others. The leader who neglects his own spiritual life will inevitably mismanage the lives of those he is called to serve. Self-oversight is not selfishness; it is the precondition of faithful stewardship. Only the shepherd who is himself being tended by the Chief Shepherd can tend others well.

A. What It Means to Oversee

To oversee is to take responsible, caring authority over a community that belongs not to the leader but to God. This is the first and most fundamental truth about biblical oversight: the flock is not ours. Paul's words are plain: it is "the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The shepherd-manager holds in trust what God has purchased at infinite cost. There is no room here for self-serving leadership, for the exploitation of position, or for the accumulation of personal power. The overseer is a steward, and stewards answer to the owner.

The Holy Spirit appoints overseers, and this appointment is not merely formal or institutional. It is the Spirit's own work, applied to specific people for specific communities in specific moments of history. "In which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). The verb is *ἔθετο*, "placed" or "set". This is an act of sovereign appointment, not merely congregational affirmation. The leader who understands this will exercise authority with a humility proportionate to the gravity of the commission. He leads not because he chose the role, but because the Spirit chose him for it.

The wisdom of Moses and Jethro in Exodus 18:13–26 offers an instructive pattern for the governance of a complex community. When Jethro observed that Moses was attempting to oversee the entire people of Israel alone, he counseled him to establish a structure of shared leadership: able men who feared God, who were trustworthy and hated dishonest gain, set over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (Exod. 18:21). This is not the abandonment of oversight; it is the multiplication of it. The shepherd-manager who insists on doing everything himself has not grasped the principle of wise governance. Biblical overseeing is structured, shared, and servant-shaped.

B. Managing Order in Worship and Community Life

The shepherd does not simply release the sheep into open country and hope for the best. He manages the flock, attending to the rhythms of pasture and rest, maintaining the order that makes genuine flourishing possible. This management function is not merely pragmatic; it is

theological. Order in the community of God's people reflects the orderliness of God Himself, who is a God not of confusion but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33).

"But all things should be done decently and in order."

— 1 Corinthians 14:40

The Apostle Paul's instruction that "all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40) is not a bureaucratic preference; it is a theological principle. Ordered worship, in which the gathered community encounters the living God through His Word, prayer, and the sacraments, in an atmosphere of reverence and clarity, is itself an act of testimony to the character of the God who is worshipped. The shepherd-manager who cultivates such order is not imposing his own preferences; he is serving the dignity of the community and the glory of God.

Managing order in the community also means attending to the household patterns of the flock: the rhythms of gathering and dispersal, of teaching and application, of service within and witness without. The shepherd who manages the flock well ensures that no dimension of communal life (worship, discipleship, hospitality, care for the poor) is neglected or crowded out by the demands of any one concern. Good governance is the art of maintaining the whole counsel of God as the whole program of the community.

C. Maintaining Safety from Spiritual Wolves

The most urgent dimension of oversight is also the most demanding: protecting the flock from those who would harm it. The prophet Ezekiel records God's indictment of the false shepherds of Israel in terms that remain relevant to every generation of leaders: they ruled the flock with force and harshness; they did not strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strayed, or seek the lost (Ezek. 34:4). The result was a scattered flock, easy prey for every beast of the field.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders that after his departure, "fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). The wolves he described were both external (false teachers who would enter from outside the community) and internal: "from among your own

selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). The shepherd-manager who is not watching for this threat has abdicated the most critical dimension of his responsibility.

“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

— 1 Peter 5:8

The call to vigilance is therefore inseparable from the call to oversee. The shepherd-manager watches at the gate. He reads with discernment, listens with care, and speaks with courage when the truth is at stake. He does not wait until the wolves are already among the sheep to sound the alarm. He reads the signs, attends to the early warnings, and guards the community with the holy boldness that comes from a settled conviction that the flock belongs to God and must be protected at cost.

This vigilance is not paranoia; it is pastoral love. The shepherd who loves the sheep will do everything in his power to keep them from harm. And the same love that drives him to confront the wolf drives him to pursue the wandering sheep: to leave the ninety-nine in search of the one who has strayed. Management is inseparable from mercy. Oversight is inseparable from care.

