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EQUIPPING SHEPHERD-TEACHERS AT CALVARY
CHURCH IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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EQUIPPING SHEPHERD-TEACHERS AT CALVARY
CHURCH IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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To my beloved wife, Lisa. Your loving encouragement and support have made my education pursuits both possible and meaningful.

And to our beautiful and godly daughters, Melody and Christina. Being your dad is one of the greatest things ever, and drives me to be a more godly father.

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PREFACE

This project is the culmination of decades of learning experiences and relationships both with and under those who have gone before me and those who stood beside me over many years. I am grateful to my Lord Jesus Christ for drawing me into His kingdom and shepherding me to a place of trust and comfort according to His sovereignty and lovingkindness.

The Lord has blessed me with outstanding pastors who have been preacher, teacher, shepherd, and friend to me. Dr. Joe Brown, Dr. Rodney Navey, Dr. Norm Geisler, and Dr. John Munro have exemplified lives worthy of Him. They have dispensed knowledge, love, and care to me and provided opportunities and grace to grow as a believer and a teacher.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission of Calvary Church is “to be and make authentic followers of Jesus Christ through a balanced ministry of worshiping God, preaching, and teaching the Word, edifying one another, caring for the needs of others, and evangelizing the world.” The philosophy of ministry includes a commitment to “emphasize strong biblically-based preaching and teaching that is well grounded in the truths of the Bible.” Teaching small groups in the church setting is a vital part of making “authentic followers.” Teachers can be well equipped for multiplication through leadership in small study groups. Small study group has the additional advantage of building relationships that cannot be built in the worship service. Whether teachers are laymen or formally trained, they can contribute to this task as Paul equipped Timothy, “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).¹

Context

Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina is a large nondenominational church with more than 3,000 congregants enrolled as members and many more in attendance. With such a large congregation, small group contact becomes fundamental to discipleship and the development of mature adult believers. Calvary has established Sunday morning Adult Life Groups (ALG) as method to facilitate this task. ALG is the equivalent to what many churches call “Sunday school.” Class leaders are expected to adhere to Calvary’s articles of faith and commit to teaching in consistent agreement with

¹ All Scripture references are the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

church doctrine. The task of maintaining quality of leadership committed to the common goal is daunting with nearly thirty ALG classes of over 1,300 attendees.

While just over 40 percent of Calvary members participate in ALG, it is not the purpose of this work to specifically address either retention or attrition among attendees in small groups, though that is an important task of a teaching leader.² This percentage of attendees may seem low, but Barna Group studies indicate that churches with large congregations are likely to experience smaller percentages of those who attend small groups in relation to those to attend worship services.³ Another study by Barna suggests this percentage to be within expectations due to Calvary's large demographic of Baby Boomers and the elderly.⁴ Regardless of the percentage of ALG attendees, Calvary maintains a "quality over quantity" approach to small groups, encouraging all who attend to connect in small groups and providing able, mature teachers to lead them.⁵

Calvary's Pastor of Discipleship takes great care in vetting teachers and providing training, and much is accomplished to engage capable leaders in this area. Leaders are expected at the least to be qualified to teach and have a good understanding of sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). The desire of the church is to vet and develop spiritually qualified leaders who are mature in doctrine and biblical principles and display a spirit of unity. In addition, the teacher must seek to make meaningful connections with ALG attendees. The mark of a mature believer is not measured by knowledge alone, but by love for others (John 13:34-25). One aspect of a teacher's love for other believers is manifested

² Calvary membership and ALG statistics reflected in this project reflect attendance prior to the onset of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

³ Barna Group, "Who Is Active in 'Group' Expressions of Faith? Barna Study Examines Small Groups, Sunday School, and House Churches," June 28, 2010, <https://www.barna.com/research/who-is-active-in-group-expressions-of-faith-barna-study-examines-small-groups-sunday-school-and-house-churches>.

⁴ Barna Group, "Barna Describes Religious Changes Among Busters, Boomers, and Elders Since 1991," July 26, 2011, <https://www.barna.com/research/barna-describes-religious-changes-among-busters-boomers-and-elders-since-1991>.

⁵ For the purpose of this project, the terms *teacher* and *leader* are interchangeable when referring to those who take charge of a small group or ALG.

in the form of what is addressed in this project as “biblical shepherding.” Shepherding can be accomplished through personal connections as well as teaching and modeling biblical application as the hearer catches a vision of life in Christ through the study presented and perceives the desire of the teacher to participate along with them. Conveying biblical knowledge alone is only part of the great responsibility placed on those who teach (Jas 3:1). As Tom Constable reminds, “James warned that God will judge a teacher more strictly than a non-teacher because he presumably knows the truth and claims to live by it.”⁶

If the teacher’s task of connecting with group participants is accomplished best through acts of love rather than simply contact organization, then the manner of acquiring that kind of love becomes a question of Christian character. Paul encourages his fellow believers in partnership in the gospel and points to Christ as the one who completes the good work in his disciples. He wraps up the introduction of his letter to the Philippians with a prayer that their love may abound more and more “with knowledge and discernment . . . and so be pure and blameless” (1:3-11). The love that serves participation in the gospel, alluded to here by Paul, will grow through relationship with Christ, which is advanced through spiritual disciples. If Calvary expects teachers to connect with Bible students in a loving way, then those teachers are obliged to cultivate a daily walk with Christ, producing love that is perfected by Him and not simply manufactured as a contact strategy. Therefore, emphasis on both shepherding and spiritual disciples will greatly equip teachers to teach and connect with their class.

I lead one of the smaller ALG classes at Calvary and have seen people fall out of my and other groups for want of shepherding. One single woman attended only a few times but asked to be placed on the roll. After a few months of occasional attendance, she was not seen or heard from again. She kept receiving the weekly ALG email and one day, a year after her last attendance, she emailed a reply to a devotional comment asking if I

⁶ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (n.p.: Galaxie Software, 2003), Jas 3:1, Logos.

really believed the Bible was true and if it could change people's lives. This opened an email conversation for the next few weeks over her perceived lack of care from those in the church. It was other people's lack of care to which she was referring. At that time, she shared that she had become pregnant and believed she had been ostracized from the church on that account, resulting in her leaving church completely. I knew that this would not be the case with the leadership or most people I knew at Calvary and made an effort to show Christ's love and kindness while inviting her to come back. My wife and I offered to babysit for her if needed. She dropped the communication and has once again dropped off the radar. I realized that, as her ALG teacher, I might have mitigated her feelings by making an immediate connection with her upon joining the class. She should have been shepherded into a relationship that at the very least informed her that she would be loved and helped no matter her circumstance. This was one failure to shepherd a sheep that had wandered into my small group flock at Calvary.

The success of retaining people in a class and drawing them to a deeper connection with the teacher and others depends as much or more on shepherding than it does on sound doctrinal teaching. Donald P. Smith, who spent his latter career directing church vocations, cites six steps that lead to a person leaving the church, all of which have to do with anxiety, relationships, and feeling left out or disconnected. Responding quickly to a member who has a cry for help will increase the chance for that member to be restored. Nowhere in Smith's chapter on equipping lay teachers does he mention doctrinal proficiency as a requirement for retaining members.⁷ The soundness of the teaching is necessary, but retention and enthusiasm for continued participation is driven by connection. Many successful connections that have produced committed members are the result of those I have visited in the hospital or attended the funeral of a parent or loved one. A phone call or visit during a time of anxiety not only strengthened the personal

⁷ Donald P. Smith, *How to Attract and Keep Church Members* (Louisville: John Knox, 1992), 87-88.

connection but resulted in higher participation and interest. Knowing and participating in the details of their life joys and struggles promotes community in the group.

In a large church environment, the task is not typically one of finding enough teaching volunteers, but of finding biblically qualified volunteers willing to operate in unity within the structure of hermeneutically sound teaching, promote spiritual application, and seek to intentionally love and shepherd those in the group at opportune moments. Doctrinally sound teachers are in good supply at Calvary Church. Therefore, the task of developing those teachers to be better shepherds is an important concern.

Many methods are available today to connect with attendees—email, phone calls, texting, and social media are just a few, and many of these methods are well employed by ALG teachers at Calvary. There is a greater chance of successful connection with these tools when people know that they are cared for in a Christlike way. Teachers generally spend an adequate amount of time preparing their minds for teaching their ALG students, but do they spend an adequate amount of time in the spiritual disciplines to prepare their hearts to shepherd them? Volunteer teachers have busy lives and careers outside of their church activities, but this area cannot be neglected if teachers are to lead and preserve Christians in a caring flock.

Teaching the Bible to adults is an important part of promoting individual spiritual growth in the church. By setting an environment of shepherd awareness and spiritual disciplines for ALG teachers, the church strengthens the foundation for communicating the gospel into the lives of believers.

Rationale

ALGs are positioned to lead believers to a greater walk with Christ through building knowledge of Scripture and deeper spiritual disciplines. Calvary's pastor of discipleship continues to make outstanding progress toward strengthening this program with thorough vetting procedures and high-level sessions aimed at briefing teachers on guidelines and direction. Beyond that, the teacher has the task of communicating the

Scriptures every week in a meaningful way to class attendees. Knowledge of the Bible is not enough—teachers should model it through their own commitment to walking with Christ. Teachers must care for their flock while always pointing to the Great Shepherd (Matt 9:36; John 10:1-18).

The teacher is a guide as well as educator. The Ethiopian on the road to Gaza knew he needed understanding of the Scriptures in addition to mere explanation. While he had read the Scripture, he still pleaded with Philip to guide him so he could gain understanding (Acts 8:31). Many teachers may lack understanding in one or more areas of basic discipleship, shepherding, and counseling. Leading and encouraging teachers to gain their own personal understanding will help them possess what they desire to convey. Training in shepherding and spiritual disciplines facilitates a more Christ-centered connection with class attendees.

First, concerning development of spiritual disciplines, every teacher is committed to guiding those in the classroom to a deeper and more personal understanding of the Bible so that their daily walk with Christ will be more God-honoring, effective, and fulfilling. God is honored and glorified through the spiritual maturation of his people (2 Pet 3:18). Teachers, like any other Christian, are not perfect, and those who promote maturity through biblical exposition must mind their own house when it comes to discipleship. If teachers provide great exposition and exegesis, but cannot apply that to their own life, then they will be ineffective in relating those truths to others (Matt 7:5). Jesus himself modeled exemplary teaching when He washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:1-17). He commanded the disciples to follow His example and do as He had done and wash one another's feet. Teachers are called to learn the Scripture and do what the Lord commands. This project sought to develop teachers' commitment to their Christian walk so that they may guide others in like manner.

Second, concerning the task of shepherding, it is given that people come to small groups for answers on how to apply the Bible to their daily life. When the application of a

passage is heard and understood, there remains the task of getting the truth of the message into the life of the hearer. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5) highlights the difference between the logical application and the spiritual. Time and again the Lord illustrates what the life of a disciple looks like. He explains how disciples should live as constituents of the kingdom of God. Kingdom living cannot always be conveyed in a classroom time that does not provide the time needed for deep reflection. Teachers may find themselves approached individually with a specific life conflict or problem that requires a commitment of time outside what is allotted for a lesson. Rather than automatically referring to a pastor, the teacher can be the initial shepherd and guide. If deeper biblical spiritual or even professional counseling is required, teachers should be aware of how and when to escalate and refer.

For teachers to be effective spiritual shepherds, it is essential that they understand the biblical and historical foundations for leading the flock. In addition, it is vital to discern between secular “self-help” methods of instruction and those that are truly based in Scripture. Often the methods of the world intersect with godly instruction, but the final authority for shepherding is based on God’s Word. “Self-improvement” is not a parallel construct to sanctification. An appeal to God’s grace and power, and realizing the work of God in the believer, draws people closer to Him as He works His improvements, which often run contrary to pop psychology (2 Cor 12:9; Phil 2:12-13). This project sought to train leaders to shepherd their flock in godly sanctification in the presentation of the lesson, personally connecting with attendees and enabling them to recognize when and how to defer to those with more training in these areas.

In summary, providing focused sessions on spiritual disciplines and shepherding for ALG leaders effectively promotes greater Bible knowledge, spiritual maturity, and unity within the body of Christ. All of these can be accomplished with the resources available within the church body supported by the pastoral staff. The result of these actions is more confident and informed teachers who have built spiritual disciplines for

themselves and relationships among each other to convey knowledge and promote spiritual maturity to class attendees.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to increase knowledge of Calvary Church's ALG leaders about shepherd-teaching so that they will teach, model, and communicate biblical living and sanctification to their members.

Goals

The following goals were utilized to implement the project plan. These steps were designed to improve the knowledge and ability of class leaders to shepherd the flock that is their class.

1. The first goal was to develop and administer a six-session curriculum for current and potential leaders to equip them for shepherd-teaching.
2. The second goal was to develop and administer the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey to the participants to assess the ALG leaders' knowledge of shepherd-teaching practices and responsibilities.
3. The third goal was to evaluate responses from the class and measure change in knowledge.

The success of the goals was measured using the specific research methodology that follows.

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of the three goals. The first goal was to develop and administer a six-session curriculum for current and potential leaders to equip them for shepherd-teaching. The curriculum covered spiritual disciplines, biblical and historical shepherding, and shepherding practices. This curriculum development was measured through an expert panel of one elder of Calvary Church and the Pastor of Discipleship who utilized a rubric to evaluate biblical and theological faithfulness, applicability of the curriculum, and adherence to the

Articles of Faith of Calvary Church as well as the Philosophy of Ministry.⁸ This goal was considered successfully met when a score of 95 percent of the evaluation criterion exceeded the 90 percent sufficient level and the proposed curriculum was approved by the Pastor of Discipleship. If the 90 percent benchmark was not met, then the material would be revised until met. The teaching goal was measured by successfully administering the curriculum in six, one-hour-and-thirty-minute sessions on Wednesday evenings over a seven-week period on campus at Calvary Church. Both measurement components were considered successful when the final class was completed.

The second goal was to develop and administer the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey to the participants to assess the ALG leaders' knowledge of shepherd-teaching practices and responsibilities. The goal was measured by administering a pre-class survey to the ALG teachers to measure their current shepherd-teaching practices.⁹ The pre-class survey was examined during the week following the initial class session for compilation and accuracy and for evidence of any outliers. The goal was considered successful when all thirteen ALG leaders completed the post-class survey.

The third goal was to evaluate responses from the class and measure change in knowledge. This goal was measured by conducting a *t*-test to indicate differences in the pre- and post-class Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey and whether any significance of change has occurred. This goal was considered successfully met when 100 percent of the post-class surveys were analyzed and a *t*-test measured the results.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

Shepherd-teacher. A *shepherd-teacher* is a Bible teacher who implements an

⁸ See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁹ See appendix 2.

aspect of biblical shepherding into the teaching environment. Thus, a *shepherd-teacher* is one who guides others in knowledge and application of Scripture, models a life based on Scripture, and provides an environment to connect with learners to spiritually impact their lives in a loving and guiding relationship toward spiritual maturity.

Adult Life Group. *Adult Life Group* (ALG) at Calvary church is the equivalent of what many churches term *Sunday school*. Groups range from ten or twelve members to over a hundred and are designed to increase biblical knowledge and application, as well as connecting attendees with their teacher and others in the class. These groups meet either prior to or following the congregational service and preaching in the sanctuary on Sunday morning. “These smaller groups are an essential part of helping everyone connect at Calvary and grow in faith together. . . . Adult Life Groups meet to study God’s Word, pray, and share the joys and challenges of life. This is where we develop lasting friendships and build community.”¹⁰

Meditation. *Mediation* refers specifically to Christian meditation. John Jefferson Davis defines it as meditation on Scripture that “seeks communion and friendship with God for its own sake and for the sake of our souls.”¹¹ Meditation includes Luther’s recommended practice of “repeating and comparing oral speech and literal words of the book, reading and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them.”¹²

Shepherding. *Shepherding* draws its definition from the *Lexham Theological Workbook*: “Shepherding is the care and supervision a shepherd offers a flock. In the Bible, shepherding and related imagery are often used metaphorically to depict God’s

¹⁰ Calvary Church, “Adult Life Groups,” accessed July 7, 2020, <https://calvarychurch.com/lifegroups>.

¹¹ John Jefferson Davis, *Meditation and Communion with God* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2012), chap. 2, “Biblical Illiteracy in America,” para 5. Kindle.

¹² Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 34: Career of the Reformer IV, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 34 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 286.

pastoral care of Israel in the OT and to depict how Jesus and his leaders attended to the Church in the NT.”¹³

One limitation applied to this project. The curriculum element of project was limited to six sessions. The time limitation imposed on the delivery of the curriculum was based on a standard semester of classes offered by Calvary Church during the Wednesday night teaching cycle.

One delimitation applied to this project. The project was delimited to receiving a minimum of eight responses to the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey from ALG teachers. The delimitation was due to a total of twenty-eight current teachers with an expectation that not all ALG leaders would participate in the class offering.

Conclusion

ALGs are the primary method for creating community and connecting with the flock at Calvary Church. In a large church, it is difficult for everyone in the flock to make personal connections with pastors, elder, or even deacons. A deacon may have one hundred people in their assigned flock. Consequently, Calvary leadership encourages ALG teachers to be the catalyst for creating community. This task is not accomplished by teaching the Bible in ALG small groups unless shepherding by the teachers is understood and prioritized. Shepherding requires personal devotion and intentional steps to care for the flock. The outcome of this project was for Calvary to strengthen connections with God’s people through the teaching of Scripture by godly shepherd-teachers so that they can experience the love and care of the body of Christ.

¹³ Wayne Baxter, “Shepherding,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2014).

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR SHEPHERD LEADERSHIP

Calvary Church relies on ALG as part of its strategy to accomplish its mission “to be and make authentic disciples of Jesus Christ.”¹ The mission statement incorporates two important aspects of growth as it relates to ministry leaders. First, the large size of Calvary’s congregation creates an obvious need to delegate teaching and discipling of the local body to leaders of smaller groups beyond pastors and governing elders. Second, the charge “to be” authentic disciples implies that those leaders cannot impart spiritual maturity if they do not possess it.

This chapter will argue that Scripture calls the leaders of God’s people to two tasks beyond the mere conveyance of biblical information if they are to achieve discipleship among those in their charge. The first task is to *be* an authentic disciple through personal spiritual discipline, and the second is to shepherd their charge. I will use both Old and New Testament passages to demonstrate God’s expectations of each for leaders throughout the ages. The call for spiritual discipline among leaders will be demonstrated by an exegetical analysis of Joshua 1:1-9—regarding Joshua’s call to the leadership of Israel; and James 3:1-5—regarding James’s admonition that not many should become teachers because of the expectation placed on them. The call for shepherd leadership will be demonstrated by an exegetical analysis of one negative example in the Old Testament and one positive example from the New Testament. Ezekiel 34:1-34 will be examined regarding the failed shepherds of Israel; and 1 Peter 5:1-4 will address Peter’s charge for leaders in the church to shepherd their flock.

¹ Calvary Church, “Beliefs,” accessed June 26, 2020, <https://calvarychurch.com/beliefs>.

Spiritual Discipline: Joshua 1:1-9

While the church today does not engage in physical battle to possess the promised land like Israel, it is nevertheless constantly engaged in spiritual warfare to possess the kingdom of God (Eph 6:10-12; 1 Pet 5:8). God provides leaders who equip the church for this task, just as he provided Joshua for the task facing Israel. The list of leaders God gives to equip include teachers as well as apostles, prophets, and evangelists (Eph 4:11-13). God not only calls them to lead to his people, but he provides them with wisdom and courage, the essential characteristics of godly leadership. When the Lord commissioned Joshua, he did not call on him to hone his skills for military strategy or his physical strength as a soldier. He made it clear that Joshua's effectiveness as a leader would rest in his personal relationship with him. His charge was to commit himself to the Book of the Law. Joshua's spiritual disciple would be the measure of his effectiveness as a leader of God's people. So too, those who lead God's people today cannot succeed if they rely on their communication and teaching skills for spiritual warfare. The Lord places the same responsibility for spiritual discipline on the leaders of the church that he placed on the leadership of Joshua.

Israel was about to enter the promised land under the leadership of Joshua, but first, the mantle was to be passed on from Moses. The passing of leadership signified more than that the person was designated as the head of the national assembly. As noted by Old Testament scholar Richard Hess, the description of "servant of the Lord" is uniquely applied to Moses and carried more significance than a servant-master relationship: "Until the death of Joshua (when it is also applied to him), only Moses is called *servant of the Lord*. Besides expressing the relationship of servanthood which Moses would have towards the Lord, it also stresses the personal relationship which the Lord had towards Moses, as described in the final verses of Deuteronomy."² Those final verses describe Moses as one who knew God "face to face" (Deut 34:10-11), implying an intimate and familiar

² Richard S. Hess, *Joshua*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 73-74.

relationship between two who are well acquainted. As the Hebrew Bible transitions from the Torah to the Nevi'im, the last days of Moses's guided leadership in Deuteronomy to Joshua's commission to replace him flows naturally.³ The Lord intended to commission Joshua to assume the leadership of his people as "servant of the Lord," as one who maintained a personal relationship as Moses had done.

As Joshua is commissioned, the Lord charged him with the necessary elements to be a godly leader. From a greater perspective, the Lord made it clear that Joshua was not the one to provide the land or produce the military victories. Joshua was only the instrument or liaison God would use to accomplish the task. Thus, the charge included an understanding of the role of leaders as well as what was expected. The elements of the commission in Joshua 1 were (1) an understanding that the Lord gives the land (1:2-3), (2) that no one would be able to stand before Joshua because the Lord was with him (1:5), (3) "be strong and courageous" (1:6-7, 9), and (4) to obey the Law of Moses (1:7-8). Understanding and obedience were required for Joshua's leadership to succeed. The first two highlight what is to be understood as the work of the Lord while the last two express the response expected of a leader.

The Lord Gives the Land

The understanding that the Lord is the one who gives the land is couched in the continuity of the Lord's provision as the transfer of leadership is passed from Moses. Joshua is identified as Moses's assistant (1:1), and now is elevated to the leadership previously occupied by Moses. The passage relates back to Moses's leadership in Deuteronomy 11 where much of the same language is repeated in Joshua's commission. Neither the promise nor the expectations had changed. When the land is promised again it is repeated with the phrase, "just as I promised to Moses" (1:3). The language of the land the Lord gives is nearly identical to the promise previously given to Israel: "Every place

³ Marten Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981), 48.

on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours. Your territory shall be from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea” (Deut 11:24). In both instances, the Lord is identified as the giver of the land, it is “the good land the Lord is giving you” (Deut 11:27), which compares to, “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you” (Josh 1:3). Deuteronomy states explicitly that the Lord gives the land thirty-nine times.⁴ Furthermore, Deuteronomy 11:13-17 enumerates the provisions in the land that the Lord also gives to Israel: the rain, grass, and the fruit.

The Lord Was with Joshua

By connecting the commission of Joshua with the history of the Lord’s interaction under Moses’s leadership, Joshua receives clear instruction that what he is about to undertake is a work of the Lord. The result of what the Lord does is that “no man shall be able to before you all the days of your life” (Josh 1:5). The promise that no one shall “stand before” or “stand against,” paired with the promise of the Lord’s presence, indicates that his appointed leaders are only successful because of his presence (Deut 7:24; 11:25, Josh 1:5). Joseph’s rise to prominence from incarceration testifies to the promise well before Moses’ era: “The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph’s charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed” (Gen 39:23). David relayed the pattern to Solomon in his instructions for building the temple: “Now, my son, the Lord be with you, so that you may succeed in building the house of the Lord your God, as he has spoken concerning you” (1 Chron 22:11). Isaiah cites the Lord’s presence as the basis for courage: “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isa 41:10). Conversely, Joshua 7:12 states that

⁴ Deut 1:25, 27; 2:29; 3:20; 4:1, 21, 40; 5:16; 6:18; 8:1; 9:6; 11:9, 17, 21, 31; 12:10; 15:4, 7; 16:20; 17:14; 18:9; 19:1, 2, 3, 10, 14; 21:1, 23; 24:4; 25:15, 19; 26:1, 2, 3; 27:2, 3; 28:8, 11; 31:7.

Israel will not be able to “stand before” their enemies when they transgress God’s covenant (7:11), causing the Lord to declare that he will “be with them no more” (7:12).

The leader whom God commissions is assured of his presence in the undertaking, no matter how long it is required. Biblical studies expert Trent Butler relates the presence as an essential and long-lasting factor in godly leadership: “The presence is not limited to a brief blitzkrieg of a few days or weeks, but rather the presence is for a lifetime, intimating that the battle will be a long-lasting reality. The descriptions at the beginning of chapters 13 and 23 that Joshua has become advanced in years seem to confirm this.”⁵ The continuity continues throughout the ages as God calls his leaders to an understanding that their work is God’s work, something which will not be grasped by knowledge alone. Both Moses and Joshua enjoyed personal relationships with the Lord and constant reminders that God provided the outcome. Moses forgot this on one occasion, and it cost him entrance into the promised land (Num 20:10-13).

Be Strong and Courageous

The second part of the charge relates the response of the leader to God’s work and his commission. Joshua was encouraged to respond to God’s provision by being strong and courageous (1:6) and committing himself to the Book of the Law (1:7-8). This is the fourth time Joshua had heard the words, “be strong and courageous,” spoken directly to him (Deut 31:6, 7 spoken by Moses; Deut 31:23 spoken by the Lord), and they would occur twice more in the current charge (1:9, 18). Joshua uses the phrase to encourage the chiefs of Israel as they overcame the Amorite kings (10:25), and it would be used later by two more great leaders in David’s charge to Solomon (1 Chr 22:13; 28:20) and Hezekiah’s charge to the military leaders in Jerusalem (2 Chr 32:7). Each use is based upon the provision of the Lord. Leaders are to be “strong and courageous” because the work of the Lord cannot be defeated.

⁵ Trent C. Butler, *Joshua 1-12*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 7A, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 217.