Reflection Questions: Chapter 1

1. What distinguishes biblical overseeing from autocratic management? How does the Holy Spirit’s appointment of overseers (Acts 20:28), rather than self-appointment, shape the way a shepherd-leader understands the authority they hold over those in their care?
2. In what ways might your church or leadership community better structure shared oversight, ensuring that governance reflects the care of the Good Shepherd rather than the agenda of any single leader? What structures of accountability and mutual oversight would serve your community well?
3. Reflect honestly: where in your own leadership has self-interest, impatience, or inattentiveness threatened the safety or flourishing of those entrusted to you? How does the image of the shepherd-guardian

(one who answers to God for each sheep) call you to a different posture this season?

CHAPTER 2

Walking Along With: The Shepherd-Mentor

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

— Psalm 23:4

One of the most profound realities of shepherding is captured in a single preposition: with. The shepherd does not manage the sheep from a distance. The shepherd walks with them. Through green pastures and beside still waters, and also through the valley of the shadow of death. The presence of the shepherd is not conditional on pleasant circumstances. It is promised for all circumstances. This is the character of the God who reveals Himself as the Shepherd of Israel: He goes before, He goes alongside, and He remains.

This is the model of pastoral mentoring. It is not merely instruction delivered from a platform. It is accompaniment: the shared journey of a leader who has committed to the health and growth of those in their care, for the long haul and through every season. The word the New Testament uses for this kind of relationship is not merely teaching or discipling. It is fellowship, *koinonia*: a participation in one another’s lives that makes growth possible. The shepherd-mentor shares the road.

The second great dimension of shepherd-leadership, then, is this: walking alongside. It is the commitment to mend what is broken and amend what needs correction. It is the investment in the wholesome flourishing (spiritual, intellectual, relational) of every sheep entrusted to the shepherd’s care. It is the hardest work in leadership, because it cannot be done from a distance, and it cannot be hurried. But it is among the most fruitful.

A. The Meaning of Walking Alongside

Jesus Christ is the supreme model of the leader who walks alongside. In Luke 24:13–35, two disciples are walking away from Jerusalem, their hearts crushed by the death of the One in whom they had placed all their

hope. The risen Christ joins them on the road, not as a triumphant figure announcing His resurrection, but as a fellow traveller who asks them a simple question: “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” (Luke 24:17). He enters their world before He speaks into it. He listens before He teaches. He walks before He reveals.

This is the pattern of the shepherd-mentor. Leadership as presence, not merely as program. The mentor who is always “too busy” to sit with a struggling member of the flock has mistaken productivity for pastoral care. The shepherd knows that the most significant investments are often made in unscheduled moments: in the conversation on the road, in the meal shared at the table, in the question asked and genuinely heard. Time given to people is never wasted; it is the currency of the kingdom.

Walking alongside also means sharing ideas rather than imposing conclusions. The good mentor does not arrive with a finished answer and demand agreement; he arrives with a question and an open posture. “Have you not known? Have you not heard?” asks the prophet, but he then proceeds to explain, to illuminate, to unfold the truth in a way the listener can receive (Isa. 40:21). Truth is not diminished by being offered with patience and care. It is honoured.

B. Nurturing Spiritual Health and Maturity

The shepherd who walks alongside is always attending to the condition of the sheep. This is the mending and amending dimension of shepherd-leadership: seeing the wounds that others overlook, addressing the patterns that lead to weakness, and cultivating the maturity that is the goal of all pastoral care. Paul’s own model of this is instructive: he describes his ministry as one of “admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28).

“Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.”

— Hebrews 12:1–2

Spiritual health is not the same as spiritual comfort. The sheep who is most comfortable may also be the sheep who is most stagnant. The

shepherd-mentor attends not merely to the emotional well-being of the flock but to their genuine spiritual vitality: their rootedness in the Word, their responsiveness to the Spirit, their faithfulness in prayer and service, their growth in the knowledge and love of God. This kind of attending requires courage: the shepherd-mentor must sometimes speak uncomfortable truth, correct established patterns, and call the flock to a higher standard than they have been living by.

Ezekiel's indictment of the false shepherds of Israel includes this charge: "The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought" (Ezek. 34:4). Each of these failures is a failure of attentiveness, a failure of the walking-alongside work that makes healing and health possible. The shepherd-mentor cannot heal what he has not noticed. He cannot bind up what he has not looked at closely enough to see.

C. Cultivating Wisdom and Knowledge

The shepherd-mentor's walking alongside is not only a ministry of care and correction; it is also a ministry of formation. The flock is called to grow not only in faith but in wisdom, in the capacity to think well about God, the world, and the life they are called to live. "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight" (Prov. 4:7). The shepherd-mentor takes this commission seriously, investing in the intellectual and theological formation of those in his care.

This formation is not academic for its own sake. It serves the renewal of the mind that the Apostle Paul calls for in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." The shepherd-mentor who cultivates the mind of his flock is equipping them to navigate a world that relentlessly presses its patterns upon them, and to discern what is true, what is beautiful, and what is of God.

The disciplines of theological formation are many: the regular reading and hearing of Scripture, shared study of the great works of the Christian tradition, discussion that integrates faith and life, and the simple habit of asking theological questions about everything. The

shepherd-mentor models these disciplines and creates environments in which they can flourish. He knows that wisdom is not merely inherited; it is cultivated slowly, patiently, and always in the context of a community that is walking together toward maturity in Christ.

Reflection Questions: Chapter 2

1. How does the model of Jesus walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35) challenge our understanding of what it means to “walk alongside” those we lead? What does it mean to enter someone’s world before you speak into it, and how does this reshape the practice of mentoring and pastoral care?
2. What structures exist in your church or leadership community for the ongoing mending and amending of relationships and communal life? How might your community more faithfully embody the shepherd’s commitment to the genuine spiritual health (not merely the behavioural compliance) of every member?
3. Think of someone in your care who needs mending: someone wounded, confused, or spiritually stagnant. What would it look like, this week, to walk alongside them in the spirit of the Good Shepherd? Name one concrete step you can take toward them.

CHAPTER 3

Leading Into: The Shepherd-Motivator

“The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”

— John 10:3–4

The shepherd does not merely keep the sheep safe; the shepherd leads them somewhere. This is the essential forward movement of shepherd-leadership that is so often overlooked in discussions of pastoral care. Safety without direction produces a well-protected but purposeless flock. The image of Psalm 23:2 is vivid and purposeful: “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.” The Good Shepherd leads the flock into something specific: into sustenance, into refreshment, into life. The shepherding is always directional.

The third dimension of shepherd-leadership is leading into. The shepherd-leader is a motivator, not in the shallow, platform-performance sense of contemporary motivational culture, but in the deepest biblical sense of the word. To motivate is to move someone toward what is good, true, and beautiful: toward the God who created them, the Christ who redeemed them, and the Spirit who sustains them. It is to draw the flock out of the merely comfortable and into the genuinely abundant life that Jesus came to give (John 10:10).

The shepherd-motivator operates by voice rather than by force. “The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (John 10:3). This is a relational, personal, and known form of leadership. The sheep follow because they trust the voice they have come to recognize. There is no coercion here; there is invitation. The leader who must compel compliance has lost the relational foundation that makes genuine motivation possible. The shepherd-motivator builds trust before he calls to movement.

A. Going Before: The Shepherd Who Shows the Way

The most counterintuitive aspect of shepherd-leadership is this: the shepherd does not drive the sheep from behind. He leads them from before. “When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him” (John 10:4). This is a leadership of example, not merely instruction. The shepherd-motivator does not call the flock to go where he himself has not gone. He goes first, and they follow.

This has profound implications for the practice of leadership. The leader who calls his community to a life of prayer must himself be a person of prayer. The leader who calls his flock into the difficult territory of evangelism must himself be willing to share the Gospel in that same territory. The leader who urges the community toward generosity must himself be generous. Example is not merely one tool in the toolkit of motivation; it is the primary one. People follow what they see modelled more reliably than what they hear commanded.

This is why John Calvin, reflecting on the elder’s calling in his Institutes, insisted that the pastor must first be formed before he can form others. The shape of the leader’s own life (his walk with God, his love for Scripture, his integrity in private and public) is the foundation of his capacity to lead others forward. As Paul writes to the young Timothy: “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). The example precedes the instruction.

B. Training for Biblical Understanding: Leading into Green Pasture

The green pasture into which the Good Shepherd leads His flock is not merely a metaphor for material comfort. In the biblical imagination, green pasture is the place where the flock is fed, and the food that sustains the people of God is the Word of God. Jesus’s rebuke of Satan in the wilderness draws on the Deuteronomic conviction that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). The shepherd-motivator trains the flock to feed on this Word for themselves.