Biblical Hebrew expert Thomas B. Dozeman indicates that the courage called for in Joshua's case has more to do with determination than overcoming fear: "The verb *'āmaš* signifies determination, as in Ruth's decision to accompany Naomi from Moab (Ruth 1:18). The phrase *ḥāzaq we'ēmāš* often describes courage to undertake war, as in Sihon's decision to war against Israel (Deut 2:30) or Hezekiah's decision to resist Sennacherib (2 Chr 32:7)."⁶ The phrase follows the assurance of the Lord's provision, which gives the leader determination to possess that which the Lord has provided. Those who lead and teach the Word of the Lord may deliver it with confidence and determination considering the sure promise that "it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa 55:11). Hess succinctly summarizes the effect: "Joshua will not succeed because he obeys God's instruction; he will succeed because God is with him to enable him to obey his instruction."⁷

Obey the Law of Moses

Joshua's charge is to be committed to the Word of God. This commitment applies to all leaders of God's people in all times. Hundreds of years after Joshua, Ezra would follow the same pattern: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). Even Artaxerxes, king of Persia, recognized its value when he encouraged Ezra to teach the laws of God to the returning remnant (Ezra 7:25). Success is assured if the object is one that the Lord has promised to provide. The sure way of knowing what the Lord provides to his people is to possess knowledge of his revelation through continuous and repeated reading and application of Scripture. When a disciple reads about God's provision over and over with no hint of failure, his determination to deliver God's promises grows to a point where he

⁶ Thomas B. Dozeman, *Joshua 1-12*, Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 6B (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 196.

⁷ Hess, *Joshua*, 80.

need not depend on his own leadership or communication skills. In fact, the Bible repeatedly shows God’s plan fulfilled despite the failures and shortcomings of his people. The “Book of the Law” is therefore a vital component of the entire commission. Without it, Joshua or any leader cannot participate in the Lord’s provision nor convey its application to those who follow.

What does it mean for the Law not to “depart from your mouth” and to “meditate on it day and night?” Calvin believed it applied to teaching: “I have no doubt that the word used is peculiarly applicable to a person who was bound to prosecute the study in question, not only for himself individually, but for the whole people placed under his rule. He is enjoined, therefore, to attend to the teaching of the Law”⁸ Old Testament scholar and professor Jerome F. D. Creach believes Calvin missed the meaning since never at any time in his career does Joshua instruct Israel in the Law of Moses. Rather, the phrase referring to the mouth is parallel to the statement to meditate on the Law: “The expression ‘you shall meditate’ denotes something akin to mumbling or speaking under the breath. Thus, it [not departing from your mouth] reflects the practice of reading aloud, which was common in the biblical world even when reading alone (Acts 8:30). Joshua’s is not casual (or quiet) reflection but active reading and study.”⁹ Likewise, Luther rightly expressed the practice of meditation as reading God’s words aloud with “diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them.”¹⁰ He warned Christians not to think they have complete understanding by just reading, hearing, and speaking. Discipleship author, Kenneth Boa, puts the practice into a New Testament context that invites the Holy Spirit to speak within us and transform us to Christlikeness by deliberately dwelling on Scripture. Nevertheless, in continuity with the Old Testament, Boa cites the

⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Joshua, Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 33.

⁹ Jerome F. D. Creach, *Joshua*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 27.

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Career of the Reformer IV*, Vol. 34:, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 34 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 286.

Joshua passage as an informative verse that “tells us that the path to success as God defines it is the habit of making space in our lives to meet with God in his holy Word with a heart intention to apply what he reveals through obedient action.”¹¹ In other words, the phrase combination refers to a continuous lifestyle of reading and studying the Lord’s commands so that Joshua would be the leader of God’s people and fulfill the commission. Butler expands on this notion as a method that not only provides encouragement but conforms the person’s life to the object of the meditation.¹²

Biblical wisdom books attest that the call for meditation extends beyond Joshua’s charge to all who are called to righteousness. These writings unpack the understanding of meditation as something more than simply thinking about the ways of the Lord. Psalms begins with this exhortation: “His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (1:2). The result is a life characterized by a firm standing, abundant fruit, and prosperity (1:3). The Psalm contrasts this man with a wicked man whom the wind drives away and is doomed to perish (1:4, 6). The wicked man is obviously not meditating on the law of the Lord. Psalm 119 provides a whole alphabet of encouragement to commit oneself to the Word of God, all of which testify to a transformed life through love of the Lord’s commands. Verses 79-80 relate to how a godly life affects others: “Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies. May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!” The writer cannot be put to shame because of the truthfulness of God’s Word.

While commitment to meditating on God’s Word is useful in ways that apply to all of God’s people, it is indispensable to those who lead. Hess relates that the combination of God’s selection for leadership and commitment to his Word is the expected norm for every leader called by God:

¹¹ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 178.

¹² Butler, *Joshua 1-12*, 221.

For the Christian, this background exemplifies the preparation of a leader for Christian ministry. The leader is someone who, like Joshua, has already undertaken specific tasks successfully and who has demonstrated a loyalty to God's Word even when that means standing out from the crowd. . . . A leader like Joshua is someone recognized by the people of God and, most important of all, someone whom God clearly chooses.¹³

All leadership is therefore inherently pedagogical in that those who lead provide a learning experience by example to those who follow. Joshua and all of God's leaders are expected to walk in a way that draws others to faith.

Leaders participate in moving God's people to greater spiritual maturity by recognizing and receiving his promises, whether that means entering the promised land or living life abundantly (John 10:10). The spirit of the commission indicates that the prosperous and successful outcome (Josh 1:8) is to obtain what the Lord provides. The spiritual discipline of devotion to the Book of the Law does not therefore mean one will obtain any kind of righteousness through works. Though a reward is involved in the task before Joshua, the commitment lends itself toward relationship and intimacy with the Lord. Whether or not anyone follows a committed leader is a work of the Lord among his people, but like Joshua, those who lead must commit themselves to godly knowledge and living so that they may be successful in their charge.

The Lord's charge to Joshua presents an excellent model for any person committed to leading God's people because it displays the benefits and success that follow commitment to spiritual discipline. The passage provides the foundation for leading as well as promise and encouragement. When leading according to God's instructions, it is understood that the blessings of a godly life are gifts from the Lord. He is the provider of all good things. Leaders may have confidence to stand against opposition because the Lord has assured the blessing on his own accord. Furthermore, successful leadership is assured because of the Lord's presence. Leadership apart from his presence is destined for failure. Finally, obedience to God's Law and commands is required for leadership. Godly

¹³ Hess, *Joshua*, 25.

leadership requires knowledge and meditation on God's Word.

Spiritual Discipline: James 3:1-5

Teachers are among those that lead God's people into the promised land. Teachers have a unique responsibility because they interpret and teach the Scripture so that hearers mature in their walk with Christ. James exhorts those who desire to teach the Scripture to consider carefully the task before them because they can expect a greater strictness of judgment from God (3:1). Furthermore, since speech is the primary tool to deliver teaching, James calls for teachers to have control over what they say (3:2-12). The words that come from the mouths of teachers are a reflection of their source: "Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?" (3:11). Teaching God's Word calls the hearer to a godly life of self-control. Teachers can only be effective in this ministry if they live by the truths they are teaching.

James states unequivocally that teachers will be judged with greater strictness in the opening verse of chapter 3. The remainder of the paragraph speaks of the power of the tongue, connecting the judgement in question with the speech of the teacher. Many scholars agree that the verses about the tongue in this pericope are directed to the teachers of verse 1, not to Christians in general, though all Christians would do well to "tame the tongue." The focus here will be the (1) arguments that link verses about judgment and speech together; (2) basis for greater strictness in judgment of speech, and (3) need for teachers to commit themselves to spiritual discipline so that they may have control over their speech.

Teachers Speech Will Be Judged

The book of James is practical for Christian living as it addresses behavior more than it does pure doctrine. The question, "How is the Christian to live?" undergirds the entire letter and is therefore pertinent to the topic of spiritual discipline for the believer. In the case of teachers, James 3:1 make a clear statement. The warning appears to Douglas

Moo as a one-off statement for teachers followed by a tangentially related section on controlling the tongue: “While James has obvious concern about the application of his teaching to Christian leaders (cf. also v. 13), we doubt that he writes as directly as this to those leaders throughout the paragraph. Verse 1, after all, is directed not to Christian leaders, but to any Christian who might want to become a teacher.”¹⁴ While the point is taken, it is difficult to see how those desiring to become teachers can avoid evaluation as such beforehand. Leaders must display leadership behavior prior to leadership.

Paul hints at the same behavioral expectation for leaders when he couches the well-known verse on Christ’s gift of “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, shepherds and teachers to equip the saints” (Eph 4:11) between two passages that exhort his readers to walk “in a manner worthy of the calling” (Eph 4:1) and to “no longer walk as the Gentiles do” (Eph 4:17). F. F. Bruce zeros in on the connected words “shepherds and teachers” as appropriately linked in a manner that denotes a single order of pastoral ministry.¹⁵ The entire behavioral exhortation of Ephesians 4, then, can be seen as containing a special heightened expectation for leaders by mentioning them in verse 11. Those whom Christ gives for leadership are unlikely to instruct in behavior that is foreign to them. The phrase in James 3:2, “For we all stumble in many ways,” naturally applies to all Christians, but like Ephesians 4, it has special meaning in the context of James’s warning to teachers. For James to leap from a single sentence about teachers to a general statement for believers obfuscates the transitional continuity of who should guard their speech.¹⁶

Craig Blomberg explains that James’s inclusion of the linking word “for” in this

¹⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 148.

¹⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), 348.

¹⁶ Moo makes the same case in both of his commentaries on James, though his earlier work applies the admonition to both teachers and people in the church. See Douglas J. Moo, *James*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 16, 2nd ed. (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2015), 155-56.

sentence indicates that the correct reading is to consider stumbling in speech as an action of the teachers addressed in verse 1, thus applying what follows specifically to them.¹⁷

Likewise, James Adamson contests that if the phrase simply means that everyone stumbles, referring to all humans or all Christians, then “the logic of the passage would be *entirely* tacit: the relevance of the diatribe would be left entirely to the hearer to gauge.”¹⁸ That is, the hearer would have no connection to how controlling the tongue relates to the warning for teachers or to any other matters addressed on the epistle. Certainly, all Christians do stumble in their speech, but that is not the point of the passage. Adamson continues, “The logic of the passage is better preserved if we take James to be saying that teachers, all teachers, are prone, very prone, to sin; for the tongue is preeminently uncontrollable and a ‘treacherous’ source of evil; only an ideal man would *never* sin with his tongue.”¹⁹ The charge, then, is better understood to mean that teachers should employ a measure of discipline over their speech if they are to fend off judgment for acts of improper speech.

Greater Judgment for Teachers

James issues a warning to teachers in verse 1 so that they will carefully consider the task before them. Not many should become teachers because not everyone is up to the scrutiny they will receive. The connection with verse 2, as stated, suggests that strict judgment is linked to speech. No one can completely control their speech. Since speech is the primary means for teaching, the Lord considers its use in relaying his revelation to be subject to stricter judgment. With greater knowledge comes greater responsibility (Luke 12:48). Teachers teach because they have been charged by God and therefore commit themselves to acquiring more detailed knowledge of what they teach than those they are

¹⁷ Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 16 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 150.

¹⁸ James Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 140.

¹⁹ Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 140.

teaching. There is an expectation that teachers come with more knowledge than the hearers. Adamson shows the relationship of knowledge and judgment: “All men commit many sins (including—but not only—teachers): that is precisely why men should be chary about incurring the risk of greater punishment, as we shall if we become teachers, entrusted, as teachers are, with increased knowledge.”²⁰ An expectation of increased knowledge puts teachers in a powerful position to have their words accepted at face value, a position which must never be abused.

A natural human desire to be recognized and held in high esteem exists among peers that can manifest itself as a desire to become a teacher—one who is respected and admired for their knowledge of the Scriptures. Paul lists the teaching ministry as one of the three most prominent in the church which also includes apostles and prophets (1 Cor 12:28). Moo relates the respect granted to teachers in the first century and how it connects to James’s warning:

Somewhat comparable to the Jewish rabbi, the teacher in the early church was entrusted with the crucial task of transmitting the doctrine that bound the community together (see 2 Tim. 2:2). A certain authority and prestige naturally adhered to the teaching ministry. Teachers in James’ day would have been particularly noteworthy, since few people could read and opportunities for advancement in status were meagre. It is not surprising, then, that Christians were attracted to the teaching ministry. Concern about believers coveting this ministry for the wrong reasons probably lies behind James’ warning: *Not many of you should become teachers.*²¹

Immediately following the apostolic era and the completion of canonical material, the informative *Shepherd of Hermas* confirmed that the church was dealing with the problem of would-be teachers: “Because of this arrogance of theirs, understanding has left them and a foolish stupidity has taken possession of them. Yet they praise themselves for having wisdom and want to be volunteer teachers, foolish though they are.”²² Moo’s analysis is quite true for the first century and with slight modification for modern times as well. In

²⁰ Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 138.

²¹ Moo, *James*, 154, emphasis original.

²² Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude 9.22.2 (99.2), in Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, updated ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 507.

the United States, today most, if not all, members in a congregation are literate, but the demands of modern culture mean that not many can devote themselves to lengthy, in-depth study of God's Word. They rely on pastors and teachers in the church to do the heavy lifting, so to speak, to help them in their spiritual growth and knowledge of the Bible. The possibility of noteworthiness has never ceased to present itself as an opportunity for pride and self-serving advancement within the church. The more learned the Bible teacher, the greater the risk. Those with advanced learning, such as Bible college or seminary, are perhaps even more susceptible.

The question of whether the judgment applies just to the speech produced by teachers in their office, or to how they conduct themselves in generally observable behavior, is worth examining when applied to spiritual disciplines for teachers. Distinguished New Testament scholar Ralph P. Martin finds the bridled "body" as a reference to the local church. That which is bridled, controlled, or directed (Jas 3:2-4) by the tongue is the congregation of the church: The more precise background to James's attitude toward the tongue "fits better into a discussion where (i) 'the body' in question is the ecclesial one, not the anatomical one, and (ii) the tongue is used in a setting of the congregation at worship."²³ In this case, judgment is applied for what teachers say to the church as a function of their office. James is therefore criticizing misuse of speech in worship because it has the effect of turning the horse or ship in the wrong direction.

Teacher's Spiritual Discipline

Two possibilities arise as the cause for misusing the tongue in teaching. First, the teacher is intentionally deceiving the church for personal gain, or second, the teacher is mistaken in his interpretation and application. Both cases may be corrected through spiritual disciplines. The first teacher is not likely to employ disciplines to walk with Christ because his intent is to honor himself rather than God. Nevertheless, a time may come

²³ Ralph P. Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 48 (Waco: Word, 1988), 104.

when he yields himself to the Holy Spirit's guidance toward truth, repentance, and humility (Phil 2:3; 2 Tim 2:24-26). While the second may be in error, the error is not intentional. If someone corrects him or he subsequently detects his error, a humble attitude produced by a close walk with Christ will lead him to accept correction and right the wrong (Acts 18:24-26). So, even if the context of the passage in James refers specifically to teacher's speech to the class or congregation, the resulting heart that produces the speech is shaped by the teacher's spiritual condition. The speech habits of the teacher are likely to manifest themselves in both private and public behavior.

Even a carefully bridled tongue can misstep because "we all stumble in many ways" (Jas 3:2). Moo recognizes that the infrequent use of the word "stumble" may suggest a minor or inadvertent sin and that James may be influenced here by Sirach 19:16: "A person may make a slip without intending it. Who has never sinned with his tongue?"²⁴ Adamson observes that a less bridled tongue is apt to produce more damage: "The main thought in vv. 1-12 is the greater responsibility of teachers and the extremely dangerous character of the instrument which they have to use."²⁵ Self-control of speech is important in this context, but that is not James's target. It more specifically considers unrestrained speech that has the effect of leading others away from the truth.²⁶ Teachers may not be able to count on presenting lessons with 100 percent accuracy at every delivery, but a close and frequent relationship with Christ is indispensable to guard speech and maintain a humble attitude so that they do not lead anyone from the truth. That is quite enough cause to consider the responsibility placed on teachers.

The responsibility of teachers to be accurate when explaining God's Word to his people must be taken seriously considering the promise of greater judgement. Ample evidence has been shown to indicate that James 3:1-5 targets teachers and potential

²⁴ Moo, *The Letter of James*, 151.

²⁵ Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 141

²⁶ Martin, *James*, 109.

teachers with a warning of the consequences of dangerous and careless speech. Adamson summarizes the passage with a succinct overview of James’s message to teachers:

- 3:1 The risks and responsibilities of being a teacher:
- 3:2-12 he is sure to say many things to offend many people. If he can avoid that, he can do anything, in act no less than in word, that is needed for perfected discipleship.
- 3:13-16 So let the teacher lead a good life, with a wisdom untainted with pride, not with the vainglory of academic strife and envy, which are a devilish denial of the gospel truth and foment disorder and evil.²⁷

Careless speech is a problem for all Christians, but in this passage, James addresses it in the context of responsibility in teaching. Teachers are judged more strictly for their speech when they are instructing. “Getting it right” requires a humble attitude and commitment to speaking God’s truths. Greater judgment means that God holds teachers accountable for what they teach to his people. James encourages teachers to lead a good and humble life, which can only be accomplished by spiritual disciplines that results in a close walk with Christ in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Failed Shepherds: Ezekiel 34:1-6

Ezekiel ministered to Israel as the exile from the promised land was taking place. Both the people already in exile and those who remained in the land disobeyed the Mosaic Covenant, yet the Lord blamed Israel’s failure on their leaders. Ezekiel, acting as the mouthpiece of the Lord, delivered a scathing review of how the leaders of Israel failed in their task to shepherd his people. Though the people had not followed the Lord, the leaders were held primarily responsible. Ezekiel’s rebuke reveals three points of interest that apply to shepherding God’s people: (1) identifying the shepherds who are the recipients of the rebuke, (2) knowing what is expected of them, and (3) what actions caused their failure. Each of these points enlighten God’s leaders in all ages how to keep watch over the flock. This negative example of leadership demonstrates how God holds all leaders of his people accountable.

²⁷ Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, 16.

Identifying the Shepherds

The Lord holds individuals responsible for their own sins (2 Kgs 14:6), yet he holds those who lead to a higher accountability (Luke 12:48). As the history of Israel as a nation begins, God shows that he has specific expectations for leaders like judges, kings, and prophets that go beyond what he expects of others. Judges must remember that God provides the victories (Josh 23:2, 5). Kings must write their own copy of the law and have it approved by the priests, keep it for life, and obey it (Deut 17:18-20). Prophets are not to imitate the surrounding nations by promoting other religions; they are only to operate if called by the Lord and must speak messages from God and not their own (Deut 18:9-22).²⁸ The summary of the expectations placed on leaders is that they are to lead according to God's direction. Gideon failed to give credit to the Lord for victory (Jdgs 8:22-28), Saul failed by not waiting for the arrival of Samuel to offer sacrifices (1 Sam 13:7-14), and the failure of Moses lay in his actions at Meribah because he did not follow the Lord's instructions (Num 20:12). These incidents are failures of leadership and each came with its own consequences.

The leaders Ezekiel addresses are those who have failed to lead Israel according to God's direction and instruction. Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah were called as prophets to deliver the words of Yahweh to Judah concerning the nation's disobedience and inevitable exile. Biblical scholar James E. Smith concludes from Jeremiah 23 that the common use of "shepherd" by both prophets is a reference to kings, princes, priests, and false prophets.²⁹ Fourth century exegete Jerome was also of the opinion that the shepherds in view were the "kings and leaders, scribes and Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish people."³⁰ All

²⁸ Eric J. Tully, "OT355 Book Study: Isaiah: God's Salvation for Israel and the Ends of the Earth" (online class lecture, 2017), segment 6, "Moses Defines True Prophets," para. 3, Logos Mobile Education.

²⁹ James E. Smith, *The Major Prophets*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992), 469.

³⁰ Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel 11.34.1-31*, in Kenneth Stevenson and Michael Gluerup, eds., *Ezekiel, Daniel*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. 13 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity,

who shared in corrupt leadership as Yahweh's representatives are therefore collectively blamed for failure.

Old Testament scholar and prolific commentary author Leslie C. Allen believes that Ezekiel was inspired by Jeremiah's term *shepherd* and used it to embellish his own writing. Even so, Allen limits Ezekiel's use to only to the last two major kings of Judah, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who were responsible for Judah's poor spiritual condition that resulted in exile: "The term 'shepherd' is standard for a king throughout the ancient Near East. In this context it is combined with the use of the metaphor to portray the covenant between Yahweh and Israel (cf. Pss 74:1; 79:13; 80:2[1]; cf. the individualization in Ps 23). Accordingly the shepherds were employees of the divine shepherd and responsible to him."³¹ Brief periods of national renewal occurred under kings like Josiah and Hezekiah, but by Ezekiel's day, the damage done by Judah's kings had collectively doomed them to exile.

Expectations of Shepherds

Both views can be reconciled for the purpose of identifying the shepherd's failure. The kings of Israel and Judah were more than a succession of monarchs to lead their people. They were God's appointed heads of state, all of whom were charged with the directives of Deuteronomy 17 to know and keep the Law as well as provide an example of living under the Law to the nation. These kings were advised by scholars of the Law and prophets who should have known better than to lead God's people on their path of compromise. Whether or not Ezekiel was referring to two specific kings or the entire leadership hierarchy, he makes it clear that they have neglected their responsibility over Israel. Daniel Block recognizes that Ezekiel's use of the term "shepherd" signifies an

2008), 105. While Jerome includes the Pharisees who were not yet established in Ezekiel's day, his point is probably an effort to identify the entire array of those responsible for handling and conveying the Scripture.

³¹ Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 29 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 161.

inherent responsibility: “When the image is used metaphorically of humans tending humans, the shepherd holds office for the sake of the ruled.”³²

Causes of Failure

Ezekiel did not rebuke the leadership for their ignorance, he rebuked them for willful disobedience. As indicated, Yahweh had intimated expectations, the height of which was to lead according to his commands. The captivity by the Babylonians was certainly a real physical danger for Judah, but the greater issue was the internal captivity caused by their spiritual condition. Block highlights that the primary concern of the chapter “is not the wicked shepherds but the relationship of the Good Shepherd and his flock.”³³ God’s kingdom requires all leaders to be conduits for his care as well as his directives.

Evangelical Bible researcher Lamar Eugene Cooper Sr. succinctly identifies the expectation: “These ‘shepherds’ were more than military-political leaders. They bore a primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual direction of the nation.”³⁴ God’s people were forsaking the directions of the King who was above the king by sins of commission and omission.³⁵ Ezekiel understood that the primary charge of the shepherd was to feed the sheep, which these shepherds were not doing (Ezek 34:2-3). Jesus himself gave Peter only one command to launch post-resurrection ministry: “feed and tend my sheep” (John 21:15-17). Additional sins of omission were displayed in their failure to heal the sick sheep and to seek out the sheep who were lost (Ezek 34:4). Academic theologian Walther Zimmerli elaborates on what shepherds do for the flock: “It would be the shepherd’s task to set the weak beasts on their feet again (literally, ‘to make strong’), to heal and bind up (30:21 of

³² Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 283.

³³ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, 277.

³⁴ Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 298.

³⁵ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, 283.

men), bring back and look for.”³⁶

Furthermore, they used their office for personal gain. Old Testament academic Joel K. T. Biwul relates the extreme nature of their behavior: “Israel’s human shepherds, in Ezekiel’s view, were nothing more than parasites, sucking the saps of the people for which they were to protect and care for. The shepherds are repudiated for their negligent attitude towards the needs of the flock even though they enjoyed benefiting from the produce.”³⁷ Shepherds are entitled to certain benefits from the flock they keep. To feed off the sheep’s milk and cheese while shepherding in the desert was perfectly acceptable but eating the fat and clothing themselves with the wool were considered offenses. The slaughter of the fat sheep went beyond what was permitted for the office of the shepherd.³⁸ Block states that the language of verse 10 indicates a legal indictment: “Whereas in v. 6 *dāraš* had meant simply ‘to look for,’ now, followed by *mīyyādām* (lit. ‘from their hand’), it expresses the legal disposition of calling an evildoer to account, in this case holding the criminal shepherds accountable for the fate of the flock.”³⁹ Personal gain for today’s leaders might involve monetary or material benefits, but for teachers of small groups and Bible studies, the temptation is more likely to come in the form of the pride and self-advancement through human admiration and exultation. Ezekiel would rebuke a shepherd for feeding off the sheep to gain notoriety just as harshly.

Shepherds are needed in God’s community to fill the needs of the sheep.

Zimmerli identifies five specific categories in verses 5 and 6 that the shepherds should have looked for while caring for their flock:

³⁶ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, Hermeneia, trans. James D. Martin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 215.

³⁷ Joel K. T. Biwul, *A Theological Examination of Symbolism in Ezekiel with Emphasis on the Shepherd Metaphor* (Cumbria, UK: Langham, 2013), 206-7.

³⁸ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 215.

³⁹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, 286.

In five strong verbs, each used in reference to a specific category of needy sheep, the prophet repudiated the shepherds for their inability to חזקתם (to make strong the weak, used in the Piel pf 2nd per. mp), רפאתם (to heal the sick, used in the Piel pf 2nd per. mp), חבשתם (to bind up the broken/injured, used in the Qal pf 2nd per. mp), השבתם (to bring back the strayed, used in the Hiphil pf 2nd mp), and בקשתם (to seek the lost, used in the Piel pf 2nd per. mp). The אל negation captures the negligent attitude of Israel's bad shepherds towards the flock because they failed to do any of the required functions of a good shepherd described by these strong verbs above.⁴⁰

Each of these categories applies to the sheep that are in the charge of shepherds in the church and directly relate to New Testament encouragements that teachers use for instruction and encouragement. The writer of Hebrews teaches his audience about the men of faith who were made strong out of weakness (Heb 11:32-38). James exhorts the leaders in the church to pray over the sick and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord (Jas 5:14-15). The parable of the Good Samaritan exemplifies someone who takes charge of one who is injured and binds up his wounds (Luke 10:29-38). Teachers look for “anyone among you who wanders from the truth” so that they can be brought back (Jas 5:19). Finally, teachers emulate the great Shepherd when they seek the lost (Luke 19:10). Clearly, the function of teacher in the church goes beyond education and conveying biblical history and information. Ezekiel named the shepherd's duties: strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring back the strayed, and seek the lost (Ezek 34:4).