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

— 2 Timothy 3:16–17

The goal of this training is not to create a flock that is dependent on the shepherd for every insight and every application. The goal is to cultivate in each sheep the capacity to read, understand, and live from the Scripture for themselves. This is the difference between a shepherd who feeds the sheep and a shepherd who teaches the sheep to find food, a difference that matters enormously for the long-term health and resilience of the community.

Training for biblical understanding is patient, systematic, and personal work. It involves teaching the grand narrative of Scripture (creation, fall, redemption, new creation) so that every passage is read in its proper context. It involves helping people ask the right questions of any text: What does this reveal about God? What does this reveal about the human condition? How does this point to Christ? What response does this call for? The shepherd-motivator who teaches this skill is equipping his flock for a lifetime of green-pasture feeding.

C. Leading into Proclamation: The Kingdom and the Whole Counsel

The shepherd-motivator who trains the flock to feed on the Word does not stop there. He leads them from feeding to proclaiming, from receiving the Word to declaring it in the world. Paul’s testimony to the Ephesian elders includes this remarkable claim: “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). The whole counsel. Not the comfortable parts, not the popular parts, not the parts that require the least pastoral courage, but the whole counsel.

This comprehensive declaration is itself an act of motivation. When a congregation hears the full scope of what God has said (about sin and grace, about judgment and mercy, about the kingdom that is coming and the commission that is already given), it is not crushed by the weight of it. It is energized. The whole counsel of God is the most motivating

message in the world, because it sets the stakes clearly and offers the resources abundantly.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

— Matthew 28:19–20

The Great Commission is the ultimate destination into which the shepherd-motivator leads the flock. The sheep are trained not merely to understand the Word but to carry it into every corner of the world God loves, in new and better ways, with fresh creativity and faithful courage. The shepherd’s voice, which once called the sheep by name and led them out, now trains those same sheep to become voices themselves. The flock that is led well becomes a flock that leads others toward the Good Shepherd.

Reflection Questions: Chapter 3

1. What is the difference between manipulation and biblical motivation in leadership? How does Christ’s model of “going before” the sheep (John 10:4) define what it means to lead by example rather than by coercion, and what does this require of you, personally, before you can call others to follow?
2. How is your church or leadership community helping people to read, understand, and live from the Word of God for themselves? Are you creating dependence on the leader for spiritual insight, or cultivating the flock’s own capacity to feed on Scripture? What would a more intentional program of biblical formation look like in your context?
3. Where are you being called to “go before,” to lead into unknown or difficult territory by your own example? And who in your flock is ready to become a voice of proclamation? Name one person you will invest in specifically for the work of Gospel-witness this season.

CHAPTER 4

Sending Off: The Shepherd-Equipper

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

— Ephesians 4:11–12

Every act of shepherding leadership builds toward a final, culminating movement: the moment of sending. The shepherd who has watched over the flock, walked alongside it, and led it into green pasture must ultimately do the hardest thing of all: release. The sheep must be sent into the world to serve, to witness, to carry the Gospel to places the shepherd cannot go. This is not abandonment; it is the fulfillment of all the shepherding that has come before. The shepherd who cannot release has not finished the work of forming.

The fourth dimension of shepherd-leadership is sending off. It is the maximization of the gifts, callings, and capacities that God has placed in the flock, not for the enrichment of the shepherd’s own ministry, but for the advance of the Great Commission and the glory of God in the world. The shepherd-equipper’s greatest achievement is not what he himself accomplishes; it is what he enables others to accomplish in his wake.

The Greek word that underlies Paul’s description in Ephesians 4:12 (“to equip the saints”) is *kataartismos*, which literally means “to mend” or “to restore to its proper function.” It is the word used for a surgeon setting a broken bone back into its proper place, or for a fisherman mending a torn net (Matt. 4:21). The shepherd-leader’s final task is to bring the flock to a state of full readiness for the mission of God: to mend what is broken, to restore what has been diminished, to bring each sheep to the fullness of what God created and redeemed them to be.

A. The Theology of Sending

Sending is not an afterthought in the economy of God; it is the missional heartbeat of the entire biblical narrative. The God of the Scriptures is a

sending God. He sent Abraham into an unknown land. He sent Moses to a resistant Pharaoh. He sent the prophets to a rebellious Israel. And in the fullness of time, He sent His own Son: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16). And the Son, risen and glorified, sends His disciples with the same missional authority: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21).

The shepherd-leader who understands this theology will never treat the flock as an end in itself. The community of God’s people is not gathered for its own sake; it is gathered for the sake of the world. The Sunday assembly is not the destination; it is the launching pad. The shepherd-equipper works toward a community that is always ready to be sent: spiritually formed, doctrinally grounded, relationally supported, and missionally oriented. This is not an ambitious program; it is the plain implication of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20).

The shepherd who sends is also a shepherd who trusts: he trusts the formation he has invested in, trusts the Spirit who continues to work in the ones who are sent, and trusts the God who governs all things for His own glory. Sending requires faith. It requires the willingness to let go of control and to believe that God is not limited to what can be accomplished through any single leader or community.

B. Equipping for Service to God and Neighbour

Equipping is specific work, not generic encouragement. The shepherd-equipper does not content himself with broadly inspiring the flock toward “service” in the abstract; he attends carefully to the specific gifts and callings that God has placed in each person and works to deploy those gifts in specific ways that serve both the body of Christ and the world beyond it. This is the inventory work of the shepherd-equipper: taking stock of what God has given, and stewarding it faithfully.

“Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.”

— 1 Corinthians 3:12–13

Paul's metaphor of the builder in 1 Corinthians 3:10–15 is sobering: not all work built on the foundation of Christ will endure. The shepherd-equipper who cares about the quality of what he sends into the world will attend not only to the quantity of activity in his community but to its substance, to whether the work being done is rooted in truth, sustained by the Spirit, and oriented toward the glory of God. Retreats, reviews, and honest evaluation are not signs of inefficiency; they are marks of a community serious about building with gold.

Equipping for service also means equipping for the full scope of the neighbour-love that the Gospel demands. The shepherd-equipper does not send the flock only into church-shaped ministries; he equips them for service in every sphere of life: in business, in education, in politics, in the arts, in the home, in the neighbourhood. As Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:17, the goal of all formation is that “the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Every good work. The whole of life as the arena of faithful service.

C. Encouraging Through Persuasion and Friendship

The shepherd-equipper does not merely train and release; he encourages. This is the final and perhaps most personal dimension of the sending work: the investment of genuine friendship, the offer of persistent persuasion, and the communication of a deep, settled confidence in what God has placed in each person. Paul's words to the Philippians capture this spirit perfectly: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12–13).

The encouragement Paul offers here is theologically grounded: you can do this, because it is God who is working in you. The shepherd-equipper who encourages from this foundation is not offering mere positivity; he is pointing the flock toward the One who is the source of all capacity and all motivation. “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13) is not a motivational slogan; it is a theological declaration. And it is the declaration the shepherd-equipper makes over the flock he is preparing to send.

The friendship of the shepherd-leader is also a critical component of the sending work. Jesus Himself articulated this at the Last Supper: “No

longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). The distinction is important. Servants receive orders; friends receive confidence, transparency, and genuine investment. The shepherd-equipper who leads as a friend (not in the casual sense, but in the deep, covenantal sense) sends people not merely with skills but with the security that comes from being genuinely known and genuinely loved.

“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.”

— Revelation 22:12

The ultimate motivation for the shepherd-equipper’s work is eschatological. The Chief Shepherd is coming. The work that has been done in overseeing, walking alongside, leading into, and sending off will be evaluated by the One who gave His life for the flock. This is not a threat; it is a promise. “Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58). The shepherd-equipper works with a long view, because the One he serves has the longest view of all.

Reflection Questions: Chapter 4

1. What does it mean to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12)? How does the image of *katartismos* (mending, restoring to proper function) deepen your understanding of what equipping actually requires of a shepherd-leader? What would it mean, in your context, to take this as seriously as a surgeon or a craftsman takes the preparation of their tools?
2. Is your church or organization genuinely sending people, releasing them into mission, service, and ministry beyond the walls of your community? Or does leadership tend to hold people close, making them dependent on the community rather than releasing them for the world? What would it look like to restructure for sending?
3. Who in your care is ready to be sent? Name the person, the gift, and the specific opportunity. What encouragement (theological and

personal) will you offer them? Write this as a commitment and act on it within the next three months.