Ezekiel called out God's appointed shepherds of Israel for their failure as kings (Ezek 17:16; 43:7-9), prophets (Ezek 13; 14:9-10; 22:25,28; 34:1-10), and spiritual leaders (Ezek 7:26; 8:12-13; 14:1-5; 20: 1-8; 22:26). He does not say they were not shepherds; he says they were bad shepherds because they did not execute their expected duties. Consequently, the exile was the result of bad shepherding in which no one sought or cared for his flock.⁴¹ Israel's shepherds were self-serving rather than God-serving.

Shepherding in God's community is an unavoidable obligation. To teach or lead in such a community requires care of it as well. Neglect of that duty leaves the sheep to

⁴⁰ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 207.

⁴¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 215.

fend for themselves resulting in a scattered and wandering flock (Ezek 34:5-6). The leaders of Israel in Ezekiel’s day and the leaders of God’s people today are shepherds whether they want that responsibility or not. If teachers desire to teach God’s Word but neglect the duties of the shepherd, then they do not cease to be shepherds, they are just bad shepherds. Continued neglect will result in removal from their post as well as the suffering of those in their charge (Ezek 34:10).⁴² God’s leaders are not self-employed; they answer to their boss. It is therefore incumbent on teachers to recognize God’s expectation to feed, heal, and keep his sheep.

Successful Shepherds: 1 Peter 5:1-4

Peter charges his fellow elders in the scattered churches to shepherd the flock of God that is in their charge. Though Peter speaks to the “elders,” this passage extends to all leaders who teach God’s Word to his people, which would include all teachers who handle God’s Word in their ministries. The main point Peter makes concerns the characteristic responsibilities and attitudes for overseers of Christ’s church. In contrast to Ezekiel’s rebuke of the failed shepherds of Israel (Ezek 34), Peter lays out the foundation for successful shepherding. By addressing the collective churches, Peter sets the general rules for shepherd behavior that may be applied to church leaders. An exegesis of this passage relates to developing shepherd-teachers in three areas: (1) which people in the church should consider themselves shepherds, (2) the reason for shepherding God’s flock in Peter’s time and today, and (3) how successful shepherds conduct themselves.

Who Is a Shepherd?

One of the characteristics of elders is to be able to teach God’s truths to the church (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17). The history of the ancient church as well as the environment of the modern church show that teaching responsibilities extend beyond formal eldership as an office within the church. Paul writes about teaching responsibilities for pastors and

⁴² Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 162.

elders as well as teaching apart from the specific office. Paul's letter to the Romans exhorts teachers with no mention of the office of elder (Rom 12:7), and he encourages everyone in the church at Colossae to teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16). The writer of Hebrews expected his hearers to have matured into teachers (Heb 5:12; 6:1-2), and John writes about someone from outside the church who brings teaching that contradicts the apostle (2 John 10). Teaching in the modern church is often taught by those who are not elders in the church. The charge that elders should be able to teach does not necessarily exclude other teachers. The question is whether those that do teach, elders or not, are the subject of Peter's charge to shepherd the flock of God.

New Testament theologian J. Ramsey Michaels warns readers not to jump to the conclusion that Peter's use of "elder" necessarily applies exclusively to the office of elder on the basis that eldership was not as fully implemented within the churches at that time as it was in the post-apostolic era. Though the churches to which Peter writes undoubtedly had elders in formally defined offices, "Peter does not take for granted that all congregations to which he is writing are necessarily ruled by elders."⁴³ Nevertheless he is speaking to elders where they do exist, and by extension, to church leaders in general. Biblical interpreter Paul J. Achtemeier concurs as he steers readers away from another idea that "elder" refers specifically to older people in the church:

It is more likely that it [elders] refers here not specifically to older people but rather to community leaders, granted that such leaders were often picked from among the older members of a group. While the word would also be understandable in that meaning to the Hellenistic culture, it seems more likely that the term was borrowed from the Jewish synagogue, where it was the usual designation for a leader. . . . The term may therefore refer here not so much to a fixed group of leaders as to any people who functioned in a leadership capacity, with the assumption that such a group may well have varied in membership from time to time.⁴⁴

The shepherding task Peter is about to describe naturally fits the responsibility of church leaders, which would include teachers. The church may take the entire exhortation to

⁴³ J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 279.

⁴⁴ Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 322-23.

include anyone serving in leadership. Indeed, the reason for urging leaders to assume shepherding responsibilities dovetails with the reason for Peter's inserting this appeal at this location in the letter.

The Reason for Shepherding God's Flock

Prior to this section, Peter described the suffering that must be endured by all Christians (1 Pet 4:12-19), and following this section, he warns believers about the schemes of the devil (1 Pet 6:6-1). Peter's call to shepherding is sandwiched between these two warnings about what believers are up against in the world. Biblical scholar Peter H. Davids elaborates that the location of the pericope "is certainly not an accidental addition. Rather, it is a logically necessary explanation of the intra-church solidarity that is required in the face of persecution. Pressure on a social group can cause it to disintegrate, and the leadership is the focus of the pressure both from without and within."⁴⁵ Achtemeier indicates that the verb "exhort" reveals the purpose of not only verse 5:1 but the entire letter. Peter's exhortation "is to be understood as providing further force and persuasiveness to the ensuing exhortation to those who exercise leadership in the Christian communities."⁴⁶ Peter's description of himself as a fellow elder adds additional force as he calls church leaders to understand their task as an extension of his apostolic ministry and authority, "and thus to exercise it with all the care and devotion such an extension implies."⁴⁷ The entire letter lays out the condition of God's flock while this particular section describes how the leadership is to shepherd the flock in their desperate condition.

The responsibility to shepherd is divided among leaders so that they connect personally with those that are "among you" and "in your charge" (1 Pet 5:2-3). The sheep are of the "flock of God," yet they are assigned to the care of the local leaders. Peter's

⁴⁵ Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 174-75.

⁴⁶ Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 324.

⁴⁷ Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 324.

aorist imperative use of ποιμύνατε indicates that he is commanding the leaders to establish a pattern of behavior that will continue until the end of the age.⁴⁸ The responsibility is not optional. Wayne Grudem notes the play on words in Peter's use of *poimainō* (serve as shepherd, serve as pastor) and *poimnion* (flock). He offers the translation of the charge in verse 2, "Shepherd the sheep of God," recalling the same verb used by Jesus when he charged Peter to "tend my sheep" (John 21:16).⁴⁹ Jesus placed his sheep in Peter's charge, and he expands the shepherd community by obliging others with the same task as the flock increases.

Peter goes on to explain how the shepherd goes about his task by first calling them to oversight. R. C. Sproul connects Peter's exhortation in verse 2 with the concept of supervision:

From the word *episkopos* we get the concept of "supervisor." The word *vision* is involved here; supervisors are overseers. The purpose of the bishop is not to look at the flock and find the faults of the sheep but, rather, to shepherd the sheep. The image in Scripture of the shepherd, which is drawn from the work of Israelite shepherds, finds its zenith in Jesus' declaration of Himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep.⁵⁰

While there is a certain administrative aspect to supervision, the primary attitude should reflect that of Christ. Paul presents the epitome of a Christlike attitude in his letter to the Philippians: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (2:3-4). Peter links the task directly to Christ, the "chief Shepherd," in verse 4. I. Howard Marshall conveys that the desperate need of the sheep is developed in other biblical passages, many of which refer directly to Jesus and, by

⁴⁸ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 282.

⁴⁹ Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 194.

⁵⁰ R. C. Sproul, *1-2 Peter*, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 183.

extension, his undershepherds in the church.⁵¹ The consistent message throughout the New Testament is for leaders to exercise oversight with Christlike humility.

Conduct of Successful Shepherds

Peter unpacks his basic command with three contrasting statements about the attitude employed by the shepherd overseer: not under compulsion but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, and not domineering but being examples (1 Pet 5:2-3). First, though they are compelled by Peter's command, leaders exercise their oversight willingly. Most leaders in the church, apart from the pastoral and support staff, are volunteers. But even volunteers can feel the weight of ministry due to the time it takes to prepare, the sharing of other's burdens, and even persecutions that come from without and within the church. Yet, Peter calls leaders to do all this willingly. Davids notes the understanding of the original audience of the letter: "In Judaism the volunteer was a person who placed himself at God's disposal, either in terms of military service (Judg. 5:2, 9; 1 Macc. 2:42) or of sacrifice (Ps. 54:6 [53:8 LXX])."⁵² If leaders are at "God's disposal," then they are willing to do his work, which is exactly what Peter indicates when he tacks the phrase, "as God would have you" to the end of this statement.

Second, leaders do not seek to gain from shepherd oversight. They do their task eagerly. Teachers are warned in the New Testament against teaching for money (1 Tim 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet 2:3, 14; Jude 11). There is no issue with teachers receiving compensation, but the warning is against the urge to seek their positions simply for the stipend.⁵³ Surely this applies to volunteer leaders as well as paid pastors and teachers, for money is not the only method of gain that may be sought by self-promoting individuals. Paul warns the Corinthians not to accumulate a following based on personalities or oratory

⁵¹ I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), "Leadership in the Church (5:1-5): The Elders (5:1-4)," para. 10, Logos.

⁵² Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 179.

⁵³ Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 326-27.

skills (1 Cor 1:10-17; 2:1-5). The first and second contrasting statements to serve “willingly” and “eagerly” in oversight display an attitude that cannot be manufactured in the mind of a volunteer. They come naturally from a desire to equip the saints through the gifts God gives to individuals for the task (Eph 4:11-14).

Third, leaders do not domineer over their charge, but live as examples to them. Teachers are expected to be the most knowledgeable person in the class, and they may have to resist the urge to claim superior knowledge just to settle a point. As previously indicated, the hallmark of the shepherd overseer is humility and eagerness to equip. Peter specifies that this is accomplished by being an example. Certainly, the leaders have authority since God has placed them in their positions. However, all leaders must look to Christ, the ultimate authority, as he provided an example to his disciples when he washed their feet (John 13:15). Davids points out that the way of the world is to domineer over those led. World leaders expect obedience and the “perks” of leadership: “But that was not to be the model his disciples were to follow (Mark 10:42). His disciples were to be servants, not bosses; ministers, not executives.”⁵⁴

The sheep are in the charge of the shepherd overseer. The NIV translates the phrase as “those entrusted to you.” Marshall explains that the sheep-shepherd relationship implies that leaders must tell their people how to live. Using their oversight to order, intimidate, or coerce behavior is an abuse of their position. The method for telling people how to live is to cultivate mutual respect and be an example to the flock, “demonstrating in their conduct of leadership the same qualities they wish to see in the congregation generally.”⁵⁵ Leaders live in a way that others can emulate but they do not have to be perfect to be the examples Peter commands. Grudem summarizes the required responsibility to be an example:

⁵⁴ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 180.

⁵⁵ Marshall, *1 Peter*, 1 Pe 5:1-5.

Thus all in leadership positions in the church should realize that the requirement to live a life worthy of imitation is not optional—it is a major part of the job, challenging though such responsibility may be. Moreover, those who select church leaders should realize that academic excellence and administrative or financial skills do not automatically qualify one for leadership in the church (as they would for leadership in the university or business worlds).⁵⁶

Peter closes this short exhortation with an encouragement, assuring the leaders that their task of shepherding will warrant the “unfading crown of glory” from the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:3). The execution of the duties of leadership may not produce an earthly reward, but Peter has shown that that is not the object of leadership. Edmund Clowney reminds those called to shepherd that they are only undershepherds: “Their authority is not original: they minister only in Christ’s name, and according to his word. . . . Any ‘hireling’ will fear the appearing of the true Shepherd. For the true shepherd, however, as for every true Christian, the coming of Christ is the source of hope and joy.”⁵⁷

Peter identifies all the leaders in the church as shepherds, exhorting them to take the responsibility and attitude of a shepherd in their task. Pastors, elders, teachers, and other leaders fall in the category Peter addresses. He stresses the necessity of the task and the obligation of leaders to execute it because of the opposition of the devil and the world faced by the flock. The flock needs shepherds who are willing and eager to lead and protect, providing an example to emulate and encouragement to follow the chief Shepherd. The entire epistle is a call to godly conduct among the churches, but this section breaks out the need to display that conduct through caring and loving shepherds in those churches. Jesus taught the five thousand before the miracle of feeding them. Mark tells that his teaching was a response to the compassion he felt when he saw them. He had compassion because he saw that “they were like sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34). Church leaders today must recognize the need of God’s sheep, have compassion on them, and shepherd them with conduct and attitudes taught and commanded by Peter.

⁵⁶ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 196-97.

⁵⁷ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 206-7.

Conclusion

Leading and teaching in the church requires more than just conveying information to those who come to learn. The four passages detailed in this chapter reveal that the plan of God for leadership includes spiritual discipline for the leader and shepherding by the leader for the flock. Joshua 1:1-9 and James 3:1-5 provide justification from both Testaments that God expects leaders whom he selects to commit themselves to their walk with him. By doing so they may be confident to lead God's people in the knowledge that God is the one who provides, and that teachers must consider the task before them and guard their speech in the knowledge that God will judge them for what they say.

Both Testaments also justify God's requirement for leaders to shepherd his flock. Ezekiel 34:1-34 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 contrast the failed shepherds of Judah with shepherds who will be successful in their charge if they follow Peter's admonition. God's call to shepherding extends beyond the formal leadership of the nation in the Old Testament or the church in the New Testament. All leaders who oversee God's flock must consider themselves to be shepherds and act accordingly.

As long as the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion seeking to devour the sheep, the situation of the sheep will always be desperate (1 Pet 5:8). God calls his shepherds to know him personally and grow in their relationship with him so that they will be well equipped to protect and care for the flock in their charge.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED
TO SHEPHERD-TEACHERS IN
BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

Many churches recognize the need for Bible study groups to be more than places to increase biblical knowledge. The need at Calvary Church that I observed is just one example. Transformation of church members is often regarded as an essential element for teachers to convey to congregations. For this to occur, teachers must recognize the need to be more than teachers of mere Bible knowledge. The passages selected in the previous chapters highlight the call to shepherd-teaching that moves beyond knowledge and focuses on the transforming work of God. Fortunately, the publishing world has devoted much ink to understanding that process and the practices that may be employed to accomplish the goal.

This chapter will establish the theoretical and practical issues of successful shepherd-teachers in Bible study groups. Two sections are presented here, the first of which will demonstrate characteristics and practices that lead to Holy Spirit transformation in both leader and learner. This section shows (1) the practice of modeling a transformed life by Bible study leaders; (2) how leaders personally maintain their spirituality; and (3) the practice of conveying transformation to learners through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The second section will describe the basis for ministry tasks that leaders employ to shepherd small group Bible study members. This section includes four elements: (1) feeding the sheep, or how teachers nourish the flock by teaching the Bible; (2) guarding the sheep, which explains how the flock is protected and guided; (3) keeping the sheep, or how leaders retain the flock and restore the ones who have strayed; and (4) healing the sheep, which describes how leaders effectively practice lay counseling with their flock.

Holy Spirit Transformation

Andrew Davis provides a good definition of Christian leadership in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*: "Christian leadership is the God-given ability through the Holy Spirit to influence people by word and example to achieve God's purposes as revealed in the Scriptures."¹ The key phrase in Davis's statement is "God-given ability," not natural talents, acquired knowledge, or motivational skills. God-given ability is a gift that operates through the Holy Spirit. Teachers appointed to lead Bible studies may be naturally good communicators, skilled teachers, or highly educated trainers, all of which can and do operate effectively outside the work of the Holy Spirit. Mature Christian leadership, however, is shaped by the work of the Holy Spirit. The task of that person is to "influence by word and example." Influencing by word is naturally understood by all teachers who wish to communicate biblical truth, but Davis rightly includes the additional characteristic of *example*. This section will focus on effective Bible teachers who model a transformed life and practice spiritual disciplines to achieve God's purposes as revealed in Scripture.

Modeling a Transformed Life

The writer of Hebrews makes a succinct connection between those who are led, and the model set by those who lead them: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (13:7). Leaders not only convey God's Word, but they are called to display a transformation or outcome that is the result of their faith. This sub-section will highlight the basis for teachers to focus on transformation for themselves and their learners, how to assess the unavoidable failures that leaders experience, and the leader's position as the primary participant in Christlike transformation.

¹ Andrew Davis, "Leading the Church in Today's World: What It Means Practically to Shepherd God's Flock," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 312, Kindle.

Small group Bible study is unique in the space of learning because it addresses more than acquiring and applying knowledge. If education is provided in a church setting, then discipleship must be the primary goal.² Paul describes this uniqueness as *transformation* (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 12:2). He points to transformation as a necessity for teachers and learners to become something other than what they were before.³ While secular forms of acquiring knowledge may change people in transformative ways, they cannot do so in a way that is affected supernaturally. Educational efforts designed to teach about Christianity without aim toward transformation are no different from any other knowledge acquisition based educational system that operates apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Christian education requires supernatural transformation of both the teacher and learner.

Educational ministry professor Gary Newton stresses that the goal of Christian education, whether formal or offered in a church setting, is to transform learners so that they become progressively more Christlike: “Anything less denies the radical transformational power that Christ gave us through His grace and Holy Spirit.”⁵ When church Bible study diminishes the task of discipleship, it ceases to function within the realm of the Holy Spirit. It is intrinsically linked to discipleship and partnered with the Holy Spirit in ministry. J. T. English, author of *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus*, illustrates the connection: “There is no path for deep

² Karen Lynn Estep, “Christian Schooling,” in *Christian Education: A Guide to the Foundations of Ministry*, ed. Freddy Cordoza (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 323-24.

³ G. Aiken Taylor relates John Calvin’s approach to transformation: “But Calvin, following the evangelical tradition, believed that man begins devoid of certain essentials. Religious education, for him, described the process whereby human beings were given something they did not previously have.” G. Aiken Taylor, “Calvin and Religious Education,” *Christianity Today* 1, no. 21 (1957): 16.

⁴ Edward Farley, “Does Christian Education Need the Holy Spirit? Part II The Work of The Spirit in Christian Education,” *Religious Education* 60, no. 6 (1965): 429.

⁵ Gary Newton, *Heart-Deep Teaching: Engaging Students for Transformed Lives* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 13.

discipleship other than living the Christian life by the power of the Holy Spirit; only he can make us whole again and conform us to the image of the Son.”⁶

While the importance of successfully conforming oneself to Christ cannot be overstated for those who shepherd God’s flock, neither should an awareness of the fallen state of humanity be overlooked. No person this side of heaven will continually operate in perfect conformation to Christ. Nevertheless, the fact that believers do not completely escape struggles with sin and sinful behavior must not deter them from leadership. Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima acknowledge the “dark side” of humanity that requires attention to overcome and redeem. Though parts of one’s personality may not be useful in a particular state, it does not mean it is not useful at all. They suggest that those “dark” parts must first be redeemed and transformed so that they become something useful: “I am convinced that they hold the potential for our most effective ministry and leadership. Without them integrated into our life, our leadership will remain somewhat superficial and manufactured—a leadership of our own creation, built out of what we feel are our best qualities and greatest gifts.”⁷ Modeling Christlikeness may be most effective when teachers do not attempt to be seen as perfectly transformed. All believers are transformed through the entire life process of sanctification.

When it comes to leading small groups, God expects the teacher to be the primary participant in transformation. Church Bible studies in small groups rely on teachers to model transformed lives if they are to be teacher-disciplers. Christian Formation Professor James C. Wilhoit put it best when he said, “The teaching is worked out not in the classroom but in everyday life.”⁸ Paul informs Christians that the influence of the Holy

⁶ J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B & H, 2020), chap. 5, “Sequence: How Do Disciples Grow?,” para. 6. Logos Bible Software.

⁷ Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: How to Become an Effective Leader by Confronting Potential Failures*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 161.

⁸ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Really Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022), 25.

Spirit in disciples will result in the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-24), or character development that results from transformation rather than production from human discipline. Christian education philosopher George Knight relates the responsibility of teachers to appropriate for themselves the fruit of the Spirit: “God wants teachers to help students to be more like Him, to internalize the essentials of His character into their individual lives. The teacher as a role model is crucial in the area of character development.”⁹ Character development that excludes the power of the Holy Spirit may be useful from a humanistic perspective, but it is not “congruent with the Christian model.”¹⁰ Everyone involved in Christian education, from the top down, necessarily operates according to the transformative role of the Holy Spirit.

Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

One of the criteria for selecting small group teachers at Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and many other churches, is evidence of spiritual maturity. Anyone who does not display a measure of spiritual maturity in their lives is not considered as a candidate to teach, even if it is demonstrated that they can effectively communicate God’s Word. This sub-section will walk through the biblical mandate and practice of God’s leaders to develop a personal, continuous walk with Christ in their own lives so that they will be transformed by the Holy Spirit. Teachers of God’s Word must possess more than knowledge of the Scripture and teaching ability, and the means of obtaining the transformation described in the previous section is through spiritual disciplines that the Holy Spirit makes effective in the believer.

James made it clear that knowledge alone is not an indication of spiritual maturity: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (Jas 1:22), and “But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being

⁹ George R. Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 214.

¹⁰ Knight, *Philosophy & Education*, 214.

no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing” (Jas 1:25). Looking into the law is a good way to define the practice of spiritual disciples. Perhaps the best Old Testament example that relates directly to a teacher can be found in Ezra. Ezra 7:10 sets the pattern for a teacher’s devotion to God’s Word: study it, do it, then teach it. Religious education professor Robert W. Pazmiño calls attention to the pattern in the context of modern teaching: “Ezra was dedicated to the study, living out, and teaching of God’s Word (Ezra 7:10) that should also characterize those called to teaching today.”¹¹ Wholehearted devotion to Scripture requires a whole life response.

Donald Whitney, prolific author on spiritual disciplines, defines the disciplines descriptively: “The Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.”¹² D. A. Carson narrows the definition to “those Bible-prescribed activities that are explicitly said to increase our sanctification, our conformity to Christ Jesus, our spiritual maturation.”¹³ It follows that those who are charged to teach others how to experience what the Bible prescribes for sanctification and discipleship must participate as well.

Evangelical author Kenneth Boa notes that the effect of messages preached and taught in most Christian churches is so low that even if the proposed spiritual regimens were practiced, the life of the members would be indistinguishable from their neighbors:

Appalled by this, a growing number of leaders in the body of Christ have realized that something more is required of believers than being spectators and head-trippers. They have come to see the need for a serious commitment to engagement in the means of transformation that have been modeled for centuries by Christlike men and women.

¹¹ Robert W. Pazmiño, “Nurturing the Spiritual Lives of Teachers,” in *The Christian Educator’s Handbook on Spiritual Formation*, ed. Kenneth O. Gangel and James C. Wilhoit, The Christian Editors Handbook Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 144.

¹² Donald A. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Revised and updated (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4, Kindle.

¹³ D. A. Carson, “Editorial: Spiritual Disciplines,” *Themelios* 36, no. 3 (2011): 379.

Without a personal commitment to inward change, believers will be dominated, motivated, and manipulated by the cultural network of our society. This is where the historical disciplines of the faith come in.¹⁴

The transformative element cited by these leaders is commitment observed in those who model Christlikeness. When the historical disciplines of faith are modeled, taught, and preached by leaders in the church, the members' lives are expected to have distinguishable Christlike characteristics. The process begins with leadership's commitment to spiritual disciplines.

Whitney list ten disciplines that are extolled in Scripture: Bible intake, prayer, worship, evangelism, service, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning.¹⁵ Regular attention to both private and corporate disciplines are essential to Christian maturity. In the case of Bible study leaders, Bible intake is nonnegotiable. If the purpose of small groups is to convey God's revelation through words and action, then revelation itself is naturally indispensable. Teachers understand and apply what they teach; namely, the Bible. Other disciplines flow from God's revelation to inform believers on sanctification. Boa enumerates multiple lists of spiritual disciplines offered by Richard J. Foster, Dallas Willard, and others before compiling his own list of twenty disciplines of faith, recognizing that some can be pursued intermittently, while others are nonnegotiable.¹⁶ While it may not be possible to agree on a standard list of spiritual disciplines, these theologians concur that transformation cannot be accomplished apart from them. Wilhoit summarizes the indispensable value of their practice: "The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God in order to receive his grace and be transformed by it. God acknowledges our hunger and thirst and invites us to come."¹⁷

¹⁴ Kenneth Boa, *Handbook to Spiritual Growth: Twelve Facets of the Spiritual Life* (Atlanta: Trinity House, 2008), 60.

¹⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 7.

¹⁶ Boa, *Handbook to Spiritual Growth*, 67.

¹⁷ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 92.

Willard singles out the discipline of service as especially important for the Christian leader in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. When the church places leaders over small groups, they automatically receive a certain amount of respect and regard that can potentially result in a lack of humility. Leaders who commit to service in the church are training themselves away from “arrogance, possessiveness, envy, resentment, or covetousness” as an act of discipline.¹⁸ Willard believes that service is more important for leaders who have influential positions because the church does not always provide special training for lay leaders. As such, some in the church may regard their qualification to lead because of their success in the world.¹⁹ A visible life of service can mitigate misconception.

Samuel D. Rima calls on leaders to commit to spiritual disciplines as a means of “self-leadership,” which has more to do with who a person is than what they do.²⁰ He zeros in on Paul’s instruction to Timothy in the area of leadership by drawing attention to the need for self-leadership over organizational techniques: “It was important to Paul that Timothy’s personal life of faith and practice be consistent with his public life as a leader. Failure to exercise this self-leadership could result in serious failure.”²¹ Paul’s method is spelled out in 1 Timothy 4:7: “Train yourself for godliness.” Godliness is the work of the Holy Spirit, but as Rima observes, “It is the practice of certain disciplines that, in a manner of speaking, place us in the soil necessary for ongoing spiritual growth and development. Conversely, the failure to exercise these disciplines in our lives will undermine the Spirit’s working.”²²

¹⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperOne, 1988), 181, Kindle.

¹⁹ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 183.

²⁰ Samuel D. Rima, *Leading from the Inside Out: The Art of Self-Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 14-15.

²¹ Rima, *Leading from the Inside Out*, 31.

²² Rima, *Leading from the Inside Out*, 31-32.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Educational experts Richard R. Melick Jr. and Shera Melick understand that Bible teaching is necessarily transformative in nature. They often refer to Romans 12:1-2 in *Teaching That Transforms* to lay the foundation that Bible teaching goes beyond mere accumulation of knowledge because even though Paul is teaching his audience, his primary objective is for them to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. They recognize that transformation “is not exclusively a mental activity. In fact, such testing cannot be done as a quest for knowledge only. ‘Testing’ implies living out the reality described and, in the process of life, burning away the impurities to find what is pure and lasting.”²³ This sub-section will substantiate the need for teachers to rely on the Holy Spirit and illustrate that the proper focus of Bible teaching is to promote transformed lives in learners.

Even though teachers may experience transformation by the Spirit and rely on the Scriptures for teaching, they must teach the written Word of God through the work of the Spirit to foster transformation of the learner. If the Spirit is not at work in their ministry, then it is little different from secular teaching.²⁴ Christian education seeks to impart life truths revealed in God’s Word through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Howard Hendricks, whose academic theological teaching career spanned more than fifty years, knows the importance of relying on the work of the Holy Spirit: “In Christian education the Holy Spirit is ultimately orchestrating the learning experience, in which I am but a participant. He, not me, oversees the classroom. He is the master teacher, not me. He is the medium of communication, the giver and transmitter of truth, and I am the personality he is animating.”²⁵ One remarkable characteristic of this statement is that he does not say he *cooperates* with the Holy Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit is the “master teacher.” Hendricks

²³ Richard R. Melick Jr. and Shera Melick, *Teaching That Transforms* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 5.

²⁴ Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry*, ed. Charles R. Swindoll (Nashville: Word, 1998), 6.

²⁵ Howard Hendricks, “What Makes Christian Education Distinct,” in *Mastering Teaching*, Mastering Ministry Series (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1991), 18.

is aware that his impeccable credentials and reputation are insufficient to teach the Bible as God intended.

The transforming element that the Holy Spirit brings to people is the enlightenment of the truth of written revelation. Christian educator and author Roy B. Zuck is careful to point out that humans are the ones illuminated, not the Scriptures, because they are the ones in need of light.²⁶ Christian education expert Rachel Henderlite highlights the necessity of the Spirit's illumination in education programs:

Without the work of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the words of Scripture, the Bible is a mere relic of antiquity, a book to read but in no sense a book of life. . . . In the knowledge that the Spirit moves in and through Scripture, the church can establish its program of education with the Bible at its center, aware that God will empower his word to bring lift to men.²⁷

Illumination is the supernatural act of the Holy Spirit on the mind of the learner that enables them to understand the truth of God already revealed in the Bible.²⁸

Perhaps the best example of understanding that is supernaturally appropriated is Paul's contrast of human and godly wisdom: "And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:13-14). The Bible can be taught by human words, but that alone does not ensure God's intended appropriation to the learner. Spiritual discernment of written revelation cannot operate without the work of the Holy Spirit.

Zuck rightly maintains that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to appropriate the Word that is read and taught to the lives of the individual learners.²⁹ God uses teachers to

²⁶ Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, 42.

²⁷ Rachel Henderlite, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 82-83.

²⁸ Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, 42.

²⁹ Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, 9.

train his people in knowledge of his Word, but that is not the end of teaching. Teaching becomes complete when the ministry of the Holy Spirit is successful in transforming the life of the learner.

Teaching the Bible cannot be approached the same way as traditional secular teaching. The Bible is necessarily transformative in nature but cannot evoke life changing encounters without the work of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the primary agent in transformation is not the work of Bible teachers, but of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, teachers teach with the recognition that their learners can only appropriately study God’s Word through the Holy Spirit. They approach lessons with the aim of discipleship and transformation that conforms those who appropriate it to the image of Christ.

Summary

Paul did not limit his instruction to Timothy solely for the purpose of leading others. He explained that immersion in the practice of spiritual disciplines will result in everyone seeing Timothy’s progress (4:15), but more importantly that perseverance in them will save himself as well as his hearers (4:16). Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* expands the verb translated *immersion* as a “a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately.”³⁰ The primary function of commitment to spiritual disciplines is to cultivate a continuous state of transformation that experiences a personal relationship with Christ as well as modeling it. For those who lead, the salvific effect extends to those who receive and follow the leader’s teaching.

Ministry Tasks of Shepherd-Teachers

All church members need to be cared for and nurtured according to the biblical standards set out in chapter 2 of this project. This section presents four tasks that small

³⁰ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 332.

group Bible study leaders utilize to shepherd members in their groups. Some of the research referenced is gleaned from material directed toward church pastors. In a large church setting, such as the ministry context for this project, many “pastoral” responsibilities are delegated to small group leaders. Therefore, practices collected from these resources are retained for practices by small group leaders where the specific office of pastor is not necessarily applicable. The four tasks demonstrated to shepherd small groups in this section are (1) feeding the sheep, (2) guarding the sheep, (3) keeping the sheep, and (4) healing the sheep.

Feeding the Sheep

Martin Bucer (1491-1551) states in his Reformation era handbook, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, that the goal of all guarding and feeding Christ’s lambs is “that they walk as children of God, as members of the kingdom of heaven without fault or defect, in all holiness and righteousness, without offence and filled with the fruit of every good work, as is fitting for the children of God and members of Christ.”³¹ In short, the goal of shepherd-teaching is holiness. Understanding Bible truths effects transformation by the Holy Spirit’s illumination of God’s Word so that the learner conforms to the image of Christ. Melick and Melick explain how the knowledge of God’s Word is essential in that role even if knowledge of it is not the final goal:

The first, and most basic, element in effecting change is knowledge. Generally speaking, God works in the mind first; then He enables us to live consistently with the new way of thinking. This is seen in the clearest text on change, Rom 12:1-2: we are “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” While the word “mind” used here describes more than just mental processes, knowledge is crucial to change. We must know truth in order to grow into it.³²

³¹ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, trans. Peter Beale (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 177-78. Bucer was prolific in producing theological treatises and biblical commentaries as a leading Protestant reformer. See “Bucer, Martin,” in F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 248.

³² Melick and Melick, *Teaching That Transforms*, 9.

Religious education authority Findley B. Edge concurs that teaching Bible knowledge is one of the most important tasks of church Bible study, but it is not the ultimate aim.³³ Consequently, the teacher's task must be to convey knowledge as a means of effecting growth toward spiritual maturity.

Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt suggest that the decline in church attendance and biblical living is a result of the church's failure to teach the Bible the way God intended: "Teaching the Bible as we teach it has not transformed men as our theology says the Word of God should."³⁴ More specifically, the church has failed to understand the purpose of the Bible that reveals truth about God so that a person can know God. Teaching the Bible as a book of facts "falls short of a genuine understanding of the nature and purpose of the Bible."³⁵ The Bible is the authoritative Word of God to man. Richards and Bredfeldt charge teachers to teach with a high view of Scripture and the knowledge that it has the authority to change lives.

Small group teachers know that the point of making Bible study lessons personal is to convey application of the study to life. Hendricks grasps the fundamental difference between secular lessons and Christian teaching when he writes, "The secularist seeks to make better, more effective, successful, and intelligent people. The Christian educator aspires to nothing less than to transform people into the image of Christ."³⁶ He seeks not just to teach, but transform. His method is to minimize focus on excellent lecturing in favor of teaching so that the learner applies the knowledge conveyed. The methods employed should cause teachers to think of themselves more as disciplers than educators. Hendricks's advice on how to accomplish this through teaching involves three prerequisite attitudes:

³³ Findley B. Edge, *Teaching for Results* (Nashville: B & H, 1999), chap. 1, "Better Bible Knowledge," para 2, Logos Bible Software.

³⁴ Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2020), 30.

³⁵ Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 34.

³⁶ Hendricks, "What Makes Christian Education Distinct," 18.

(1) take people seriously, (2) desire for people to grow as Christians, and (3) desire people to experience authentic Christianity.³⁷ These three goals changed the way he prepared and taught his lessons.

Richards and Bredfeldt add a completing step to teaching God's Word that follows the application portion of a lesson. They espouse an implementation stage that challenges the learner to consider what must be changed in their life as a result of the study: "The implementation stage of study becomes highly individual and concrete. It is important that as readers of the Bible we do not merely approach the Word of God as information to be learned, but as life-changing truth meant to transform us."³⁸ Ultimately, those who study God's Word need to understand that it requires them to respond. Effective Bible teachers train students to think the way God thinks. His revealed Word demonstrates God's thinking and draws his people to align themselves with his thoughts.

Teaching learners toward transformation is easy when learners see themselves as misaligned with God's ways and desire knowledge and application for reorientation. Sadly, this will not be the case for every member in a Bible study class. Edge recognizes two dangers that teachers for Christian living may face unawares which impede transformation in their learners: verbalization and emotional catharsis. Verbalization happens when the learner desires to memorize or parrot the teacher's words but does not attempt to grasp the concepts. Bible teachers must guard against this phenomenon because it does not lead to an encounter with God. The one who only verbalizes biblical principles is not transformed in a way that results in expression. Emotional catharsis describes a member who believes that their only action in Bible study is to attend, sit, and listen. They may agree with the study and enjoy the lesson but take no action to internalize biblical truth that results in transformation. Edge's remedy is for teachers to lead individuals to experience spiritual growth by purposefully designing studies that make the lessons

³⁷ Hendricks, "What Makes Christian Education Distinct," 28-30.

³⁸ Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 77.

personal.³⁹ The implementation stage offered by Richards and Bredfeldt is a challenge for learners to make the study personal and life changing. Without implementation, there is a greater risk that teachers will allow learners to fall into habits that obstruct transformation.

Guarding the Sheep

Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible explains the primary work of a shepherd as guarding the sheep. Since flocks are practically defenseless, they require constant care. The character of sheep is to be submissive and to trust the shepherd, while the guarding responsibilities of the shepherd involve feeding and protecting against thieves and wild animals.⁴⁰ It is no surprise that the New Testament employs the sheep-shepherd metaphor so often. Shepherds are expected to nurture through guarding, feeding, and protecting, so that their flock will continue to grow to maturity.

David C. Deuel, Professor Emeritus of The Master's Seminary, notes that the essence of nurturing the flock is spiritual guidance and protection.⁴¹ Leaders of small groups should be encouraging and challenge members to prioritize their lives to align with the Word of God. They attend Bible study because they trust leaders to guide them according to Scripture. It is the nature of sheep to trust their shepherd. Deuel calls shepherds to redirect the interest of the flock beyond personal desires and gratifications of the sheep to glorification of Christ and his kingdom. This task is not only prudent for shepherd-sheep relationships but loving as well. Shepherds redirect the flock away from danger toward safety and opportunity for growth. Compassion is the motivator for

³⁹ Edge, *Teaching for Results*, chap. 1, "Two Dangers Teachers Face."

⁴⁰ Gerald L. Mattingly, "Shepherd," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1208.

⁴¹ David C. Deuel, "The Pastor's Compassion for People," in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry: Shaping Contemporary Ministry with Biblical Mandates*, ed. John MacArthur Jr., Richard L. Mayhue, and Robert L. Thomas, electronic ed. (Dallas: Word, 1995), 228.

nurturing the flock through exhortation, encouragement, and appeals aimed at drawing a response to the Word of God.⁴²

Timothy S. Laniak, scholar on the Old Testament and Israel, makes seven observations of shepherd ministry, five of which relate directly to leadership in small groups. First, shepherd leadership is comprehensive. That is, it takes the changing needs of the flock into consideration when executing the roles of protector, provider, and guide. Good shepherds make decisions that benefit the flock and are accountable for the lives and well-being of the sheep. Second, bad shepherds use their position to serve their own needs. Leadership cannot be about recognition or any type of personal gain. It is directed toward benefitting the sheep. Third, shepherds understand that God is the one who enlists them in his mission. Those who carry out his mission are necessarily dependent on God as their shepherd. Shepherds are stewards appointed by God and empowered by his Spirit. Fourth, leadership must be engaged in a theological vision of God and his work on earth. Guiding sheep will involve a comprehensive theology that includes Christology, ecclesiology, soteriology, and anthropology. Fifth, throughout the Bible, and especially in the wilderness narrative, God reveals himself as the Shepherd of his people. God oversees and guides his shepherd so that every member of his flock makes it home.⁴³ These observations are useful guides to shepherd small groups with love and humility as well as theology.

These guides for shepherding indicate that leaders are primarily servants of the flock. A leader's position as shepherd appointed by God should enhance the understanding that a shepherd is always a servant of the one who owns the sheep. Prolific author and scholar Joseph M. Stowell emphasizes that this position is more rightly understood as undershepherd: "They guard, guide, feed, and at times sacrificially give themselves to the

⁴² Deuel, "The Pastor's Compassion for People," 227-28.

⁴³ Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 247-50.

needs of the flock. Undershepherds were particularly serious about this, since they knew their flock was a large part of their master's wealth. We should be reminded that the flock of God over which we have oversight is a highly valued possession of our Lord."⁴⁴

"Undershepherd" draws attention to Christ, the chief shepherd, to whom the flock belongs. The agenda of the shepherd to guide people toward a deeper relationship with Christ will be greatly hindered without an attitude of servanthood.

Lastly, it is important to mention the protecting aspect of guarding sheep. The Bible warns about wolves that seek to come in and destroy God's flock. Shepherd-teachers take heed of this biblical warning and are charged to convey it to the flock. Interestingly, as 9Marks contributor and pastor Juan Sanchez conveys, wolves are likely to emerge from among the teachers in the church. Shepherds need to protect the flock from the wolves and instruct them on how to recognize them. He refers to Acts 20:28-30, which informs elders to pay careful attention to the flock because of the wolves that will come in among the church. Sanchez offers three ways to protect the flock from wolves: (1) identify the sheep, (2) identify the pastors, and (3) identify the wolves.⁴⁵ Identifying the sheep is accomplished through the membership process. Not all members of small groups may be church members whom leadership has vetted for genuine allegiance to Christ. All are welcome to study the Bible, but wolves may creep in among those who have not been examined by elders or pastors for membership. Small group leaders can alleviate some of the danger by getting to know non-members and encouraging them to go through the membership process. Churches that do not have membership processes for vetting prospects should develop a method of protecting the church from the wolves. Teachers, elders, and pastors may also come in as wolves. Teaching members to recognize wolves according to biblical standards is a valid means of guarding the sheep. Sanchez warns

⁴⁴ Joseph M. Stowell, *Shepherding the Church: Effective Spiritual Leadership in a Changing Culture* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 134-35.

⁴⁵ Juan Sanchez, "Whacking the Wolves," *9Marks Journal* (June 2020), "Pay Careful Attention to the Flock," para. 1, Kindle.

pastors and church members to be alert and heed Paul's charge to "avoid such people" (2 Tim 3:5).⁴⁶

Keeping the Sheep

Members of small groups will inevitably drop off the roster because they have moved, changed to another class, or changed churches, among other reasons. Leaders may need to regard those who leave for reasons other than logistical as lost sheep that require search and effort to retain and restore (Luke 15:3-7). The task of keeping the sheep involves knowing the sheep. Pre-emptive measures must be considered when the shepherd observes warning signs that a sheep is about to depart. When they do leave, the shepherd must take action to restore the sheep to the flock. It is therefore vital that leaders understand the primary reasons people leave small groups and what actions can be done to keep the sheep.

John S. Savage published research on understanding member dropouts in his 1976 publication *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*. He maintains that the primary reason people leave church or small groups, apart from logistical reasons, is anxiety.⁴⁷ Members who lose their comfortable state within the church or group because of a trigger event, such as death, divorce, or conflict within the church or even outside it, become anxious and angry because of unresolved uncomfortableness. The loss of comfort combined with a lack of resolution leads to anger, tenseness, resentment, and eventually frustration. Savage identifies two possible tracks taken by the frustrated member:

When the anxiety level becomes too great to tolerate, active church members will give verbal signals for others to hear. If there is no response, the signals will come in the form of anger. Those persons who express anger at others move down to the apathetic track, while those expressing feelings of inward blame and guilt will progress down the bored track. As long as there is a chance for resolution of the anxiety and anger, persons will remain active. Where there is no resolution and the

⁴⁶ Sanchez, "Whacking the Wolves," para. 12.

⁴⁷ John S. Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member* (Pittsford, NY: LEAD Consultants, 1976), 3.

anxiety-anger levels become too great to tolerate, active church members will change their behavior patterns.⁴⁸

Leaders of small groups are in the best position to observe when members become bored or apathetic. Those members may hope that someone notices their change in behavior and will step in to help resolve their conflict and restore their comfort with the community.

Savage maintains that anger is always object-oriented.⁴⁹ The person wants to eliminate the object or situation that produces the anxiety. The anxiety producing event may not necessarily be church related. Family and career often produce anxiety that a person hopes to resolve through church community and relationships. Savage finds the dropout track to follow five common steps: (1) an anxiety provoking event, (2) non-resolution that leads to anger because no one addressed their issue or heard their cry for help, (3) the member becomes less active, (4) the member enters a waiting period of six to eight weeks, and finally (5) the member drops out of church or group.⁵⁰ Leaders cannot eliminate anxiety producing events (though they should take care not to create them), but they can know their sheep and be on the lookout for changes in behavior or attitudes. The best place to intervene in the process is before the member believes it cannot be resolved.

Former Director of Vocation of Presbyterian Church (USA), Donald P. Smith, observes that caring love and meaning for living are vital elements to member retention. Those elements “are like the resin and hardener in epoxy glue. Together they cement a member’s loyalty to the congregation. If either is diminished, bonding suffers.”⁵¹ Smith espouses the usual methods of fellowship activities and programs for building community at church for the purpose of participating together in love. Though he does not mention “shepherding” specifically, he describes that task plainly when he says that those

⁴⁸ Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*, 68-69.

⁴⁹ Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*, 32.

⁵⁰ Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*, 68-69.

⁵¹ Donald P. Smith, *How to Attract and Keep Church Members* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 35.

relationship activities need to move beyond friendship to active caring: “Friendliness can be superficial and even self-centered if one has not learned to care for others.”⁵² Fellowship events are not the caring element in shepherding, but they set the stage for providing care to the flock because friendship and trust can be established through them.

Smith’s second vital element, meaning for living, helps to keep the sheep focused on the object of Bible study which is transformation. One of the ways to facilitate this is through Christian education in church. His study of Christian education begins with two assumptions: (1) “the primary aim of congregations life is to nurture” and (2) “a person of mature faith experiences both a life-transforming relationship to the loving God and a consistent devotion to serving others.”⁵³ Nurturing is an obvious shepherding word, and this chapter has already defined transformation as the object of small groups. Leaders motivated by these two assumptions provide meaning because the group’s purpose is to discover and implement lives that conform to the image of Christ. Leaders must take care to stress biblical definitions of meaning while avoiding those designed to give a person hope through mere existential application.

Finally, shepherds are concerned with restoring lost sheep to the flock. Loving and keeping the sheep means seeking and restoring them when they have wandered away. Leaders who engage inactive members should operate with love and humility, especially if they have left because of some conflict. Savage recommends five components that contribute to effective interpersonal communication when engaging an inactive member: (1) understand the person’s self-concept, (2) be an effective listener, (3) gain clarity of what they are expressing, (4) cope with angry feelings (theirs and ours), and (5) look for and exhibit self-disclosure if it is helpful.⁵⁴ Engagement is not performed to judge or condemn, but with an object toward restoration. Leaders attempt to resolve whatever

⁵² Smith, *How to Attract and Keep Church Members*, 42

⁵³ Smith, *How to Attract and Keep Church Members*, 50.

⁵⁴ Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*, 82-84.

conflict the member is experiencing with the hope of relieving anxiety and anger, thus opening the door to restoration.

Healing the Sheep

The final task of shepherd-teachers presented in this section is that of healing the sheep. Since small group teachers are likely the most accessible church leader to members, the shepherding task of healing and binding wounds warrants attention. Many large churches employ professionally trained biblical counselors on staff, or as may be the case in smaller churches, the pastor may serve as counselor to the congregants. This sub-section will present (1) evidence for effective application of lay counseling within the church community, (2) an understanding of when to escalate a member's issue when lay counseling is inadequate, and (3) a word about legal and ethical issues of lay counseling.

Though shepherd-teachers may not be professionally trained in counseling, this should not deter them from providing a certain level of counseling to their members. Larry Crabb identifies three levels of counseling in the church:

Level I—Counseling by Encouragement can involve every member of the body in a meaningful ministry of profoundly helping one another. Level II—Counseling by Exhortation requires a number of people knowledgeable in Scripture, trained in interactional skills, and able to apply practically the wisdom of the Bible to living situations. Level III—Counseling by Enlightenment demands more extensive training but should equip its practitioner in less than one year to meet every nonorganic counseling need within the local church.⁵⁵

Crabb's second level, "Counseling by Exhortation," is an exact fit for shepherd-teachers. They are already placed because they are knowledgeable in Scripture and able to teach Bible application. Extensive training in interactional skills may not be necessary if these leaders are pre-selected according to their heart to shepherd and care for others.

What Crabb terms "Counseling by Exhortation" is another way of describing "lay counseling." Gary R. Collins defines, "Lay counselors are individuals who lack

⁵⁵ Larry Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians Become Capable Counselors* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), chap. 10, "Summary and Conclusion," para. 1, Logos.

training, education, experience, and credentials to be professional counselors, but who nevertheless are involved in helping others cope with personal problems.”⁵⁶ Both descriptions describe the biblical model for “healing” and “binding up wounds” of the injured sheep by the shepherd (Ezek 34:4). As recent as 2016, Siang-Yang Tan, and Eric Scalise insisted that, while more research is needed, “lay counselors are generally as effective as professional therapists for most common problems experienced by clients, according to more recent reviews and reports or studies.”⁵⁷ Not every issue can be addressed by lay people, but many issues can be handled without the need to escalate to an elder, pastor, or professional counselor.

Lay counseling is so closely associated with shepherding that many churches have named their counseling ministries using the word “shepherd.”⁵⁸ Lay counseling as a specific ministry may not be the primary aim of shepherd-teachers, but the creation of these ministries suggests that it is a necessary function for healing the sheep in the absence or shortage of professional Christian counselors. Crabb’s “Counseling by Encouragement” category includes teachers because he says it can be practiced by every member of the church. His more specialized “Counseling by Exhortation” leans toward biblical lay counseling because it involves direct application of the Bible to life situations. The level of counseling provided by teachers should match the level of biblical direction they can provide according to their biblical maturity and insight. According to Crabb,

Level II counseling [Counseling by Exhortation] requires a knowledge of the Bible. Counseling technique is important. An ability to establish rapport, to reflect feelings accurately (Level I) and to react sensitively to a person’s needs are critical. But without a working knowledge of biblical principles of living a person simply cannot counsel at Level II.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Gary R. Collins, *Innovative Approaches to Counselling*, Resources for Christian Counselling 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 74.

⁵⁷ Siang-Yang Tan and Eric Scalise, *Lay Counseling, Revised and Updated: Equipping Christians for a Helping Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), chap. 7, para. 2, Logos.

⁵⁸ Tan and Scalise, *Lay Counseling*, chap. 11, para. 4.

⁵⁹ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, chap. 10, para. 12.

Tan and Scalise stress the importance of recognizing one's spiritual gifts when engaging in lay counseling and call for more research to be done on the role of the gifts in effective Christian counseling. Gifts such as exhortation, wisdom, knowledge, discerning of spirits, mercy, and healing play an important role in caring for others.⁶⁰ Collins advocates for training to be offered by the church for lay counselors so that they can more effectively fill the gap between biblical advice and formal counseling by professional clergy or psychologists.⁶¹

Inevitably, some issues with members will require more expertise than a shepherd-teacher acting as a lay counselor can provide. When lay counseling reaches a point of ineffectiveness that the shepherd-teacher cannot overcome, the counselor should consider escalating the relationship to the next level of expertise.⁶² Many church structures expect elders and pastors to be equipped for counseling at this level. Teaching leaders may be able to biblically inform a member with what they should do in their situation that will resolve their issue but insisting that their member do it may result in resistance, frustration, or despair.⁶³ Furthermore, problems involving abuse, addiction, medications, or serious issues of mental health should be referred to professionals. Depending on the size and structure of the church staff, professionally trained and credentialed counselors may be available. Lay counselors should not expect to resolve every situation they encounter with their members.

In addition, certain ethical issues may arise while counseling members. Tan and Scalise assert, "Ethical awareness is critical on many different levels. Ongoing supervision and accountability, even between peer-level colleagues, still appears to be the single most determining factor in helping reduce unhealthy isolation and unnecessary risk taking

⁶⁰ Tan and Scalise, *Lay Counseling*, chap. 12, para. 3.

⁶¹ Collins, *Innovative Approaches to Counselling*, 73.

⁶² Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, chap. 10, para. 5.

⁶³ Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, chap. 10, para. 22.

among counselors.”⁶⁴ While this warning may be directed toward professional or clinical counseling, the lay counselor should be aware of possible ethical entanglements as well. Richard R. Hammar, an attorney who specializes in legal issues for churches and clergy, cautions “There is no assurance that lay counselors working on behalf of a church share the virtual immunity from liability enjoyed by nontherapist clergy counselors. This is so whether or not the lay counselors are licensed counselors or psychologists under state law.”⁶⁵ In short, shepherd-teachers should engage cautiously in lay counseling and seek advice from pastors and elders along the way.

Summary

The task of shepherd-teachers involves more than simply conveying biblical information to members of small group Bible studies. Teaching God’s Word is a vital part of nurturing God’s flock, but more than Bible study is needed to grow, protect, and nurture them. Feeding the sheep involves teaching God’s Word with an aim toward transformation. Shepherds are also charged with guarding the sheep, which means guiding them to a transformed life and protecting them from the wolves who desire to separate them from the safety of the flock. Keeping the sheep means to know them and keep them, going after those who stray and restoring those who have left. Finally, shepherd-teachers can participate in healing the sheep through friendship and lay counseling, and knowing when to bring in elders, pastors, and trained counselors to set the sheep back on the path to godly life and transformation.

Conclusion

Shepherd-teaching is demonstrated and practiced by modeling, cultivating, and teaching life according to the Spirit. The third person of the Trinity is the Master Teacher.

⁶⁴ Tan and Scalise, *Lay Counseling*, chap. 11, para. 4.

⁶⁵ Richard R. Hammar, *Pastor, Church & Law: Liability & Church and State Issues*, ed. Marian V. Liautaud (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today International, 2008), 4:283.

He is the one who transforms the life of both teacher and learner. Shepherd-teachers experience transformation in their own lives and live it out. The Holy Spirit likewise transforms learners in the leader's group as they assimilate biblical principles through Bible study and observing the life of the leader.