Conclusion

Let Us Lead by Shepherding

This book began with a problem: the crisis of leadership in a world that swings between the extremes of domination and drift. It ends with a call. The call is not complex; it is ancient and clear. It is the call of the Good Shepherd Himself, who gave His life for the sheep and rose again to give them life abundantly (John 10:10).

Biblical leadership is shepherding. It is the four-fold practice of overseeing with wisdom, walking alongside with compassion, leading into with vision, and sending off with joy. These four dimensions are not separable; they are aspects of a single integrated calling, each one depending on and enriching the others. The shepherd who only oversees without walking alongside will produce a well-managed but spiritually shallow community. The shepherd who only walks alongside without leading into will produce a warm but directionless flock. The shepherd who only leads into without sending off will produce dependent followers rather than commissioned disciples. All four dimensions are required; all four are always in motion.

It is overseeing: the management of the flock entrusted to our care. Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders rings through every generation: "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock" (Acts 20:28). The shepherd-manager does not lead for personal gain. He leads because the Holy Spirit has appointed him, for the sake of a people purchased at infinite cost. Sound governance, ordered worship, and vigilant protection of the flock from the wolves that seek to scatter it are not administrative details; they are acts of love.

It is walking alongside: the mending and amending of a people who are always, in some measure, broken and growing. The shepherd who walks with the flock through the valley of the shadow of death is not a manager of outcomes; he is a companion in the journey. He sees the wounds that others overlook. He speaks correction and comfort with the same voice, knowing that both are expressions of the same love. Christ disciplines His people positively and negatively (Rom. 12:1–2; Phil. 2:12–

13); He corrects and comforts (Heb. 12:1–3). The shepherd-mentor does the same.

It is leading into: the motivation of a people who forget, again and again, who they are and where they are going. The shepherd who goes before calls the sheep by name and leads them out into green pasture, into the Word, into the proclamation of the Kingdom, into the whole counsel of God. The leader who is content to keep the sheep safely in the fold has misunderstood the commission. The world outside the fold is dying for want of the Good News. Lead your people into it.

It is sending off: the maximization of the gifts and callings that God has deposited in His people, for the advance of His Great Commission. The shepherd's final act, the act that fulfills all the others, is to release. To equip thoroughly, to encourage deeply, to trust genuinely, and then to send. Christ rewards His faithful servants (Rev. 22:12). He gives rest so that the flock can gather strength to advance (Matt. 11:28–30). He is the model; we are the under-shepherds. Let us not mistake the weight of the calling for a burden that was never meant to crush us. It is a calling wrapped in grace, sustained by the Spirit, and sealed by the promise of the Chief Shepherd Himself.

My closing exhortation is simple. It is the exhortation of the apostle who, having poured out his life for the flock at Ephesus with tears (Acts 20:31), commended them to God and to the word of His grace (Acts 20:32). It is the exhortation of the ancient writer who prayed over his own flock: “May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20–21).

“And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

— 1 Peter 5:4

Let us lead by shepherding.

Soli Deo gloria.

Personal Questions and Challenges

On Overseeing and Walking Alongside

1. Reflect on the Holy Spirit's role in appointing overseers (Acts 20:28). In what ways does the awareness that your leadership is Spirit-appointed (not self-appointed) change how you exercise authority over those in your care? Where might pride or self-sufficiency be crowding out dependence on the Spirit?
2. The shepherd who walks alongside must be willing to both correct and comfort. Think of a person or situation in your community that needs mending. What would faithful mending look like? What truth needs to be spoken, and in what spirit? What is the first step of healing you can take this week?
3. Write one concrete commitment for how you will better attend to the spiritual health (not merely the behavioural compliance) of those you lead. What will you do differently this month to ensure that the people in your care are genuinely growing in the knowledge and love of God?

On Leading Into and Sending Off

1. Jesus declared, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14). How well do you know the people you lead? Could you name, with real specificity, the gifts, struggles, and callings of each person in your care? What would it take to know them better?
2. In your current context, who are the "sheep" who are ready to be sent but have not yet been released? What is holding them back, and what is your part in that? Is it a failure of equipping, or a failure of trust? Be honest in your assessment.
3. Identify one person in your leadership context whom you will intentionally equip and send in the next three months. Name the person. Name the gift. Name the opportunity. Write out the specific

encouragement (theological and personal) you will offer them. Make this a commitment, not a hope. Act on it.