The tasks of shepherd-teachers are directed toward the benefit of the flock. Feeding, guarding, keeping, and healing are all action verbs that describe how leaders practice shepherding for their members. Teachers who shepherd their Bible study groups are applying effective principles that will align them with God's Word and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter describes the project preparation and gives a detailed account of the project implementation. The purpose of this project was to increase knowledge of Calvary Church's ALG leaders about shepherd-teaching so that they will teach, model, and communicate biblical living and sanctification to their members. Shepherd-teaching as a curriculum is focused on teaching and interpersonal skills that target spiritual formation in both the teacher and ALG attendees. Chapter 1 of this project recognized the need for emphasis on this topic at Calvary Church. Chapter 2 established the biblical responsibility of spiritual leaders to care for their members by adherence to their own spiritual formation as well as leading their members in it. Chapter 3 reviewed the theological foundation of those tasks as well as practices and instruction from expert sources for successful leadership in that arena.

The project had three key components: (1) develop and administer a curriculum consisting of six, ninety-minute sessions for instruction in shepherd-teaching at Calvary Church; (2) transmit the curriculum plan to the Pastor of Discipleship and at least one elder at Calvary church to evaluate biblical and theological faithfulness, applicability of the curriculum, and adherence to the Articles of Faith of Calvary Church as well as the church's Philosophy of Ministry; and (3) develop and administer the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey to survey the participants' knowledge of the curriculum material. The survey was given pre- and post-class to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum. Implementation of the project commenced on January 27, 2022, and continued through March 30, 2022.

Preparation

Preparation for the components of this project were completed in successive stages that partially utilized assignments from doctoral seminars at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, peer interaction with instructors and classmates in those seminars, and consulting with church leadership and other ALG teachers at Calvary Church. The final draft of the curriculum was presented to church leadership on January 27, 2022. The class was promoted on the church website in February along with personal e-mails to ALG leaders as a Wednesday evening elective Bible study. It was offered in the second part of Calvary Winter Bible Studies that ran from February 16, 2022, through March 30, 2022. All ALG teachers, co-teachers, and substitute teachers were encouraged to attend. Pre-class surveys requests were sent to registrants between February 3, 2022, and February 14, 2022.

Developing the Curriculum

The curriculum development began after completing the first two chapters of this project and was simultaneous with the research for chapter 3. The first draft was formed over the summer of 2021 during the “Foundations of Teaching” doctoral seminar under the direction of Matthew Haste. The draft was evaluated by the instructor and a cohort of classmates which prompted revision and final approval for class credit on August 7, 2021. The first draft proposed eight sessions of sixty to ninety minutes.

The initial eight-session draft was refined and reduced to six, ninety-minute sessions to accommodate the six-week limitation of Calvary Church’s elective Bible study series. The final six-session curriculum was written between August and December 2021, and the final draft was submitted for evaluation to Calvary Church’s Pastor of Discipleship and two church elders on January 22, 2022. The Pastor of Discipleship is responsible for all classes in spiritual formation at Calvary Church as well as directing and scheduling ALG classes and additional elective courses. He holds a seminary master’s degree and is currently completing a Doctor of Educational Ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. One of his responsibilities is to review and approve classes such as the one

presented in this project. The selected elders were both ALG teacher veterans with over twenty years of teaching ALG and Sunday School. Each elder has also served two, three-year terms as Calvary elders. The elder qualifications at Calvary include being able to teach and exhort sound doctrine, possessing exemplary moral and spiritual character, and being able to explain and defend Calvary's Articles of Faith.

Developing the Class Survey

The first draft of the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey was constructed in the fall of 2021 to complete an assignment for the "Applied Empirical Research" under the direction of Joseph C. Harrod. The draft was evaluated by the instructor and a cohort of classmates which prompted revision and final approval for class credit. The draft consisted of sixteen questions to assess pre- and post-class knowledge of class participants in the areas covered by the curriculum. The final survey was completed in January 2022 and reduced the number of survey items to twelve.¹ The reduction was prompted by recognizing redundant items and those that reflected the researcher's opinions of teaching practices rather than biblical instruction. The final draft was reviewed by Harrod and the Pastor of Discipleship at Calvary Church, with minor revisions suggested by each and revised by me.

The survey was constructed as a quantitative survey using a five-option Likert scale for participants to respond to each item. Four items allowed optional space for participants to comment on their Likert responses.² I administered the survey online using Google Forms so that participants could respond electronically, and data collected online. The surveys required the participant's e-mail address solely for the purpose of matching the pre- and post-class survey items and conducting a *t*-test for dependent samples and analysis. No sensitive data was collected on the survey and each participant was notified

¹ See appendix 2.

² See appendix 3.

that their e-mail address would be collected only for the purpose of matching surveys. Nevertheless, I converted each e-mail address to a participant number before viewing the data to facilitate unbiased analysis. The participants were informed of the identity conversion process, and each gave consent without objection to the use of their surveys in this manner. The pre-class surveys were sent to thirteen of the twenty-one class registrants on or after February 3, 2022, and completed surveys were collected on February 14, 2022. Each of the survey participants identified as either class teachers or co-teachers. I welcomed all registrants to participate and interact in the class, but those who were not teachers or co-teachers were not asked to participate in the survey.

Evaluation of the Curriculum

The Pastor of Discipleship and one of the two elders returned the curriculum evaluation rubric by February 10, 2022, along with their comments.³ Both evaluators approved the curriculum and action to move forward with the class. All nine questions in the evaluation rubric received a rating of either “3-sufficient” or “4-exemplary” which exceeded the minimum 90 percent approval rating from one pastor and one elder, as specified in the project goals. The evaluators provided feedback and suggestions that were helpful in making minor improvements to the curriculum.

Shepherd-Teaching Curriculum and Implementation

Twenty-one people registered for the class, including teachers, co-teachers, substitute teachers, prospective teachers, and spouses of teachers. Substitute teachers, prospective teachers, and spouses were in attendance but were not surveyed because they did not have on-going responsibility for members’ spiritual formation. A limitation to collecting the survey responses was that they had to be collected during the week immediately preceding the class rather than allowing the usual week or more buffer before class implementation. Registration for Wednesday classes at Calvary Church is

³ See appendix 1.

typically sparse until just before the classes begin. Most attendees register the day before class begins or in the initial class session. The format of the Google Form and the online survey method eased data collection in such a short timeframe and only a few minutes were required to collect and store every survey response the evening before the class began.⁴ All thirteen teachers that were asked to participate completed a survey.

The class session commenced at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 16, 2022, and continued every Wednesday through March 30, 2022. The third session was postponed one week to allow for Calvary Church's Missions Week. Each session was ninety minutes in length and was recoded for playback online using Zoom meeting technology. Participants were asked to attend in person or view the recording if they were unable to attend. Live participation online via Zoom was not offered. Six of the surveyed participants were present in all six sessions, four were present for five sessions, and three were present for four sessions.

Session 1: What Is a Shepherd-Teacher?

The first session defined the term "Shepherd-Teacher" from Ephesians 4:11. The goal was to introduce the learners to the concept of shepherd-teachers and demonstrate the biblical and theological basis for applying the term to ALG leaders. The learning outcome was for teachers to associate and identify themselves as shepherd-teachers. The teaching focused on three passages and the implications of each when applied to leading ALGs. The first passage defined shepherd-teachers from Ephesians 4:11-12 by exegeting the phrase "shepherds and teachers," whom God gave to equip the saints, and drawing attention to biblical commentators who indicate that it could be rendered as "shepherd-teacher." The resulting hyphenated word thus referring to a single person who is both shepherd and teacher. Ezekiel 34:1-6 was taught to demonstrate a bad example of shepherds and to enumerate the five responsibilities of a shepherd from verse 4. Finally, 1

⁴ See appendix 3.

Peter 5:1-4 was reviewed as an example of how to successfully shepherd the flock in the care of leaders. Special attention was given to show how “elders” in this passage can refer to anyone in charge of a flock without contradicting the teaching role assigned to the New Testament office of elder.

One of the main points was to educate learners on the caring responsibilities of a shepherd beyond what is required of all Christians. All Christians are charged to care for each another, as numerous “one-another” passages testify. All leaders share in these tasks because they are Christians. However, a shepherd has special leadership responsibilities that pertain to the spiritual needs of the flock in their care. Five strong verbs from Ezekiel 34:4 served as the focal point for the class: (1) make the strong weak, (2) heal the sick, (3) bind up the broken, (4) bring back the strayed, and (5) seek the lost. The shepherd-teacher is therefore charged with these tasks in tandem with teaching responsibilities.

The discussion section of the class invited participants to share their insights and experiences concerning the risk to ALG members if they are merely taught Bible knowledge without being shepherded. All agreed that we do our members a disservice if we focus on teaching Bible knowledge not directed toward spiritual care.

Session 2: Spiritual Disciplines and the Shepherd-Teacher

The second session concentrated on ALG leaders’ responsibility to live a Christlike life for their own spiritual welfare, thereby modeling their walk with Christ to those in their care. The learning outcome was that teachers identify the necessity of spiritual disciplines in their own lives as biblical leaders. The session focused on the biblical definition of leadership, the call to model a transformed life, and how personal and corporate spiritual disciplines prepare leaders to fulfill the task of shepherd-teaching.

The class opened with an invitation for participants to evaluate whether a study conducted forty-six years ago of what people look for in a church leader still applied today,

and if that study might illustrate timeless values.⁵ The study ranked the four most important church leadership qualities in order of survey results: (1) humility, (2) honesty, (3) Christian example, and (4) pastoral skills. The study defined pastoral skills as formal biblical training and preaching and teaching capabilities. The ensuing discussion revealed surprise that pastoral and teaching skills ranked fourth. The feedback validated my evaluation that Calvary's ALG leaders were strong in teaching Bible knowledge but inconsistent in understanding the importance of how they are perceived by their members. We achieved unanimous agreement that the study revealed some timeless truths about what members value in their leaders, thus opening the door to the material comprising the remainder of the class that focused on modeling Christlikeness and practicing spiritual disciplines.

Passages from both testaments were offered to illustrate the importance of being a model, citing especially Joshua's charge from God (Josh 1:1-9), Ezra's example to "study, do, and teach" (Ezra 7:10), and a few passages from Paul stressing example and imitation (1 Cor 11:1; 2 Thess 3:7-9; 1 Tim 4:12). Quotes from Christian authors including Clarence Benson and Roy Zuck bolstered the significance of modelling godliness as a teaching tool.

Donald Whitley's *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* provided the groundwork for the section on spiritual disciplines. Ten disciplines were presented for review and discussion.⁶ Many participants indicated a lack of knowledge of fasting, silence and solitude, and journaling. Most of the class admitted that they do not practice these at all because they either lack knowledge of those disciplines or that they neglect them.

Two final discussion questions had to be skipped at the end of class for lack of time. The enthusiastic discussion of the previous material was enough to accomplish the learning objective. The following week was a week off from Wednesday electives since

⁵ David S. Schuller, "Identifying the Criteria for Ministry," in *Ministry in America: A Report and Analysis, Based on an In-Depth Survey of 47 Denominations in the United States and Canada, With Interpretation by 18 Experts*, ed. David S. Schuller, Merton P. Strommen, and Milo L. Brekke (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 18-19.

⁶ Donald A. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4, Kindle.

Calvary was holding its annual Missions Week. One of the discussion questions was revisited at the beginning of the following class: “What are the potential problems of using my personal devotion time to double as preparation for leading Bible study?” The class agreed that the simultaneous study may cause them to be distracted from personal growth, worship, and devotion by having to focus on how to convey the material to others rather than internalizing the study.

Session 3: Shepherd-Teaching for ALG Members

The third session was presented two weeks after sessions 2. Session 3 contrasted teaching aimed at biblical knowledge with teaching that encourages spiritual growth. The learning outcome was for teachers to develop lessons that promote spiritual growth and transformation by the Holy Spirit rather than merely imparting biblical content. The main topic was to highlight the purpose and motivation for teaching small groups.

The class was challenged to consider and discuss the statement: “You can have biblical knowledge without spiritual growth, but you cannot have spiritual growth without biblical knowledge.” This statement was the basis for developing lessons aimed at transformation. Four main subtopics were presented to reinforce the main topic: (1) the purpose of teaching goes beyond content to promote spiritual growth in members, (2) transformative teaching is motivated by love, (3) group members may be regarded as a flock that needs protecting, and (4) small group teaching is a form of mentoring even though it is not done one-on-one.

The first subtopic, emphasizing spiritual growth, included Paul’s illustration comparing believers who have grown spiritually to letters written “with the Spirit of the living God” (2 Cor 3:2-4). The believers who were informed by Paul’s teaching were transformed by the Spirit. The outcome of their learning was not based on increased knowledge of Scripture as if they were letters merely written “on tablets of stone,” but they displayed godliness as “on tablets of human hearts.” The second subtopic, teaching

motivated by love, centered on Jesus’s motivation to teach when he observed the crowd that was “like sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:36). His compassion for their un-shepherded state is what prompted his teaching. The third subtopic, to protect the flock, prompted the learners to think beyond false teachers when considering the wolves that threaten the sheep. Common struggles of life, such as materialism, sensuality, pluralism, and relativism, which are more subtle, can be just as destructive as false teachers. Members need to be warned and equipped to stand against these wolves as well.⁷ The fourth subtopic likened teaching to a form of mentoring. Teachers should seek one-on-one mentoring opportunities within the group but should consider their small group leadership as a form of mentoring that moves a person into the strength of what God made them to be.⁸

The session ended with a discussion of how to teach lessons aimed at transformation and motivated by love for the learners. Many useful observations were offered. Among these was that the teacher’s efforts toward Christlikeness is likely to produce greater love for the learners thereby impacting the lesson as well as the delivery.

Session 4: Why Do Members Drop Out?

The fourth session was a presentation of academic studies concerning why members drop out of church or small groups. Most of the material for the session was gleaned from John S. Savage’s *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*.⁹ The learning outcome was for teachers to recognize basic psychological and theological reasons for inactivity or leaving church or small group. The dominating content was research that explained why members become inactive as opposed to those who simply change churches

⁷ Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R), 172.

⁸ Bill Hendricks and Howard Hendricks, *Men of Influence: The Transformational Impact of Godly Mentors* (Chicago: Moody, 2019), chap. 9, “Building Confidence and Character,” para. 5, Logos Bible Software.

⁹ John S. Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member* (Pittsford, NY: LEAD Consultants, 1976).

or small groups. The class opened with a discussion of experiences and thoughts from the class. The focus then moved to the topic of anxiety prompted by unresolved conflict, which was Savage's most cited reason people drop out.

The presentation included definitions of unresolved conflict, anxiety, and anger within the context of explaining member drop-out. When a person loses their comfortable state because of a trigger event they become uneasy, tense, or uncomfortable. The trigger event may not be something that originates in church relationships. Nevertheless, when they become frustrated because they lack resolution, they begin to withdraw from the church group. The change is often observable and may be a cry for help. Leaders should be attentive enough to be able to recognize a change in attitude or behavior in their members.

Whether the anxiety is real or delusional, if it goes unresolved, the member is likely to harbor anger at their lack of progress toward resolution, leading them eventually to drop-out. The session contrasted the apathetic member who blames others, with the bored member who blames themselves. Each of these tends toward a decreasing contact with friends and church relationships. Leaders should always be looking out for diminishing activities and responsibilities in otherwise regular members. The goal is to engage members before they drop out. Some strategies for engaging members who have become inactive were presented and discussed.

In the concluding discussion, class attendees shared their experiences with members who dropped out and whether they were involved in restoring any of these members. Three of the attendees who are elders voiced their encounters with church members who had expressed frustration in a church relationship and had dropped out or were on the path to dropping out.

Session 5: Know the Sheep

The fifth session focused on methods to communicate the teacher's willingness and availability to know their members as well as meet and discuss personal matters and

spiritual growth with members. The instruction gave attention to sensitivity, privacy, gender dynamics, and lay-counseling as well as handling personal crises and when to escalate to elders, pastors, or professional counselors. The learning outcome was for teachers to know their members, engage them personally, know when to counsel members, and identify when a pastor or elder should enter or take over the process.

The session was broken up into six subtopics: (1) what others know about their teachers, (2) lay counseling member, (3) escalating problems to pastors and elders, (4) legal concerns, (5) reinforcing teachers as undershepherds, and (6) knowing and caring for the sheep. The first subtopic reminded teachers that they are already regarded as spiritually mature by their members and should expect and prepare for members to approach them with spiritual questions or in crisis. They were encouraged to establish an atmosphere of accessibility and trust. If they lead a large class, they should consider developing care group leaders to engage smaller groups within their class.

The second, third, and fourth subtopics dealt with lay counseling. As spiritual mature teachers of God's Word, teachers should prepare to counsel members when approached and know their members at least well enough to see when they have a change in behavior so that they can ask if they would like to talk. Many issues are not serious enough to require professional counseling and can be handled by trusted leaders who can guide others in spiritual disciplines and applying biblical principles. They should also know when they have reached the limit of their ability to counsel and know where to refer members if necessary. Elders and pastors must be engaged if spiritual discipline in the church might apply. Problems involving abuse, addiction, medications, or mental health should prompt referral to professionals. The material included information about legal concerns that may arise and how to avoid and handle those.

The fifth and sixth subtopics emphasized the shepherd-sheep relationship between the teacher and their members. The material reminded teachers that they are shepherd-teachers with responsibility to maintain their flock. Calvary Church is a large

church, and the pastoral staff cannot know each member personally. Therefore, ALG teachers must assume some elder and pastor tasks even though they do not hold either office. The parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-6) was used to encourage teachers to account for their members. Timothy Witmer's five categories of sheep from *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* was used to help teachers understand where each of their members might fit, how to recognize what kind of sheep each one is, and what action is required for each category. The five categories are healthy sheep, weak sheep, stray sheep, lost sheep, and circumstantially inactive sheep.¹⁰

The discussion portion of class was abbreviated because the class had neared the end of the allotted time. However, the questions offered were already discussed during the evening's session. The discussion questions were, How have you made connections with your members?, and Do you have or need care group leaders? Some who had not participated in the earlier discussions shared their experiences.

Session 6: ALG Ministry and the Role of the Church

The sixth and final session detailed how ALG ministry fits within the structure of the church to build community and also defined how both church and ALG activities set an environment for shepherding members. The outcome was for learners to distinguish activities that directly shepherd members from those that merely support shepherding. The primary material for the session included (1) a review of Christian community, (2) which activities might be mistaken for shepherding, (3) the basis for bonding believers in the church, and (4) a summary of James C. Wilhoit's "Curriculum for Christlikeness."¹¹ The session material was intentionally shortened for the remaining thirty minutes to

¹⁰ Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 199-204.

¹¹ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Really Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022), 258-60.

accommodate a forum for sharing shepherding methods already in use by the attending teachers.

The session opened with an anecdote about Christian community thriving among what appears to be a dysfunctional assembly of believers. Despite the dysfunction, people with differences bond together because of the common object of worship: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The attendees reviewed the Calvary ALG mission statement to bring the previous material to bear on the purpose for ALG. The second section of the class time focused on distinguishing shepherding activities that directly address spiritual maturity with those employed to set the stage for that work. The material addressed two activities that provide an environment for growth: great preaching and small group events. Less than 50 percent of Calvary's worship attendees regularly attend ALG and thereby forego the opportunity to partner with other church members and leaders who may contribute to their spiritual formation. Great preaching alone cannot therefore directly shepherd members in the same way small groups are designed to do, but it does provide encouragement to participate in the church and grow through community. Similarly, small group events can only connect members with each other and with class leadership in an environment that stimulates personal connections that may lead to shepherding. The activity itself may be an opportune moment to launch trust relationships for spiritual growth, but does not *necessarily* do so. Wilhoit categorizes relationships not as a direct grace action, but a *means* of grace "through which the Holy Spirit works to restore the image of Christ in individuals and communities."¹²

The third section of the class material clarified the kind of bonding that is unique to the Christian community. The New Testament uses the term *koinonia* to describe that bonding as one that centers on the communal undertakings of personal support, Bible study, prayer, worship, and mission. The class reviewed Gareth Weldon Icenogle's foundations for small group ministry from *Biblical Foundations for Small Group*

¹² Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 215.

Ministry: An Integrative Approach as a reminder of how Christian community is formed and for what purpose it exists.¹³

The class considered Wilhoit's "Curriculum for Christlikeness" as a resource for evaluating lessons that promote spiritual formation. His basis for evaluating includes four R's: (1) Receiving: "Where Do People Receive God's Grace and Love?," (2) Remembering: "Where Are People Encouraged to Remember Who They Truly Are as Children of God and Whose They Truly Are?," (3) Responding: "In What Ways Do We Foster a Disposition to Be People of Love and 'Right Living?,'" and (4) Relating: "Where Do We Provide Opportunities to Grow in and through Relationships?"

Finally, thirty minutes were set aside at the end of class for teachers to share successes, failures, and experiences in shepherding their members. Class attendees were open, honest, and willing to share in each of these areas. An entire hour or more could have been allotted to this activity and the size of the class limited the discussion. The attendees' take-away from this portion of the session was that teachers need more time to interact and share their experiences.

Conclusion

This project was prepared and implemented through thirty weeks that included assignments and feedback from two seminars at SBTS, rewrites and evaluations from pastors and elders at Calvary Church, and finally teaching the class sessions. The preparation spanned twenty-four weeks from Summer 2021 to Winter 2022. The entire month of January 2022 was used to complete final drafts and receive approvals from my advisor, Calvary Church evaluators, and the SBTS Ethics Review process. The six class sessions were held at Calvary Church over a seven-week period in February and March 2022, and I received positive feedback and verbal encouragement from the participants as

¹³ Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry: An Integrative Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), chap. 24, "Popular Models of Small Group Ministry," para. 1, Logos Bible Software.

well as in the survey remarks. The ninety minutes allotted to teach each session and allow for discussion was appropriate for the class material and discussion items. The research evaluation in chapter 5 demonstrates the successful result of the project goals.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

ALG teachers at Calvary Church know that members in their small groups require spiritual care as well as accurate Bible teaching, but because the church had never purposefully educated teachers about member care, the knowledge and practice of those teachers was only incidental to their spiritual maturity and biblical teaching experience. My own experience showed a need among ALG teachers for biblical teaching directed at spiritual formation rather than increasing members' Bible knowledge. Simply put, the member's acquisition of Bible knowledge should improve their ability to cope with daily challenges (Eph 4:11-14). In a large church such as Calvary Church, small group teachers would do well to implement some pastoral aspects to their leadership even though they do not hold the office of pastor or perhaps even that of elder. This project met the need to increase knowledge of Calvary Church's ALG teachers to shepherd their members by leadership toward Christian community and spiritual maturity.

I evaluated the project according to the goals and methodology outlined in chapter 1. Assessing the goals of the project served as the criteria to determine the success of the project. This chapter evaluates the three stated goals and reflects on the process and application of the project at Calvary Church. This project was implemented in the first quarter of 2022.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to increase knowledge of Calvary Church's ALG leaders about shepherd-teaching so that they will teach, model, and communicate biblical living and sanctification to their members. Two of the project's tasks were to develop the Shepherd-Teaching curriculum to better equip ALG teachers in shepherding

knowledge and practices, and measure change in knowledge after the class was implemented. This section addresses those two tasks.

The Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey that was administered both pre- and post-class indicated that the project's purpose was successfully met. Not only did the *t*-test confirm an increase in knowledge, but the qualitative data that accompanied the post-class survey provided valuable participant information. The survey data showed that even though participants possessed prior knowledge and practiced methods of the subject matter, they gained new knowledge and desire to implement learning from the curriculum into future ALG activities. Comments from the final question on the post-class survey, "Anything you would like to share about having participated in this class," are presented below:

Even though I have been leading small group Bible studies in church and in homes for over 30 years, I've become convinced that I need to be more intentional about shepherding every member.

The various ALG teachers readily shared and instructor was very prepared. It was evident there are several different methods used in teaching, but all agreed (I think) that shepherding is a key component to a successful class and the spiritual growth of its members.

This class helped me gain a deeper appreciation for what it means to teach God's people with a shepherd's heart.

Wonderful class, it highlighted a number of very important principles/truths and responsibilities.

Discussion questions during the class as well as discussion prompts that opened and closed the class contributed to meeting the purpose of understanding current knowledge and practices. These questions also provided an opportunity for sharing actions and experience with other participants, thus extending the training beyond the information provided by the curriculum alone.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The sum of the projects goals was to increase knowledge of biblical shepherding so that teachers could model and communicate biblical living and sanctification to their Bible study students. The success of the project was evaluated according to three goals:

(1) develop and administer a six-session curriculum for current and potential leaders to equip them for shepherd-teaching, (2) develop and administer the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching to the participants both pre- and post-class to assess the ALG leaders' knowledge of shepherd-teaching practices and responsibilities, and (3) evaluate responses from the class and measure change in knowledge.

Goal 1: Develop and Administer the Curriculum

The first goal was to develop and administer a six-session curriculum for current and potential leaders to equip them for shepherd-teaching. When I first organized the project, the project plan did not implement a teaching phase. At that time, I was not guaranteed a slot to teach the class at Calvary Church in time to complete the project by the expected end of the seminary's three-year doctoral program. Consequently, the original plan was to develop a strategic plan alone that did not depend on implementing a teaching phase. However, due to an unforeseen opportunity to teach the curriculum at Calvary Church in the first quarter of 2022, the project purpose was modified. Considering the new opportunity to teach the curriculum, I was advised to modify the plan to include both developing and teaching the curriculum. In December 2021, Calvary Church offered me the opportunity to teach the curriculum to ALG teachers as soon as February 2022. Ideally, under the original plan, the first goal would have been to conduct interviews with current and past teachers and assess their understanding and practices. The time available to conduct and evaluate teacher interviews was considered too short to be effective while simultaneously planning the curriculum and preparing for February implementation. However, I had taught in the ALG environment at Calvary for more than ten years and was active in peer groups and friends with many ALG teachers. Therefore, my existing knowledge and personal experience seemed adequate to make the interviews largely superfluous. Additional information from the attendees' completed Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey and class discussion served to verify my assumptions and provide for possible improvements should the curriculum be offered in the future.