Glossary

Chief Shepherd: A title of Jesus Christ, taken from 1 Peter 5:4. Pastors and elders shepherd God's people under His authority and answer to Him.

Episkopos: The Greek word for an overseer, someone who watches over others with responsible care. The church later used the word for the office of bishop. In this book it names the shepherd-leader's work of overseeing the flock (Acts 20:28).

Eschatological: Having to do with the last things: the return of Christ, the final judgment, and the new creation.

Great Commission: The command of the risen Christ to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them (Matthew 28:19–20).

Katatismos: The Greek word translated “to equip” in Ephesians 4:12. It means to mend something or restore it to its proper working order, as a surgeon sets a broken bone or a fisherman mends a torn net.

Koinonia: The Greek word for fellowship, meaning a real sharing in one another's lives. In this book it describes the walking-alongside work of the shepherd-mentor.

Missional: Shaped by the mission of God, who sends His people into the world with the Gospel and with works of service.

Paradigm: A pattern or model that shapes how people understand and practise something. This book presents shepherding as the paradigm for biblical leadership.

Skopeo: The Greek root meaning to look at, to attend to, or to watch with purpose. It is the root behind the word episkopos.

Under-shepherd: A leader who shepherds God's people on behalf of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, and answers to Him.

Whole counsel of God: Everything God has revealed in Scripture, taught in full and not only the comfortable or popular parts (Acts 20:27).

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About the Author

Pastor Baltazar A. Niangar is a Pastor Emeritus who holds the degrees of Th.B. (Bachelor of Theology), A.B. (Bachelor of Arts), and D.D. (Doctor of Divinity). He has devoted his life and ministry to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the rigorous theological formation of God's people, and the equipping of pastoral leaders for faithful and effective ministry in church and society.

Pastor Bal served for many years as a pastor and theological educator, and has been a central figure in the work of Holistic Enhancement for Lay-leaders and Pastors (HELP, Inc.) — a parachurch ministry committed to equipping the whole people of God for faithful service across every sphere of life. His monthly theological lectures to the HELP, Inc. fellowship have addressed the most foundational questions of the Christian faith, and these studies — expanded, deepened, and formatted for print — have shaped the theological works he continues to write.

His theological formation reflects sustained engagement with the whole of the Reformed and evangelical tradition. Among those whose thought has most shaped his own are Augustine of Hippo, John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, Louis Berkhof, Benjamin B. Warfield, Oscar Cullmann, Herman Dooyeweerd, Karl Barth, Paul Jewett, Francis Schaeffer, R.C. Sproul, and Ravi Zacharias. He reads every theological question through the lens of the whole counsel of God, and has spent a lifetime teaching others to do the same.

The present work, *Biblical Leadership Is Shepherding*, represents Pastor Bal's engagement with the question of leadership as it is defined and modelled by Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. Drawing on the four dimensions of shepherding found in Acts 20:28 and the broader witness of Holy Scripture, this volume is both a theological exposition and a pastoral challenge. It calls every leader, in the church and beyond it, to measure their leadership by the only model that endures: the shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

Other theological works by the author:

The Athanasian Creed Understood by Faith
Biblical Christian Cosmoscope
Biblical Salvation: A Study in Soteriology
Christian Balanced Thinking and Life
Comparing and Contrasting Calvinism and Arminianism
Cosmological Arguments for the Origin of the Universe
Divine Election unto Salvation
Doctrines of Divine Grace, Part II
Eastern Western Thinking and World-and-Life Views
Eisegesis in the Bible Study
The Epistemological Thinking for Christians
The Five Illustrations of Divine Truths
The Five Solas
God Set Time and Eternity in the Heart of Man
His Eternal Fatherhood Is the Ground of Eternal Salvation and His
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The Threefold Understanding of Salvation

The Truth of Divine Election

Vital Words Related to Salvation

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Why God Did Decree and Allow Evil to Exist

The Work of the Holy Spirit

He lives with his beloved wife, Estrella. He is the father of Dr. Ellazar and Zarelle Grace. He continues to preach, teach, write, and intercede for the reformation and renewal of the Church of Jesus Christ, until the day when faith gives way to sight and the knowledge that is now partial becomes the knowledge that is full.

Soli Deo gloria.