The development of the curriculum was outlined in the summer of 2021 and finalized by the end of the year. Chapters 1 and 2 of this project provided the primary material for the content, while the knowledge gleaned from SBTS seminar, “Foundations of Teaching,” shaped the delivery. The Pastor of Discipleship at Calvary Church and one elder responded to my request to evaluate the curriculum for the intended audience by completing a rubric that measured four areas: (1) biblical and theological accuracy, (2) Calvary faithfulness, (3) content and application, and (4) practicality.¹ Only one pass of the evaluation was necessary as the curriculum score of 95 percent exceeded the goal of 90 percent sufficiency on the first pass.

Table 1. Expert panel rubric results

Criteria	Evaluator Scores	Comments
Biblical and Theological Accuracy		
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.	Evaluator 1 = 4 Evaluator 2 = 4	
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.	Evaluator 1 = 4 Evaluator 2 = 4	
Calvary Faithfulness		
The content of the curriculum is in accordance with Calvary’s Articles of Faith.	Evaluator 1 = 4 Evaluator 2 = 4	
Content and Application		
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers shepherd-teaching for ALG leaders.	Evaluator 1 = 4 Evaluator 2 = 4	
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.	Evaluator 1 = 4 Evaluator 2 = 4	
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.	Evaluator 1 = 4 Evaluator 2 = 3	
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.	Evaluator 1 = 3 Evaluator 2 = 3	Consider adding discussion throughout the lesson in addition to the conclusion
Practicality		
The curriculum clearly details how to shepherd-teach an ALG class.	Evaluator 1 = 4 Evaluator 2 = 4	Perhaps add how an ALG lesson would look in practice. How does it apply today?
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better shepherd-teach the attendees of ALG.	Evaluator 1 = 4 Evaluator 2 = 4	
Total Score by Evaluators	69 out of 72 = 96%	

¹ See appendix 1 for the Shepherd-Teaching Evaluation Tool.

The goal was successfully met after I made minor modifications to the curriculum based on feedback and suggestions, and the curriculum was approved by the Pastor of Discipleship for implementation. The modifications included discussion of the conclusion of each lesson and a discussion between leaders in the final class session of what they were currently doing to accommodate shepherd-teaching and what they might change in the future.

The administration portion of the goal was accomplished by teaching six ninety-minute sessions on Wednesday evenings. The number and length of sessions was determined by the format of Calvary Church's Elective Class program. I required participants to attend in person or view an online recording of the session before the following session. Zoom recording technology was used only to record the sessions and make them available online after class for those who were absent from the on-campus presentations. I did not offer live Zoom participation because of my preference for in-person discussion and interaction. Live Zoom class participation was also unneeded because COVID-19 health protocols had been lifted for our region. Anyone missing an on-campus class did so because of their own scheduling issues and not because of COVID-19 restrictions. All class attendees except one were able to meet in person. The one who could not attend viewed all the recorded sessions within a few days after class.

The class body consisted of twenty-one participants, thirteen of which were lead or co-teachers. The remaining eight participants were prospective teachers or teacher spouses. The attendance of spouses was unexpected but welcome because it provided an opportunity for them to share in learning and partnering with their spouse to shepherd members. Glory to God for prompting them to participate and share the experience. Only the attendance of the thirteen lead or co-teachers was recorded for this project. Six of the thirteen were present in all six sessions, four were present for five sessions, and three were present for four sessions. Only a few session recordings were viewed since nearly everyone registered attended in person. The class implementation goal was successfully met when all six sessions were administered.

Goal 2: Develop and Administer Shepherd-Teaching Survey

The second goal was to develop and administer the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey to the participants to assess the ALG leaders' knowledge of shepherd-teaching practices and responsibilities. The development and administration portion of this goal was accomplished by developing a survey to gather participants' knowledge of the curriculum material and administering it before the beginning of the initial class session.² The survey was administered a second time following the final class to accommodate the third goal of this project. The survey consisted of twelve statements, each of which was followed by a Likert scale for participants to indicate their response. The survey questions were created from personal knowledge and interaction with ALG teachers at Calvary Church that indicated the need to improve shepherding practices in the ALG program as described in chapter 1 of this project. The survey items recorded the participants' knowledge of how they value Bible knowledge in comparison to spiritual maturity, whether ALG teaching should include caring for their members as well as teaching the Bible, and whether the teachers' practice of spiritual disciplines affected the ability to teach effectively.³ Four items allowed participants to make additional or clarifying comments to their responses. The aim of the clarifying comments was for participants to elaborate beyond the Likert limitation if they felt they could not accurately convey their answer in that format. The goal was successfully met when all thirteen lead teachers or co-teachers of ALG had completed the survey and the data had been tabulated to yield a picture of current knowledge among ALG leaders who participated in the class. All thirteen responded to the survey within the time allotted for both the pre- and post-class surveys.

The registration process for the class limited me to viewing the pre-class responses during the week following the first session. Nevertheless, since the first session

² See appendix 2 for the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey Items.

³ See appendix 3 for the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Google Form.

consisted of introductions and definitions of the subject matter to come, I considered the week following that session to be adequate to assess the responses and make modifications to the curriculum. The totals of the pre-class survey responses are included in table 2.⁴

Table 2. Pre-class survey totals

	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	I10	I11	I12
Average	4.23	4.38	4.85	2.77	2.23	4.69	4.46	4.00	3.38	3.00	3.23	4.08
Median	4	4	5	3	2	5	5	4	4	3	3	4
St. Dev.	0.599	0.650	0.376	0.927	0.725	0.480	0.877	1.080	1.261	0.707	0.927	0.494

The pre-class survey item totals verified the assumption that Calvary ALG leaders were strong in Bible knowledge but had room to improve in the shepherd-teaching practices set forth on the curriculum. Seven of the twelve survey items produced an average score of 4.00 or higher (agree or strongly agree). Each of these items addressed spiritual conditions or knowledge of leader responsibilities.

Table 3. Pre-class survey response averages above 4.00

Survey Item	Average Score	Survey Statement
1	4.23	ALG teachers should value member care at the same level as teaching biblical knowledge.
2	4.38	Everyone who teaches ALG is responsible to shepherd (care for) their members.
3	4.85	ALG teachers must model Christlikeness.
6	4.69	ALG teachers must practice spiritual disciplines (Examples of spiritual disciplines are prayer, Bible study, fasting, corporate worship and serving).
7	4.46	Christians require Christian community to grow spiritually.
8	4.00	Spiritual growth can occur apart from biblical knowledge. (reverse scored)
12	4.08	Teachers should try to know the spiritual condition of every member in class.

⁴ See appendix 4, Paired Survey Results, for a complete chart of responses by participant.

The five survey items that scored below 4.00 addressed shepherding the class members. The responses in table 4 indicate room for improvement in knowledge of caring for members.

Table 4. Pre-class survey response averages below 4.00

Survey Item	Average Score	Survey Statement
4	2.77	Preaching is the primary means of shepherding (caring for) God’s people. (reverse scored)
5	2.23	A small group event is an example of shepherding (caring for) for members. (reverse scored)
9	3.38	The end goal of teaching is to increase the member’s biblical knowledge. (reverse scored)
10	3.00	Many inactive members leave ALG (drop out completely) because of unresolved conflict.
11	3.23	Personal crises of members should always be escalated to a pastor, elder, or staff counselor. (reverse scored)

The survey responses confirmed my prior assumptions that Calvary ALG leaders possessed high biblical knowledge and teaching practices but were not well acquainted with shepherding knowledge and practices when it came to ALG members. The pre-class survey results therefore validated the content of the curriculum. Consequently, I did not make any modifications to the curriculum following the tabulation of the pre-class surveys. Had modification been warranted, the Pastor of Discipleship would have been advised of the change to the curriculum and asked for re-approval of the modified portions.

Goal 3: Evaluate Leader’s Response

The third goal was to evaluate responses from the class and measure change in knowledge. All thirteen survey participants completed both the pre- and post-class surveys exceeding the target minimum of eight responses.⁵ The change in average for each survey item is shown in table 5.

⁵ See appendix 4 for Paired Survey Results.

Table 5. Survey response averages compared

	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	I10	I11	I12
Pre-Survey Results												
Average	4.23	4.38	4.85	2.77	2.23	4.69	4.46	4.00	3.38	3.00	3.23	4.08
Post-Survey Results												
Average	4.46	4.46	4.85	3.85	2.31	4.92	4.77	3.85	4.23	4.00	3.15	4.23
Change in Average												
	0.23	0.08	0.00	1.08	0.08	0.23	0.31	-0.15	0.85	1.00	-0.08	0.15

The goal was met when both surveys had been totaled and a *t*-test for dependent samples indicated if change in knowledge had occurred. The *t*-test demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-class survey responses:

$t_{(12)} = 4.4824, p < .0004$. The hypotheses that the teaching would make a difference was confirmed by the *t*-test results.

Table 6. *T*-test: Paired two sample for means

	Pre-Test Total	Post-Test Total
Mean	45.30769231	49.07692308
Variance	10.23076923	8.41025641
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	0.509312256	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	12	
t Stat	-4.482415667	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000374629	
t Critical one-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000749258	
t Critical two-tail	2.17881283	

The average increase in knowledge for the participants was raised 3.77 points from 45.31 out of 60 to 49.08.⁶ The greatest change for a single participant occurred with participant 9 who increased 10 points from 43 to 53 in the total score. Ten of the twelve survey items showed a positive increase of two steps on the Likert responses. This

⁶ See appendix 4.

participant was one of the six participants who attended every session of the class. Every participant increased at least one point in overall score for the pre- and post-test surveys. The data did not indicate any outliers.

The greatest positive change in item responses occurred in items 4 and 10, both of which were in the group of items that scored 4.00 or below on the pre-class survey. Item 4 stated, “Preaching is the primary means of shepherding (caring for) God’s people.” The average score increased by 1.08, suggesting that, at least in a large church context, the participants shifted to a knowledge that the primary means of shepherding members could be better served in small groups. Item 10 stated, “Many inactive members leave ALG (drop out completely) because of unresolved conflict.” The average score for item 10 increased by 1.00, indicating that implementing the curriculum increased the participants’ knowledge of conflict experienced by members. Goal 3 was successfully met when the analysis of the survey data was completed, and the *t*-test was applied to the results.

Strengths of the Project

I observed at least four compelling strengths in the project. First, the biblical support gleaned from developing chapter 2 of the project was well received in the class. Calvary Church ALG teachers are known for biblical knowledge and attention to detail, and anything presented with weak biblical support would likely diminish its effect. One of the reasons for conducting the education was the perception that while Calvary small group teachers are excellent at teaching the Bible, they fall short in caring for their members. Biblical support for shepherd-teaching provided the means to convince teachers to raise their level of care while maintaining the excellent reputation for conveying biblical knowledge.

Second, statistics that were incorporated into the curriculum established the need for attention to spiritual maturity in small group teachers. For instance, I presented a statistic to the class that showed that humility, honesty, and Christian example are the most sought-after qualities in Christian leaders while special pastoral skills like preaching and

teaching ranked fourth.⁷ This statistic supported the premise that spiritual formation in teachers was more important to members than the teacher's ability to convey biblical knowledge. One of the recurring themes in the class was the necessity for teachers to value their spiritual maturity so that they are better equipped to stimulate it in their members. The use of published statistics enhanced the points where they were used.

Third, the discussion time used in class proved to be one of the most valuable assets. Each class started with a question or statement to prompt a discussion about the material to be presented in that session. In addition, each session ended with questions that prompted discussion about what was gleaned from the session. For instance, session 3 on the topic of teaching for spiritual growth began with the discussion prompt, "You can have biblical knowledge without spiritual growth, but you cannot have spiritual growth without biblical knowledge." The closing discussion prompt was, "How can we teach ALG lessons that motivate members towards love and transformation?" Since the class was full of veteran teachers, I had no difficulty motivating the discussion on each end that concerned the underlying reason for biblical teaching, which is to enhance spiritual formation.

Fourth, the unexpected high number of attendees provided the strength in numbers to facilitate sharing their experience. The physical assembling of ALG teachers in the same room was a rare opportunity for teachers to interact and share with each other. Calvary Church has only one gathering of teachers for fellowship during a calendar year and I foresaw that the class might serve secondarily as a venue for fellowship if the number of attendees were high enough. However, the extent of the interaction that took place was unforeseen. Several teachers expressed the joy of participating together in learning designed for their benefit and that of their members. They also indicated that the

⁷ David S. Schuller, "Identifying the Criteria for Ministry," in *Ministry in America: A Report and Analysis, Based on an In-Depth Survey of 47 Denominations in the United States and Canada, With Interpretation by 18 Experts*, ed. David S. Schuller, Merton P. Strommen, and Milo L. Brekke (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 18-19.

time together made them feel needed and valued by the church. Volunteer leaders often feel taken for granted and the church should take every effort to express how much they value them by providing occasions for training and fellowship.

Weaknesses of the Project

I perceived at least three weaknesses in the project. First, two of the Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey items were unnecessarily ambiguous.⁸ Item four of the survey asked respondents to identify whether preaching was a “primary” means of shepherding, an item that expected a response of “strongly disagree” on the basis that the senior pastor of a large church could not have personal knowledge of many the church members’ spiritual conditions and also act on that knowledge. In hindsight, it should be said that preaching *is* a primary shepherding action because it does care for the church members by informing, encouraging, and protecting. It is also the main reason people attend Calvary Church. The item should have been eliminated in favor of concentrating on actions and practices limited to ALG teachers. The fifth item was of similar nature and received the lowest change in average in the survey analysis. The responses centered just below “neutral” in both the pre- and post-surveys. It asked if small group events were examples of shepherding. The curriculum identified social events as a “way” to get to shepherding but was not a shepherding action in itself. In either the wording of the survey item, or in the delivery of the material, I failed to make the distinction clear and the responses on both pre- and post-surveys remained largely unchanged. The pre-survey response yielded an average score of 2.23 on a five-point Likert scale, while the post-survey score yielded an average of 2.31.⁹ The change in each survey item is shown in figure 1.

⁸ See appendix 2.

⁹ See appendix 4.

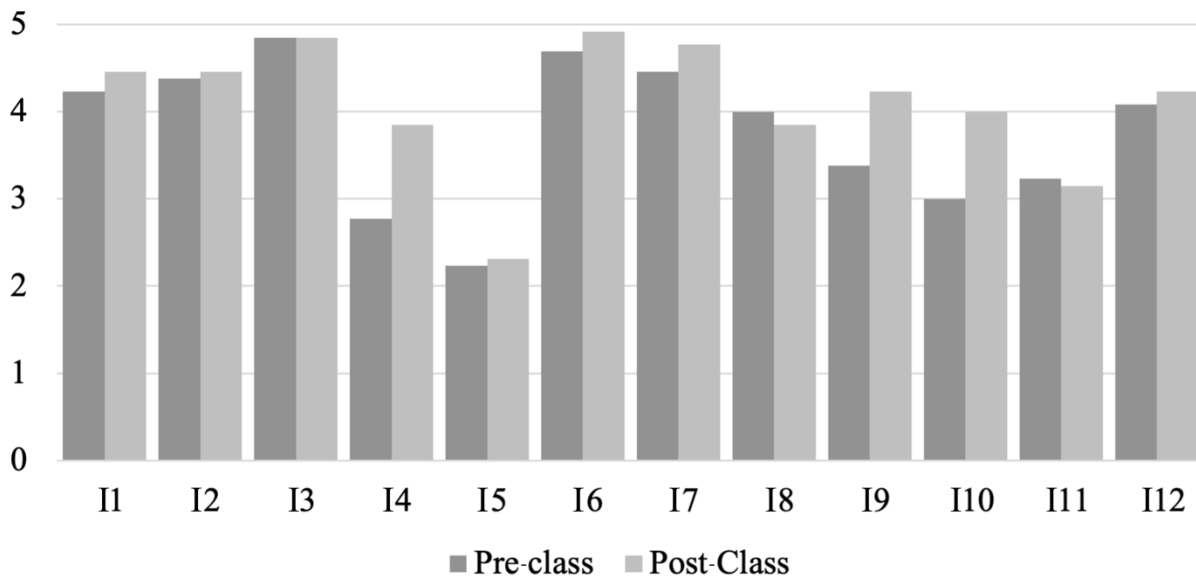


Figure 1. Average response between pre- and post-class surveys by survey item

Second, the difference between caring for each other as a Christian responsibility that applies to all believers was sometimes confused with the caring that would come specifically under leadership shepherding. The curriculum identified biblical caring that is shared by all believers, and which can be found in the many “one-another” passages such as “mutual upbuilding” (Rom 14:19); “care for one another” (1 Cor 12:25); “serve one another” (Gal 5:13); and “pray for one another” (Jas 5:6). Leaders do not neglect these things, but they have an additional responsibility to feed, guide, and protect in the manner of a shepherd. One qualitative survey response to item 12, “Teachers should try to know the spiritual condition of every member in class,” indicated that I failed to successfully make the distinction: “I agree that the ALG leader has as a focus member care, but it is not his responsibility alone. Member care is also a responsibility of the ALG members.” The respondent made a true statement, but not one that reflected what the curriculum intended to convey.

What I Would Do Differently

In addition to the improvements conveyed in the previous section there are two things that I would do differently. First, a follow-up with all participants would benefit

them as well as aid in improving the curriculum for future classes. I did not attempt to follow up with participants except what was incidental to our existing friendships and acquaintances. Some participants indicated in the survey that they desired to meet for some clarification or just for fellowship. Even though ample time was provided for class discussion, there are always some things that people will not share in a group environment. In addition, not all participants in the class were offered to take the survey, and thus had no opportunity to express their feedback following the class. All participants were sent a “thank you” e-mail, but that e-mail should have invited feedback and emphasized an “open door” to interact with me personally.

Second, the project could have included a strategic plan to implement the curriculum for future classes at Calvary Church. The original scope of the project was to limit it to development of a curriculum plan only. By changing the project to teach the curriculum, the choice to build a plan to train future teachers was abandoned. Time may not have permitted developing of both scopes, but the positive responses lead me to believe that every ALG teacher could benefit by participating in the class early in their ALG teaching tenure. More than one teacher who participated conveyed that the church would do well to make the class a required element to teach an ALG.

Theological Reflections

Three primary theological reflections surfaced during my preparation of this project and presentation of the Shepherd-Teaching curriculum: (1) the importance of understanding the object of group Bible study; (2) the biblical requirement for teachers to engage in spiritual disciplines as preparation to lead; and (3) the theology that holds teachers responsible for biblical leadership in a teacher-learner relationship. The first three chapters of this project addressed these matters in some depth, but the relationships in which I engage others as a teacher cause me to reflect on their relevance.

First, teaching small group Bible studies for over three decades has shown me that I must never lose sight of its objective, which is to foster spiritual growth. Donald

Whitney aptly remarks, “Christian discipleship is more than mastering information.”¹⁰ Consequently, Small group teachers who lead others in understanding and applying the Bible are categorically disciplers and guides to discipleship. The often-hyphenated phrase “shepherd-teacher” in Ephesians 4:11-12 reveals that teachers have built-in responsibilities to shepherd those in their care. While not all small group leaders hold the office of pastor, all have a measure of pastoral responsibility, especially in large churches where they are the closest point of contact for members. The task of Bible study leadership is not to just teach the Bible, but to teach it with purpose. Paul makes the purpose clear: “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 Tim 3:16-17). Whatever lesson plan I convey to the ALG members in my class on Sunday mornings must be directed toward producing people of God who are “complete.”

The class I currently teach has over fifty members, many of which are in their seventies or eighties and have spent their lives as pastors or serving in missions. There is almost nothing new I can teach them when it comes to biblical information. They are not there for me to teach them new information. They are there to deepen their walk with Christ toward their own completeness, participate in partnership in the gospel (Phil 1:5), and hear the affirming words, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:21) when they stand before our Lord. I ask myself, “What am I teaching to contribute to that end?”

Second, Scripture drives me and my fellow teachers to participate in spiritual disciples so that we can communicate Christlikeness effectively. The curriculum contained one lesson that quoted Howard Hendrick’s well-known phrase, “You cannot impart what you do not possess.”¹¹ Yet, it became something of a mantra among the participants

¹⁰ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 181.

¹¹ Bill Hendricks and Howard Hendricks, *Men of Influence: The Transformational Impact of Godly Mentors* (Chicago: Moody, 2019), chap. 5, para. 4, Logos Bible Software.

throughout every lesson. Discussion items frequently circled back to this phrase and the root of a teacher's Christlike character. Calvary Church has effectively sent teachers to ALG members as letters of recommendation "written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:2-3).

One aspect of devotion to spiritual disciples is that it is the only way to truly love those in our care. Mark records one occasion that Jesus taught the crowds because of his compassion "because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). Christlike love and compassion come from Christlikeness, which is only accomplished by attention to spiritual disciples.

Third, the study and curriculum have shown me that teachers are unavoidably responsible for biblical leadership in teacher-learner relationships. Christian culture today is keenly aware of errant teaching that surrounds and infiltrates the church, though I am sure this has been the case ever since the gospel was first delivered. My study of the bad shepherds in chapter 2 of this project showed me the accountability required of a shepherd. I may be a good or bad shepherd, but I cannot escape the responsibility of being one. It is more than something teachers should take seriously; it is a biblical mandate that has the consequence of greater judgment (Jas 3:1). The Bible is full of examples of responsibility for those who care for God's people: Levites (Num 3:38), Joshua (Josh 1:6), the judges (Judg 2:16), Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh 8:9), and the apostles (Acts 5:29), to name a few. It is a serious thing to come under God's judgment for not attending his charge, but it is a greater joy to obey and see the fruit of God's inner workings among those we teach. "But we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith" (2 Cor 1:24).

Personal Reflections

This project has been a much-needed instrument to help me serve the body of Christ. I have served in many areas over more than forty years of following Christ; more than thirty of those years have been joyously leading small groups in ministry and Bible study. My desire to know and understand God's Word has grown exponentially over the

years from a discipline to a great love. Having never served as a pastor or vocational minister, I struggled at the beginning of the project with where to direct the studies to come. With the help and guidance of SBTS, and a few pastors at Calvary Church, it became clear that I would first try to improve myself for my own small group ministry and then share what was gained with my peers. The first order was to study to improve my personal disciplines, knowledge, and ability to serve the groups I was already teaching. If I could become a better shepherd to them, then it followed that other teachers might benefit from what I gained. I am a much better teacher and shepherd than when I began this project.

One surprising aspect of the project process was the number of teachers that registered for the class. I recognized my own desire to improve but had not considered that so many others felt the same need and were just waiting for the opportunity to be led. God gave me the desire, time, and resources to embark on a doctoral program where others might not have such resources available. I am honored to do the so-called “heavy-lifting” for them (as many have done for me) and for us all to benefit together. God supplies our needs in many unforeseen ways: “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph 3:20-21). It was enough to have personal benefit from the project. I am humbled at the feedback from others who have shared their benefit from it as well.

As I near what is commonly known as “retirement age” in the United States, I hope to increase my service to the church as my business responsibilities wane. My greatest joy has been to study God’s Word, walk in his ways, and devote my time to equipping the saints. The process of producing this project along with the seminars and experience with godly instructors and other brothers and sisters in the program has equipped me to equip others. *Soli Deo gloria.*

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to increase knowledge of Calvary Church's ALG leaders about shepherd-teaching so that they will teach, model, and communicate biblical living and sanctification to their members. The purpose was successfully accomplished by developing a curriculum to inform ALG teachers how to shepherd small groups and presenting the class to a group of current ALG teachers. Each of the project's goals were successfully met by the conclusion of the class sessions and evaluation of the class surveys.

Chapter 1 demonstrated the need to be equipped to be a better shepherd of small groups and by extension all ALG teachers at Calvary Church. Chapter 2 provided the biblical and theological basis for teachers to shepherd the flocks in their care. Chapter 3 examined the theoretical and practical issues related to shepherd-teachers and was instrumental in developing the curriculum. Chapter 4 described the detail to implement the project. Finally, chapter 5 evaluated the project as a whole and its successful outcome.

The project succeeded in increasing knowledge and equipping for shepherd-teaching among the leaders who participated in the class. My hope is that the change in knowledge among the participants will prepare them to communicate biblical living and sanctification to their Bible study members more effectively. I gained a better understanding of the shepherding environment at Calvary Church through increased personal contact with other leaders and their survey responses. My hope is that I will use this understanding to lead members in my care more effectively and continue to encourage my church toward shepherd-teaching small groups.

APPENDIX 1

CALVARY ALG SHEPHERD-TEACHING CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

The Pastor of Discipleship and at least one elder of Calvary Church utilized the Curriculum Evaluation Tool to evaluate the Shepherd-Teaching curriculum as a class for ALG teachers. The evaluators scored the curriculum in nine areas for biblical and theological accuracy, faithfulness to Calvary Church, content and application, and practicality. A score of “3-sufficient” or “4-exemplary” constituted approval for that area. A score of “1-insufficient” or “2-requires attention” triggered modification of the curriculum. The evaluators completed the rubric and gave recommendations to improve the curriculum.

CALVARY ALG SHEPHERD-TEACHING
CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

Name/Title of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical and Theological Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Calvary Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is in accordance with Calvary's Articles of Faith.					
Content and Application					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers shepherd-teaching for ALG leaders.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to shepherd-teach an ALG class.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better shepherd-teach the attendees of ALG.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 2

CALVARY SHEPHERD-TEACHING SURVEY

The Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey items are show in this appendix. The survey was presented online to the participants using Google forms, as shown in appendix 3. Two unique items from the post-class survey complete the section. Each of the twelve items required a response in the form of a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The final item on the survey asked why the participant was interested in the class and was not related to pre or post-class analysis. The item was discarded when the form data was compiled. The post-class form was identical to the pre-class form except for eliminating the demographic data and adding an item to record how many of the six sessions were attended and viewed online by the participant.

CLASS SURVEY

1. ALG teachers should value member care at the same level as teaching biblical knowledge.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
Comments:
2. Everyone who teaches ALG is responsible to shepherd (care for) their members.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
3. ALG teachers must model Christlikeness.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. Preaching is the primary means of shepherding (caring for) God's people.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
5. A small group event is an example of shepherding (caring for) for members.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
Comments:
6. ALG teachers must practice spiritual disciplines (Examples of spiritual disciplines are prayer, Bible study, fasting, corporate worship and serving).
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
7. Christians require Christian community to grow spiritually.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
8. Spiritual growth can occur apart from biblical knowledge.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
9. The end goal of teaching is to increase the member's biblical knowledge.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
Comments:
10. Many inactive members leave ALG (drop out completely) because of unresolved conflict.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

11. Personal crises of members should always be escalated to a pastor, elder, or staff counselor.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

12. Teachers should try to know the spiritual condition of every member in class.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Comments:

APPENDIX 3

CALVARY SHEPHERD-TEACHING GOOGLE FORM

The Calvary Shepherd-Teaching Survey was created online using Google forms. Participants were emailed a link to the form. Screenshots of the pre-class online form are included in this appendix.

Shepherd-Teaching for ALG Survey

Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina relies on ALG leaders to build community and teach God's Word.

"Adult Life Groups are where we do life together! These smaller groups are an essential part of helping everyone connect at Calvary and grow in faith together... ALGs meet to study God's Word, pray, enjoy fellowship, and share the joys and challenges of life. This is where we develop lasting friendships and build community that stretches far beyond Sundays."

Agreement to Participate

This survey will assess the current methods and mindsets of ALG leaders with intent to meet the goals of the mission statement.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of shepherding (caring for) for small groups and the practice of spiritual disciplines among ALG leaders. This research is being conducted by Doug Goforth at Calvary Church for the purpose of collecting data for a Seminary ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before class sessions, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the sessions.

Your email is collected for the sole purpose of matching your pre and post class survey responses. Please use the same email when completing the post class survey.

Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name, email, or personal identity be reported or identified with your responses.

Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

* Required

Email *

Demographic Information

What is your age? *

Mark only one oval.

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

What is your ALG role? *

Mark only one oval.

- Leader or Co-Leader
- Assistant Leader
- Substitute Leader
- Other: _____

How long have you led ALG at Calvary? *

Mark only one oval.

- Not a class leader
- Less than 5 years
- Between 5 and 10 years
- More than 10 years

How long have you led ALG or Sunday School teaching at any church? *

Mark only one oval.

- Have never led
- Less than 5 years
- Between 5 and 10 years
- More than 10 years

Are you a pastor or elder at Calvary (now or in the past)? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

Have you ever taken a class in biblical counseling? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

Survey 1

To be completed before the start of the Shepherd-Teaching for ALG class

1. ALG teachers should value member care at the same level as teaching biblical knowledge. *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Comments to previous item

2. Everyone who teaches ALG is responsible to shepherd (care for) their members. *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

3. ALG teachers must model Christlikeness. *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

4. Preaching is the primary means of shepherding (caring for) God's people. *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

5. A small group event is an example of shepherding (caring for) for members. *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Comments to previous item

6. ALG teachers must practice spiritual disciplines (Examples of spiritual disciplines are prayer, Bible study, fasting, corporate worship and serving). *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

11. Personal crises of members should always be escalated to a pastor, elder, or staff counselor. *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

12. Teachers should try to know the spiritual condition of every member in class. *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Comments to previous item

13. (Pre-class only question) What is your interest in taking this Shepherd-Teaching class.

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Shepherd-Teaching for ALG Post-Class Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of shepherding (caring for) for small groups and the practice of spiritual disciplines among ALG leaders. This research is being conducted by Doug Goforth at Calvary Church for the purpose of collecting data for a Seminary ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before class sessions, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the sessions.

Your email is collected for the sole purpose of matching your pre and post class survey responses. Please use the same email when completing the post class survey.

Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name, email, or personal identity be reported or identified with your responses.

Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

*** Required**

Email *

Class Attendance

Please check all classes where you were either present in class or viewed video recording *

Check all that apply.

- 2/16/2022 Session 1: What is a Shepherd-Teacher?
- 2/23/2022 Session 2: Shepherd-Teachers and Spiritual Growth
- 3/9/2022 Session 3: Shepherd-Teaching for ALG Members
- 3/16/2022 Session 4: Why Do Members Drop Out?
- 3/23/2022 Session 5: Know the Sheep
- 3/30/2022 Session 6: ALG and the Church

To be completed after participating in the Shepherd-Teaching for ALG class

13. (Optional post-class only question) Anything you would like to share about having participated in this class.

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Google Forms

APPENDIX 4
PAIRED SURVEY RESULTS

The tables in this appendix display the Shepherd-Teaching survey results. Both pre- and post-class numbers are shown along with averages, median scores, and standard deviation for each survey item. The change in average appears at the bottom of the table. The survey result numbers in columns I4, I5, I8, I9, and I11 are reversed because they expected a negative answer. The survey was administered using the following five-point Likert scale:

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

Table A1. Shepherd-teaching survey pre-test results

PARTICIPANT	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	I10	I11	I12	PRE-TEST TOTAL
1	4	4	5	4	2	5	4	3	1	3	4	5	44
2	4	5	5	2	2	5	5	2	2	4	3	4	43
3	5	5	5	2	2	4	5	4	3	3	4	3	45
4	5	5	5	1	2	5	5	2	4	3	3	4	44
5	3	5	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	43
6	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	3	3	4	46
7	4	4	5	3	2	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	49
8	5	3	5	3	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	51
9	4	4	5	3	3	4	4	4	4	2	2	4	43
10	4	4	5	4	1	5	5	5	1	2	1	4	41
11	4	4	5	2	2	4	2	4	4	3	4	4	42
12	5	5	5	2	2	5	5	5	4	3	3	5	49
13	4	5	5	4	2	5	5	5	4	3	3	4	49
Average	4.23	4.38	4.85	2.77	2.23	4.69	4.46	4.00	3.38	3.00	3.23	4.08	
Median	4	4	5	3	2	5	5	4	4	3	3	4	
St. Dev.	0.599	0.650	0.376	0.927	0.725	0.480	0.877	1.080	1.261	0.707	0.927	0.494	

Table A2. Shepherd-teaching survey post-test results

PARTICIPANT	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	I10	I11	I12	POST-TEST-TOTAL
1	5	4	5	4	2	4	5	5	5	4	3	4	50
2	4	5	5	4	2	5	5	2	4	4	4	4	48
3	4	4	5	2	2	5	5	4	5	4	3	4	47
4	5	5	5	2	2	5	5	2	5	4	1	4	45
5	5	4	4	4	2	5	4	1	3	4	4	5	45
6	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	2	5	4	4	4	49
7	5	5	5	4	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	54
8	5	5	5	5	2	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	53
9	4	4	5	4	3	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	53
10	4	4	5	4	2	5	5	5	4	3	2	4	47
11	4	4	5	4	2	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	49
12	5	5	5	4	2	5	5	5	2	4	1	5	48
13	4	5	5	4	2	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	50
Average	4.46	4.46	4.85	3.85	2.31	4.92	4.77	3.85	4.23	4.00	3.15	4.23	
Median	4	4	5	4	2	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	
St. Dev.	0.519	0.519	0.376	0.899	0.630	0.277	0.439	1.519	0.927	0.408	1.144	0.439	
Change in Avg	0.23	0.08	0.00	1.08	0.08	0.23	0.31	-0.15	0.85	1.00	-0.08	0.15	

APPENDIX 5

SHEPHERD-TEACHING CURRICULUM

This appendix contains the outline and talking points for six weeks of the Shepherd-Teaching curriculum. It was designed to be taught in six, ninety-minute sessions, including time for discussion. The target audience was current ALG teachers at Calvary Church, but it could be used to train any set of small group Bible study teachers who regularly serve their members.

CALVARY CHURCH ALG SHEPHERD-TEACHERS CURRICULUM PLAN

Context

- Course for developing Adult Life Group leaders at Calvary Church to be Shepherd-Teachers.
- Students are comprised of current or potential Adult Life Group leaders. Their leadership role is to fulfill Calvary's mission statement to be and make authentic disciples of Christ.
- Course will be delivered in six sessions of one-hour-and-thirty-minutes during a Wednesday Night Elective period.

Content

- A training session to lead ALG teachers to establish and/or reinforce shepherding practices in ALGs by growing biblical knowledge, building community, and understanding spiritual growth as leaders. This course will focus on:
 - (1) how shepherd-teaching differs from content-teaching in small groups
 - (2) biblical foundations for shepherd-teachers
 - (3) how personal spiritual growth affects the ability to shepherd
 - (4) what a shepherd-teacher is and what it involves.

Sessions

- (1) Introduction: What is a Shepherd-Teacher?
- (2) Spiritual Growth for Shepherd-Teachers
- (3) Content-Teaching vs. Shepherd-Teaching
- (4) Why Do Members Drop Out?
- (5) Making and Keeping Personal Connections in ALG
- (6) Small Group Ministry and the Role of the Church

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION—
WHAT IS A SHEPHERD-TEACHER?

- 1) **What is a Shepherd-Teacher?**
 - a) This session will introduce learners to the concept of the shepherd-teacher by demonstrating the expectation for teachers to shepherd the flock in their charge. That teaching must not be separated from shepherding will be shown biblically and theologically.
 - b) *Learning Outcome: Learners will be able to identify the biblical understanding a Shepherd-Teaching.*
- 2) Outline
 - a) **Introduction: What to expect**
 - i) Instructor and attendee introduction:
Chairs are prearranged before class into groups of four. Each one in the group tells the following information about himself/herself. The class is informed that the person to the left of the speaker will tell the class the other person's name and ALG.
 - (1) Name
 - (2) Family
 - (3) When did you first come to Calvary?
 - (4) Small group teaching experience
 - (5) ALG taught and age group or demographic
 - ii) Learners place their chairs back into rows. Each person tells the class about the other person in their group:
 - (1) Name
 - (2) ALG taught
 - iii) This class is not about changing the way we teach...
 - (1) It's about changing who we are as teachers in God's plan to equip the saints and building up the body of Christ to maturity. (Eph 4:12-13)
 - (2) It's about using our teaching task to build ALG communities as shepherded communities.
 - b) **What is an ALG teacher's mission at Calvary?**
 - i) Calvary's mission statement is to "be and make authentic followers of Jesus Christ through a balanced ministry of worshiping God, preaching and *teaching the Word, edifying one another, caring for the needs of others, and evangelizing the world.*"
 - ii) The Adult Life Group web page states:
"Adult Life Groups are where we do life together! These smaller groups are an essential part of helping everyone connect at Calvary and *grow in faith together*. ALGs meet to study God's Word, pray, enjoy fellowship, and share the joys and challenges of life. This is where we develop lasting friendships and *build community* that stretches far beyond Sundays."
 - (1) Would you agree that all of these are rooted in this phrase to "grow in faith"?
Are we serving any spiritual purpose if we leave this out? With the exception of "prayer," all the others can be done apart from faith: do life, connect, study, fellowship, make friends, build community.
In order for our members to "grow in faith together" we should be

thinking about more than just learning the Bible in a room where everyone is seated together.

- (2) An opportunity exists for teachers to be all that God desires in his leaders. Something more than conveyors of information. Teachers who feed, guide, and protect so that the Holy Spirit is at work maturing those whose lives we touch.
 - (a) ALGs are not less than information, discussions, and fellowships.
 - (b) They are more. But not in content and activities. They are more because of what we bring to the classroom that cannot be found outside the Christian context. The biblical expectation is for each of us to be shepherd-teachers.

c) What is a Shepherd-Teacher?

i) Ephesians 4:11-12

“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,” (Eph 4:11-12 ESV).

- (1) If you have an ESV bible, look at the footnote that follows the phrase: “shepherds and teachers.”

- (a) Wayne Grudem calls attention to this grammatical structure in his *Systematic Theology* (2nd Edition).

- (b) The footnote identifies that phrase literally as *shepherd-teachers*.

- (c) Shepherd-Teachers are responsible for building up the body.

Josh Branum (PhD in Applied Theology) explains the shepherd metaphor:

“Since verse 12 speaks of ‘building up the body’—that is, the church—it is likely that the verses that follow refer only to work done by shepherd-teachers. Through the ministry of teaching, church leaders equip believers to possess a unified biblical worldview and knowledge leading to sanctification. The work of the church leaders connects vitally to the spiritual growth of believers.”¹

- (2) The passage is often quoted in reference to pastors.

- (a) The word for *pastor* comes from *ποιμένας* which is often translated pastor or shepherd, not from the second word, *διδασκάλους* (teacher). A *ποιμένας* is one who keeps watch over a flock or group of people.

- (b) Small group leaders are shepherds of a flock, and we are already identified as teacher. It is not just pastors who shepherd, but anyone who teaches a group for the purpose of spiritual growth.

- (c) I want to differentiate between “caring” for others and shepherding. All believers are to care for one-another. None of us is exempt from that. Shepherds are leaders who have an additional responsibility. We will talk a lot more about that later. But for now, we all understand that a shepherd is responsible for the *spiritual* welfare of the flock in addition to the caring ministry of all believers.

¹ Josh Branum, “Elder as Shepherd: Implicit Use of the Shepherd Metaphor by the Apostle Paul,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 3, no. 1 (2018): 12.

d) Biblical warning: Not many should be teachers

- i) Teachers have a greater responsibility:
“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” (Jas 3:1).
(1) A teacher’s speech is linked to greater judgment (Jas 3:1-5).
(2) Teachers commit themselves to spiritual disciplines so that they may control their speech.
- ii) Those who teach are responsible to shepherd their small group as well as teach the Bible.

e) Maintenance

- i) There are two ways to keep a diesel truck running. The first is called “troubleshoot and repair” and involves waiting for a breakdown and *then* trying to fix the problem. It involves so much down-time, however, that most truckers now use the “preventive maintenance” approach, in which problems are anticipated and thus solved before they occur.²
(1) Shepherding is best achieved by preventative maintenance: Anticipate spiritual problems, inform the flock of solutions to problems before they occur.
(2) Troubleshooting and repair will inevitably occur in our lives. Sometimes life catches us by surprise. Shepherds will look for opportunities to troubleshoot as well as provide preventative maintenance.
- ii) Two examples of shepherding from the Bible to illustrate our role as shepherds.
(1) Failed Shepherds: Ezekiel 34:1-6
(2) Successful Shepherds: 1 Peter 5:1-4

b) Failed Shepherds: Ezekiel 34:1-6

Ezekiel rebukes the Shepherds of Israel.

- i) Who are the rebuked shepherds?
(1) Those who lead are accountable.
(Luke 12:48 – Everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required)
(2) Leaders lead according to God’s direction (1 Samuel 13:7-14).
(3) Shepherds are not just preachers.
(a) Jeramiah identified them as the kings, princes, priests, and prophets of Israel (Jer 23).
(b) Everyone who shared in corrupt leadership was blamed for failure.
(c) Anyone God calls to lead his people is a shepherd.
(d) OT professor and author, Leslie Allen comments on the shepherds in Ezekiel: “The term ‘shepherd’ is standard for a king throughout the ancient Near East. In this context it is combined with the use of the metaphor to portray the covenant between Yahweh and Israel....

² Michael P. Green, ed., *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching: Over 1500 Sermon Illustrations Arranged by Topic and Indexed Exhaustively*, rev. ed. of the expositor’s illustration file (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989).

Accordingly, the shepherds were employees of the divine shepherd and responsible to him.”³

- ii) What was expected of the shepherds?
 - (1) In the context of God’s appointed heads of state, they are charged with the directives of Deuteronomy 17:18-20.
 - (a) Keep a copy of the law – approved by the priests (Deut 17:18).
 - (b) Read it all the days of your life (Deut 17:19).
 - (c) Keeping the commandments results in length of leadership (Deut 17:20).
- iii) What actions caused their failures?
 - (1) They were to lead according to God’s commands.
 - (2) They were not rebuked for ignorance, but for willful disobedience.
 - (3) God’s primary concern “is not the wicked shepherds but the relationship of the Good Shepherd and his flock.”⁴ (Daniel Block)
 - (4) “These ‘shepherds’ were more than military-political leaders. They bore a primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual direction of the nation.”⁵
 - (5) They used their office for personal gain.
 - (a) Negligent towards the flock but benefiting from the produce.
 - (b) Ezekiel 34:10 expresses a legal disposition of calling an evildoer to account. The shepherds are charged with criminal negligence of the flock.
- iv) What should the shepherds have looked for in caring for their flocks?

Five strong verbs from Ezekiel 34:4 and NT reiteration:

 - (1) to make the strong weak (NT: Heb 11:32-38)
 - (2) to heal the sick (NT: James 5:14-15)
 - (3) to bind up the broken (NT: Luke 10:29-38)
 - (4) to bring back the strayed (NT: James 5:19)
 - (5) to seek the lost (Luke 19:10)
- v) Shepherding God’s community is an unavoidable obligation.
 - (1) Teaching and leading the flock requires care as well.
 - (2) Neglect of duty leaves the sheep to fend for themselves, resulting in a scattered and wandering flock.
 - (3) Neglecting the duties of shepherd does not mean we are not shepherds; it means we are bad shepherds.

c) Successful Shepherds: 1 Peter 5:1-4

Peter charges the scattered churches to shepherd the flock that is in their charge. He lays the foundation for successful shepherding.

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the

³ Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 29 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 161.

⁴ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 277.

⁵ Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 298.

sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you.” (1 Pet 5:1-2).

i) Who are the shepherds in the church?

- (1) Paul identifies the use of teaching responsibilities apart from the specific office of elder (Rom 12:7). He lists several other responsibilities here as well.
- (2) Paul encourages everyone in the church at Colossae to teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16).
- (3) Teaching in the modern church is accomplished by many who are not elders in the church. Those who teach are the ones charged with shepherding.

(a) New Testament theologian, J. Ramsey Michaels, warns readers not to jump to the conclusion that Peter’s use of ‘elder’ necessarily applies exclusively to the office of elder on the basis that eldership was not as fully implemented within the churches at that time as it was in the post-apostolic era. He speaks to elders where they exist, and by extension to church leaders in general.⁶

This is not to obscure the meaning of the office of elder. All teachers are not elders though all elders must be teachers. It is to say that we others can serve the same teaching function that elders perform, and if they do this in the church where they have been appointed as teachers, they have the same teaching responsibilities that elders have. This may differ from an itinerant teacher who goes from place to place and cannot establish a shepherding relationship with the audience.

(b) Biblical interpreter, Paul J. Achtemeier, identifies the word “elder” as one borrowed from the Jewish synagogue, where it was the usual designation for anyone who functioned in a leadership capacity.⁷

(4) The tasks that follow naturally fit the responsibility of church leaders including teachers.

ii) Why should we shepherd?

(1) Immediate context of Peter’s charge gives the answer:

- (a) Suffering must be endured by all Christians (1 Peter 4:12-19).
- (b) Peter’s charge to shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-8).
- (c) The devil schemes against Christians (1 Peter 5:8-9)

(2) The condition of the flock is reflected in Peter’s letter:

- (a) Passions wage war against the soul (1 Pet 2:11)
- (b) Suffering for righteousness’ sake (1 Pet 3:14)
- (c) Subject to fiery trials (1 Pet 4:12)
- (d) Insulted for the name of Christ (1 Pet 4:14)

(3) How do successful shepherds conduct themselves?

R. C. Sproul: “From the word *episkopos* we get the concept of ‘supervisor.’ The word *vision* is involved here; supervisors are overseers.

⁶ J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 279.

⁷ Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 322-23.

The purpose of the bishop is not to look at the flock and find the faults of the sheep but, rather, to shepherd the sheep.”⁸

(a) Not under compulsion but willingly

(i) Most leaders in today’s church are volunteers. We are at God’s disposal.

(b) Not for shameful gain but eagerly

(i) Gain can be self-promotion, or egocentric.

(c) Not domineering but being examples

(i) Humility and eagerness to help. Jesus’ disciples are servants, not bosses, ministers, not executives.

(4) The sheep are entrusted to the shepherd-overseer.

(a) A sheep-shepherd relationship implies that leaders tell their people how to live.

(i) Oversight is abused by orders, intimidation, or coercive behavior.

(ii) Telling people how to live involves cultivation of mutual respect and being an example.

(iii) Leaders do not have to be perfect but should live in a way that others can emulate. Grudem says this is not optional for leaders.

d) **Discussion**

i) What are the risks to our members if they are taught but not shepherded?

⁸ R. C. Sproul, *1-2 Peter*, St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 183.

SESSION 2: SPIRITUAL GROWTH FOR SHEPHERD-TEACHERS

1) **Spiritual Disciplines and the Shepherd-Teacher**

- a) This session will walk through the biblical mandate for God's leaders to model a personal, continuous walk with Christ in their own lives. It will be demonstrated that teachers of God's Word must possess more than knowledge of the Scripture and teaching ability. The class will discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in their ministry.
- b) *Learning Outcome: Learners be able to identify why the practice of spiritual disciplines is necessary for effective shepherding.*

2) Outline

a) **Introduction: What do people look for in a church leader?**

What qualities are American and Canadian church people looking for in their church leaders? While this is not a recent study (it dates from 1976) we can evaluate whether it still holds true. Regarding young ministers and priests, here is what the study reported:

To find the answers, the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada sponsored a three-year research project costing more than \$500,000, financed mostly by Lilly Endowment and carried out by the Youth Research Center of Minneapolis. More than 5,000 persons in forty-seven denominations were surveyed after research among 3,200 others established criteria and categories.

The results show that *humility* (willingness to serve without regard for acclaim), *honesty* (personal integrity, the ability to honor commitments by carrying out promises without compromise) and *Christian example* are the most sought-after qualities. Special pastoral skills rank fourth.

Traits criticized most: catering to self-serving motives while avoiding intimacy and repelling people with a critical, demeaning, and insensitive attitude; indulging in illicit sex and other actions that irritate, shock, or offend; and evidencing emotional immaturity, insecurity, and insensitivity when buffeted by the demands and pressures of the job.⁹

- i) The first two, humility and honesty, are characteristics that can be achieved outside of a Christian context. We know that people have moral convictions that lead them to be humble and honest without a biblical foundation. The third characteristic, that a leader should be a Christian example, cannot be modeled outside of a Christian context. The first two are also developed differently if they are done within a Christian context.
- ii) Our Christian life context demands a process where character development occurs as a result of Christlikeness and not because of self-improvement. That is, character to lead results from Christlikeness.

⁹ Vinson Synan and David Kucharsky, "Reconciling the Charismatics," *Christianity Today* 20, no. 14 (1976): 48. The article contains interview material with David S. Schuller and his study of ministry. See David S. Schuller, "Identifying the Criteria for Ministry," in *Ministry in America: A Report and Analysis, Based on an In-depth Survey of 47 Denominations in the United States and Canada, With Interpretation by 18 Experts*, ed. David S. Schuller, Merton P. Strommen, and Milo L. Brekke (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 18-19.

b) How does the Bible define leadership?

i) Joshua 1:1-9

- (1) Understand that the Lord gives the land (1:2,3)
 - (a) God provided the transfer of leadership from Moses
 - (b) The land is not provided by Moses or Joshua.
- (2) No one would be able to stand before Joshua because the Lord was with him (1:5)
 - (a) The work is a work of the Lord
 - (b) God's leaders are only successful because of his presence
 - (c) Israel would not stand if they transgressed God's covenant (Josh 7:11)
- (3) "Be strong and courageous" (1:6, 7, 9)
 - (a) "Courage" OT Word was more about determination than overcoming fear
 - (b) The Lord's provision strengthens determination. God enables us to obey.
- (4) Obey the Law of Moses (1:7,8).
 - (a) Repeated success of the Lord is known through his Word
 - (b) The learning example is vital to leadership

ii) Three tasks in Ezra-Nehemiah

- (1) Rebuild the temple
- (2) Rebuild the community
- (3) Rebuild the walls

Ezra was tasked with rebuilding the community after the completion of the temple. That is the task of an ALG leader: to build the community. That's how ALGs are defined in Calvary's mission. ALGs build community.

iii) How did Ezra build community?

"For Ezra had *set his heart* to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel."

(Ezra 7:10).

iv) Emulating Ezra

- (1) "Study the Law" There is no substitute for careful study.
- (2) "Do it" Study is not merely for the sake of knowledge but must translate into personal application.
- (3) "Teach his statutes" What is learned and practiced must also be communicated.¹⁰

c) What does Paul have to say about church leadership?

i) "Be *imitators* of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Cor 11:1).

ii) "For you yourselves know how you ought to *imitate us*, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves *an example to imitate*." (2 Thess 3:7-9).

iii) "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).

¹⁰ Douglas J. E. Nykolaishen, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, in *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther*, Teach the Text Commentary Series, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 80.

- iv) Imitation is Paul's answer to effective leadership.
- d) How does the Shepherd-Teacher become a Christlike leader?**
- i) Andrew Davis provides a good definition of Christian leadership in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*:
 "Christian leadership is the God-given ability through the Holy Spirit to influence people by word and example to achieve God's purposes as revealed in the Scriptures."¹¹
- ii) God-given ability is a gift that operates through the Holy Spirit. We may be naturally good communicators, or skilled teachers, or highly educated trainers, but those things can and do operate effectively outside the work of the Holy Spirit. There are many books and speakers out there that can turn us into great communicators and trainers without any help from the Holy Spirit. Christian leadership takes shape through the work of the Holy Spirit, and only through the work of the Holy spirit.
- iii) Davis' definition reveals the Holy Spirit as the driving force behind influence. After all, small group leaders are nothing if they are not influencers.
- iv) Notice he says that we influence people by word and example. Influence by word is generally how we think about the task of teaching. Equally important is influence by example, as Paul indicated in his letters.
- v) Since we are talking about leadership in a Christian context, we know that leading as a person of high morals and integrity is not what Paul is writing about. A person is a Christian leader because he models a *transformed* life, one that exhibits Christlikeness because of the transformation of the Holy Spirit.
- (1) "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." (Rom 12:2).
- (2) "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being *transformed* into the same image from one degree of glory to another. *For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*" (2 Cor 3:18).
- e) Modeling a transformed life**
- i) Clarence Benson, author of *The Christian Teacher*, had it right back in 1950: "The example of a consistent Christian life counts more toward helping others reach a higher standard than any amount of instruction."¹²
- ii) Benson is reiterating what Paul says:
 "Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." (1 Thess 1:5).
- iii) Roy Zuck summarizes: "*Christian teachers must be in vital union with Christ. Their personal acquaintance with and deep love for Christ and His Word are*

¹¹ Andrew Davis, "Leading the Church in Today's World: What It Means Practically to Shepherd God's Flock," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 312, Kindle.

¹² Clarence H. Benson, *The Christian Teacher* (Chicago: Moody, 1950), 50.

essential. This must be ranked above their knowledge of things, books, or people.”¹³

- iv) On a negative note, Zuck says “Teachers whose lives are not yielded to the holy Spirit and in whom there is unconfessed sin prevent the effective teaching ministry of the Spirit through them.”¹⁴
 - (1) Recall what Davis said about how Christian leadership is only accomplished through the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit is not operative in teaching, Christian teaching is diminished or non-existent.
 - v) James C. Wilhoit, put it best when he said that “the teaching is worked out not in the classroom but in everyday life.”¹⁵
 - vi) This is why we need to frame our teaching in transformation. One of the vehicles for doing this is conveying biblical knowledge. But if that teaching is not rooted in producing transformed lives, we have missed the point of acquiring knowledge.
- f) Spiritual disciplines**
- i) How then do we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit? Is it completely passive, or is something active required of a teacher in yielding? Do we just “Let go and let God?” Or do we actively participate in yielding to the Holy Spirit? It is both.
 - ii) The passive element is our submission to the Holy Spirit. Allow him to work God’s will in our lives.
 - (1) I wish to be clear that there is no “secret key” that unlocks the Holy Spirit in our lives. There is no action that obligates God to a favorable reaction that we set in motion by what we do (e.g., “Word Faith”).
 - (2) The only thing that could remotely be called a “key” is Christlikeness. But it doesn’t happen because we invoke a formula that guarantees results.
 - (a) In striving for Christlikeness, we may find that God’s plan is for us not to be a teacher. The result may conflict with our plans.
 - (b) We may find a calling to something completely unexpected.
 - (c) This is what happens when we “yield” ourselves to the Holy Spirit.
 - iii) The active element of our participation is our commitment to spiritual disciplines.
 - (1) Donald Whitney, prolific author on spiritual disciplines, defines them: “The Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.”¹⁶

¹³ Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry*, ed. Charles R. Swindoll (Nashville: Word, 1998), 77.

¹⁴ Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, 76.

¹⁵ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Really Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022), 25.

¹⁶ Donald A. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4, Kindle.

- (2) Spiritual disciplines are both personal and interpersonal.
- (a) Personal – practiced alone
 - (b) Interpersonal – practiced with others
 - Some disciplines are carried out in both areas of life: Bible reading, study, and worship are done both privately and corporately.
- iv) Biblical spiritual disciplines:
- Whitney: “The following personal Spiritual Disciplines are commended in Scripture: Bible intake, prayer, worship, evangelism, service, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning.”¹⁷
- (1) These practices are not new to us teachers. Being selected as a teacher implies that we are already aware of them and that they are necessary for spiritual maturity. You would not be in a teaching position at Calvary Church if a measure of Christlikeness was not already observed in you.
 - (2) We know that our time can be taken up by so many necessary things in life that we don’t make time for spiritual disciplines. godly people are often busy people.
 - (3) Neglecting them compromises our intimacy with Christ as well as our ability to lead. Spiritual disciplines are a nonnegotiable element of Christian leadership.
 - (4) How do we keep pace with spiritual disciplines?
 - (a) Life gets crowded the older we get. We need to periodically reevaluate our priorities in life.
 - (i) Spiritual disciplines help identify what we should cut away.
 - (ii) Cutting away spiritual disciplines to make room for other things compromises our ability to lead and teach.
 - (b) Even a slow persevering pace in the Disciplines is better than inconsistency.
 - (c) Three indispensable elements for persevering in the practice of Spiritual Disciplines:¹⁸
 - (i) The Holy Spirit
 - 1. We cannot make ourselves more holy. It is accomplished by the Spirit.
 - 2. The discipline of our disciplines is not the source of our spiritual strength. Jesus is the source, and the ministry of Holy Spirit applies that strength.
 - 3. “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil 1:6).
 - 4. Even if we are not naturally inclined toward disciplined habits, the Holy Spirit equips us supernaturally. “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and *self-control*.” (2 Tim 1:7).

¹⁷ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 7.

¹⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 290-99.

5. If it were left to us, we would have given up on the disciplines long ago. But God gives grace for us to persevere in spiritual disciplines.
6. The Holy Spirit prompts us to practice the disciplines. We are responsible to act on it, and he helps us in that endeavor.

(ii) Fellowship

1. No believer can be Christlike in isolation.
2. Christian fellowship is with the triune God and his people. “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3).
3. Remember that spiritual disciplines are both personal and interpersonal. Many cannot be practiced alone: corporate worship, corporate prayer, the Lord’s Supper, and serving others are some examples.
4. Do not confuse socializing with fellowship. *Koinonia* is participating together for the gospel (Phil 1:3-5). We talk together about life and God from a Christian perspective. Nonbelievers cannot experience this fellowship.
5. Believers require mutual edification: “The whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Eph 4:16).

(iii) Struggling

1. Living the Christian life is not easy. We have internal struggles as well as external opposition from spiritual forces.
2. The fact that we struggle is an encouragement. The fact that *all* Christians struggle should bring comfort and hope.
3. There will be no freedom from struggle this side of heaven. “For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.” (1 Tim 4:10).
4. We are in the world. The world hates Jesus. The world will hate us. Only Jesus has victory over the world. Our victory is a vicarious one through Christ. His victory is decisive and eternal.

(iv) Whitney: “One of the surest signs that someone does cling to Christ is his or her ever-deepening desire to know Him better and to become as much like Him as possible. This is what godliness is, and genuine disciples of Jesus passionately pursue it. And just as the only way to God is through Christ, so the only way to godliness is through the Christ-centered practice of the Spiritual Disciplines.

Will you ‘discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness’? Where and when will you begin?”¹⁹

(v) Dallas Willard singles out the discipline of service as especially important for the Christian leader in his classic work, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.

1. When the church places leaders over small groups, they automatically receive a certain amount of respect and regard that can potentially result in a lack of humility.
2. Leaders who commit to service in the church are training themselves away from “arrogance, possessiveness, envy, resentment, or covetousness” as an act of discipline.²⁰
3. Willard believes that service is more important for leaders of influential positions because the church does not always provide special training for lay leaders. As such, some in the church may regard their qualification to lead as a result of their success in the world. A visible life of service can mitigate this misconception.

g) Discussion

- i) How does my spiritual condition affect my learners?
What are the potential problems of “double-duty” Bible study?
(Using my personal devotion time to double as my study to teach ALG.)

¹⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 304.

²⁰ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperOne, 1988), 181.

SESSION 3: CONTENT-TEACHING VS. SHEPHERD-TEACHING

1) **Shepherd-Teaching for ALG Members**

- a) This session will examine the differences between teaching for *biblical knowledge* and teaching for *spiritual growth*. Attention will be given to developing a shepherd-teacher mindset that nurtures, protects, and cares for the flock and shapes lessons aimed at the spiritual growth of the members.
- b) *Learning Outcome: Learners be able to develop or improve lessons to focus on spiritual growth and transformation through bible study and application.*

2) Outline

a) **Introduction: Knowledge and spiritual growth**

Consider this statement:

You can have biblical knowledge without spiritual growth, but you cannot have spiritual growth without biblical knowledge.

- i) Is this a true statement?
- ii) What makes it true?
- iii) Can someone possess a vast knowledge of the bible and still be an outsider when it comes to belief?
“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19).
- iv) Is it possible that we can be drawn into teaching patterns that build knowledge without promoting spiritual maturity?
- v) Can we be drawn into an existential model of teaching the Bible that produces people with purpose but without transformation?

b) **Our primary task – To promote spiritual growth in our small groups**

“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” (1 Cor 4:1).

- i) Martin Bucer’s classic work from the sixteenth century, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, draws attention to the result of the apostles’ teaching. The evidence of the Spirit was seen in those that received their teaching.²¹
- ii) What was imparted to them beyond knowledge that effected this kind of change?
Bucer says that the outcome was accomplished by the Lord who *uses his ministers* to inscribe himself upon people’s hearts, imparting to them not only the letter but the Spirit.²²
- iii) Bucer points to Paul’s second letter to the Corinthian church:
“You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” (2 Cor 3:2-4).

²¹ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, trans. Peter Beale (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 20.

²² Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, 20.

- iv) The Corinthians are described as a letter written “with the Spirit of the living God,” which does not sound at all like they simply increased their biblical knowledge or information about Jesus, though they probably at least did that.
 - v) God uses teachers to affect spiritual maturity in his people.
 - vi) In a large church like Calvary, ALG teachers are the point of contact between members and someone who can lead them to spiritual maturity.
 - vii) Our primary task is to promote spiritual growth in our small groups.
- c) Teaching beyond the content.**
- i) We have already covered the necessity for teachers to possess habits of the spiritual disciplines. Howard Hendricks, one of the great teachers of teachers, is often cited to have said, “you cannot impart what you do not possess.”²³
 - (1) Possession of a spiritually mature life naturally leads to a desire to share that with others. We seek to reproduce in our learners the godly life we know as Christ followers.
 - (a) Therefore, biblical teaching must necessarily encourage and promote the same life in the learner. (Encouragement should not be confused with affirmation.)
 - (2) Does our spiritual maturity come through bible knowledge alone? Neither will it come for those in our small groups by simply relating content and knowledge of biblical passages.
 - (3) Think beyond teaching for application, which can inadvertently lead to a response of better behavior. Think in terms of preparing members for transformation by the Holy Spirit. Better behavior is a result of transformation, but transformation is the goal.
- d) Transformative teaching is motivated by love.**
- i) Jesus taught with the heart of a shepherd. His compassion for un-shepherded sheep is what prompted him to teach. He wanted to continue even when they had no food.
 - (1) “When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. *And he began to teach them many things.*” (Mk 6:34).
 - (2) Jesus shepherded them by teaching them. Their lack of knowledge was not the object that evoked his compassion.
 - (a) What does a sheep without a shepherd look like?
 - (i) Wander aimlessly without direction
 - (ii) They go hungry
 - (iii) They are undisciplined
 - (iv) They don’t experience abundant life under the care of a loving shepherd
 - (3) If knowledge is the object of shepherding, the shepherd works himself out of a job when he has taught them everything he knows.
 - (4) Shepherding is a continuous job born out of compassion for the sheep.

²³ Bill Hendricks and Howard Hendricks, *Men of Influence: The Transformational Impact of Godly Mentors* (Chicago: Moody, 2019), chap. 5, para. 4, Logos.

- ii) When the Corinthians had a question about whether to eat food sacrificed to idols, Paul did not encourage them to gain knowledge about the nature of sacrificed food. He framed his entire answer within the context of love:
 - (1) “Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that ‘all of us possess knowledge.’ This ‘knowledge’ puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.” (1 Cor 8:1-3).
 - (2) Paul knew that it was no consequence whether a person eats the food offered to idols, but because of his love for someone whose conscience might be weak, he would refrain from eating it himself.
 - (3) Paul was modelling Christlikeness. Paul taught them out of compassion.
- iii) Likewise, love for those in our small groups motivates us teach them in a way that transforms them to Christlikeness, which is the goal of every Christian life.
 - (1) A small group lesson that does not result from love for the learner or have transformation as its goal, is content-teaching, not shepherd-teaching.
 - (2) Sam Emadi wrote an article in the *9Marks Journal* called, “What ‘Able to Teach’ Means and Doesn’t Mean.” His astute observation is this:
 - “‘Able to teach’ means a person is able to faithfully explain and apply the Bible so that listeners grow in their knowledge of Scripture and sound doctrine in a way that produces love for God and neighbor.”²⁴
 - (a) Knowledge of Scripture and sound doctrine are not a means to an end, they are offered to transform a person, thereby producing love for God and neighbor.
- e) **Guarding the sheep.**
 - i) Shepherd-teaching involves an element of guarding the sheep against wolves.
 - (1) “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” (Matt 7:15).
 - (2) “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” (Matt 10:16).
 - (3) “Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.” (Luke 10:3).
 - (4) “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. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.” (Acts 20:28-30).
 - ii) Shepherd-teaching will include teaching designed to protect the flock.²⁵
 - (1) Our “flocks” have a basic need for protection and security.
 - (a) Jesus tells us about those who are just hired hands and not really shepherds:

²⁴ Sam Emadi, “What ‘Able to Teach’ Means and Doesn’t Mean,” *9Marks Journal* (June 2020): para. 15, Kindle.

²⁵ Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R), 169-87.

- (i) “He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.” (John 10:12-13).
- (ii) The Good Shepherd gave up his life to protect the flock.
- (2) Shepherd-teachers must teach the warnings in God’s Word to protect against the wolves.
 - (i) Our first thought of wolves who come against believers are false teachers. But those are just the easiest to identify.
 - (ii) Timothy Witmer draws attention to those things that are move subtle: “Examples of those wolves might be materialism, sensuality, pluralism, relativism, and the panoply of sins flowing from them. In a culture saturated with these destructive values, the sheep not only need to be warned about the dangers but equipped to stand against them.”²⁶

h) Mentoring

- i) Howard Hendricks provides an excellent definition of mentoring in the Christian context (he is speaking to men in this book):
 - (1) “Mentoring is what happens when one man affects another man deeply enough to where he later declares, ‘I never would have become who I am were it not for that man’s influence.’”²⁷
 - (2) Of course, this does not apply only to men. I would recommend resources from Bev Hislop, professor of pastoral care at Western Seminary, for some first-rate guidance on women mentoring women. (Shepherding Women books.)
- ii) Everyone who leads a small group may not be able to accommodate one-one mentoring with another believer and cannot mentor every member of a class.
 - (1) It is time consuming.
 - (2) Many small group leaders cannot make full-time commitments to these efforts.
- iii) If you do have the time to mentor one or more believers, it will pay spiritual dividends for both or you. Look for those opportunities with your members. Small groups are often a springboard for mentoring relationships.
 - (1) This course will not cover methods and techniques for one-on-one mentoring.
 - (2) Speak with one of the pastors for books, resources, and helpful planning materials. I highly recommend Hendrick’s book on mentoring.
 - (3) Get some recommendations on how to manage mentoring relationships.
- iv) Apart from one-on-one mentoring, we need to be aware that leading a small group *is* a form of mentoring. A small group leader is a mentor as well as a teacher.
 - (1) Hendricks says that the heart of mentoring is leading a person to move from self-doubt to confidence. “From not believing that he can do it to

²⁶ Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 172.

²⁷ Hendricks and Hendricks, *Men of Influence*, chap. 3, para. 6.

believing he can.” It may be fishing, fixing cars, or walking with Christ. A Christian mentor leads a person into the strength of what God made them to be.²⁸

- (a) Mentoring describes the role of a Shepherd-Teacher. We teach people God’s Word and his plan for living so that they can be what God made them to be.
 - (b) We are uniquely positioned to build confidence in others that God is faithful and that he can be trusted with all aspects of their life.
 - (i) We do this by helping them understand the Bible, which is then illuminated in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.
 - (ii) Zuck: “Biblical revelation is the communication of God’s truth in written form, while illumination is the communication of the *meaning* of truth.”²⁹
 - (iii) Zuck: “Illumination occurs in conjunction with and not apart from the believer’s diligent study and devoted prayer. The Holy Spirit’s illuminating ministry demand study; it does not delete it.”³⁰
But it is the Holy Spirit that does the illuminating.
 - (c) A one-on-one relationship is not always necessary for mentoring. It can be done on a macro level as well as micro.
- (2) We must remember that in the Christian context, transformation is accomplished by divine power.
- (a) God uses people to shape other people.
 - (i) Timothy’s life is shaped by God through Paul.
 - 1. Paul constantly reminded Timothy that he has what it takes:
 - a. “This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.” (1 Tim 1:18-19).
 - b. “Command and teach these things. 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 4:11-12).
 - c. “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” (2 Tim 2:1).
 - (ii) We may not be aware that we are shaping others. God is at work.
- (3) Mentoring goes beyond a human process. Change happens because it is divinely affected. There is a shift in our souls that we can never fully explain.³¹

²⁸ Hendricks and Hendricks, *Men of Influence*, chap. 3, para. 2.

²⁹ Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, 46

³⁰ Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, 45.

³¹ Hendricks and Hendricks, *Men of Influence*, chap. 3, para. 1.

i) **Discussion**

- i) How can we teach ALG lessons that motivate members towards love and transformation?

SESSION 4: WHY DO MEMBERS DROP OUT?

1) **Why Do Members Drop Out?**

- a) This session will consider the inactive church or ALG member. Member retention will be discussed as well as the reasons members become inactive.
- b) *Learning Outcome: Learners be able to recognize basic psychological and theological reasons for inactivity or leaving church or small group.*

2) Outline

Much of the information for this session is gleaned from John S. Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*, 1976.

a) **Introduction: Predictive class activity**

Most cited reason people drop out church or small group (apart from moving away or changing classes):

- (a) Dislikes the preaching
- (b) Finds small group teaching boring or uninformative
- (c) Does not make meaningful connections in the group
- (d) Unresolved conflict: Anxiety (correct answer)

b) **Church attendance and Drop-outs**

i) Church attendance³²

- (1) In 2020, 47% of U.S. adults belonged to a church, synagogue, or mosque
- (2) 50% in 2010
- (3) 70% in 1999
- (4) Down more than 20 points from turn of the century
- (5) Change primarily due to rise in Americans with no religious preference

ii) Drop-out rate has increased among young church attenders.³³

- (1) 64% of 18-29-year-olds who grew up in church have withdrawn as an adult in 2019.
- (2) Down from 59% in 2011.

c) **Why do people drop out or become inactive? (Answer to predictive activity)**

In the mid-70s, John S. Savage, researched this question using questionnaires and interviews.

- i) The primary reason people move from active to inactive is anxiety prompted by unresolved conflict.³⁴
 - (1) Anxiety is the feeling of loss of a comfortable state. Leads to anger if unchecked.

³² Gallup, "U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time," accessed August 4, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx/>.

³³ The Barna Group, "Year in Review: Barna's Top 10 Releases of 2019," accessed August 4, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/top-10-releases-of-2019/>.

³⁴ John S. Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member* (Pittsford, NY: LEAD Consultants, 1976), 3.

- (2) Anger is a combination of uneasiness, discomfort, uneasiness, tenseness, resentment, and frustration.³⁵
 - (3) These incidents begin with some trigger(s), such as a death, divorce, or conflict at work or in the church, that cause the member to become upset.³⁶
 - ii) Surprisingly, people do not cite church preaching or teaching as the reason they leave.
 - (1) They leave because of how they feel.
 - (2) Often this is the result of some unresolved conflict or displeasure, real or perceived.
 - (3) The member exits because the tension they experience is not resolved.
 - iii) Typical drop-out process:³⁷
 - (1) Anxiety-provoking event(s)
 - (a) personal tragedy, burnout, conflict with pastor, conflict with another family in church, or with members of their own family
 - (b) A verbal cry for help
 - (i) This is the sign that shepherds must be able to recognize.
 - (c) Anger if no one responds
 - (d) A feeling of helplessness or hopelessness
 - (e) Withdrawal through a series of moves
 - (i) Attendance drops, drops from meetings or committees, etc.
 - (ii) Another sign shepherds should be ready to recognize.
 - (f) Six-to-eight-week period of no activity before leaving
 - iv) Some conflicts may be with the pastor, a family member, theological issues, financial issues, educational issues, or overwork in church activities.
 - (1) When these things are not resolved, members become anxious and then angry.
- d) Anxiety and Anger**
- i) Anxiety

In each one of these possible causes for anxiety, think about things that have made you anxious, or some anxiety you observed in someone close to you.

 - (1) Anxiety about real events in their own history.
 - (a) Cannot function in their Christian walk because of something they have done in the past, or something that happened to them.
 - (2) Delusional anxiety with no tie to real events.
 - (a) Something perceived, but not rooted in reality. Many people today require medication to function in their jobs or relationships. They have unrealistic fears of actions or consequences.

³⁵ Frederick R. Stern, *Anger, Psychology, Physiology, Pathology* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1972), 6.

³⁶ LeadPlus, "Early Warning Signals of Drop-out," accessed August 6, 2021, <http://leadplus.com/Articles.htm>.

³⁷ Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*, 68-71.

- (3) Anxiety from moral conflicts (expectations vs. behavior).
 - (a) This can be especially prevalent with church members who may knowingly compromise their lifestyle against biblical expectation. Extreme examples could be cohabitation before marriage, or compromised business practices.
- (4) Anxiety that life is meaningless (existential)
 - (a) A feeling that their existence is inconsequential. Once they are gone, there will be no indication that they ever lived. (Never married, no children, never witnessed). They are anxious because their lives lack meaning.
 - (i) We must be careful not to promote Christianity as an existential solution to meaninglessness. True identity is not found by selecting noble life-guiding principles. Our true identity is found in Christlikeness.
- ii) Anger

Think about times that perhaps you have been angry at a pastor or leader in the church and the reason for that anger has never been resolved. Think about someone that you know that has left a church in an angry state.

 - (1) Anger is a response to anxiety.
 - (2) Anger occurs when a person feels their comfort is being taken away.
 - (a) It is an aggressive response to escalating conflicts.
 - (3) Anger is always object-directed.³⁸
 - (a) The person wants to eliminate the object or situation producing anxiety.
 - (4) Anger is the method for returning to the comfortable state before the conflict.
 - (a) Attacking the object brings hope that the anxiety will go away.
- iii) The “drop-out track”:
 - (1) Anxiety provoking event (not necessarily church related)
 - (2) Non-resolution produces anger
 - (3) Member becomes less active (drops off committees and commitments)
 - (4) Enters a waiting period of 6-8 weeks
 - (5) Drops out of church or group
- e) **Apathetic and bored members**
 - i) Apathy is how a person survives when all is seemingly lost. The person gives up.
 - (1) This can happen when there is too much stress or conflict.
 - (a) They are usually vigorous in trying to “make things right.”
 - (b) Eventually give up because they feel helpless which results in isolation.
 - (c) Loss of contact with friends or church relationships.
 - (2) Blames the church.
 - (a) “No use telling them anything; they won’t listen.”

³⁸ Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*, 6.

- ii) Boredom occurs when a person believes he cannot change his condition by his own power.
 - (1) Person blames themselves for inability to affect change resulting in a loss of hope.
 - (a) The difference between the bored member and the apathetic member is that the bored person blames himself for the conflict.
 - (b) The bored person gives up because they do not believe they have influence or power to effect a change. They feel they don't matter.
 - (c) May become distant from the church.
 - (2) Blames themselves.
 - (a) "It's my own fault. I have been away too long to come back."
- f) Engaging the inactive member**
- i) First, we hope that members do not become inactive. Some of what we will be talking about in the remainder of the course is developing a shepherding role of engagement with our members so that conflicts (whether in life or in church) do not go unnoticed or unaddressed.
 - ii) Second, engaging an inactive member should not be tackled alone. Consult with pastors, elders, and respected people who are spiritually mature for advice on how to proceed. You may want to have them partner with you to engage an inactive member.
 - iii) Third, we must remember that the primary goal of engaging an inactive member is not to get them back in class or church. It is to encourage and restore the loving relationship with Christ so that they are living in the care of the Great Shepherd and experiencing his constant presence.
 - iv) Savage offers five components that contribute to effective communication whenever we engage someone who has become inactive due to conflict.
 - (1) Understand the person's self-concept.
 - (a) They are in the process of making a new identity for themselves that does not include the church or group.
 - (b) It is often an emotional change. The bored-hopeless person may exhibit a poor self-image.
 - (2) Be an effective listener.
 - (a) This is the most important component.
 - (b) Listen for meaning behind the words.
 - (c) Interact to make sure we understand what they are saying.
 - (3) Gain a clarity of what they are expressing.
 - (a) Restate their expression to make sure it is understood properly.
 - (4) Cope with angry feelings (theirs and ours).
 - (a) Be prepared to see a display of anger (hopefully not).
 - (b) We are not there to win an argument.
 - (5) Look for and exhibit self-disclosure if it is helpful.
 - (a) We create a climate of trust with mutual self-disclosure.
 - (b) What we reveal about ourselves can put our member at ease.
 - (c) Our self-disclosure may not be necessary and only comes after attentive listening.
 - v) The best option for shepherd-teachers is not to let a conflict come to the point of inactivity. Conflicts come in all forms: personal issues, work, church, small groups. When we act as trusted shepherds, we hope that our members have

confidence in their church leaders and friends so that anxious issues do not remain hidden.

g) Discussion

- i) Have you been involved in the restoration of an inactive member?
- ii) Have you experienced the loss of a member that did not return?
 - (1) Briefly share your experience.

SESSION 5: MAKING AND KEEPING PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

- 1) **Know the Sheep – Making and Keeping Personal Connections in ALG**
 - a) Session 7 will focus on methods to communicate the teacher’s willingness and availability to meet and discuss personal matters and spiritual growth with members. Attention will be given to sensitivity, privacy, gender dynamics, and lay-counseling as well as handling personal crises and when to escalate to elders, pastors, or professional counselors.
 - b) *Learning Outcome: Learners will be able to engage their members on a personal level, know when to counsel members, and identify when a pastor or elder should enter or take over the process.*
- 2) Outline
 - a) **Introduction: What do others know about you?**
 - i) A former director of The Evangelical Alliance Mission, Thomas Bach, wrote about a lady who testified publicly that she had entered into a deeper relationship with God.

When asked if she had experienced more power in her life or had more important work assigned to her, she answered, “No, I don’t think so. But I have noticed that my children put more confidence in me, and that my friends now frequently ask me for counsel and prayer.” Bach says, “When God brings you closer to Himself, people will soon know about it.”³⁹
 - ii) Those in your classes already regard you as a leader who is spiritually mature.
 - (1) Do you think they would come to you for spiritual questions or in crisis?
 - (2) Are you intentional about cultivating an atmosphere of accessibility?
 - (3) Are you developing trust relationships? (Acquaintances, friends, or in between)
 - (a) Depending on the size of your class, it may be impossible to be a trusted friend to everyone who attends.
 - (b) Do your members feel like they can trust you, even if a friendship has not been established? This is the case with pastors, and it can and should extend to small group leaders.
 - (i) For those that do not have strong ties to you, their trust level will be based on what they observe in your Christian walk.
 - (ii) Be prepared for people to come to you when they have nowhere else to go, if they have a spiritual matter to discuss, or if they want something to be kept confidential.
 - b) **Lay Counseling**
 - i) One thing we are all aware of if we have been leading in church for any length of time: People will face problems and crises in their lives.
 - (1) If you have built trust with your members at any level, you should expect to be called on to help in a crucial moment.

³⁹ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, 1996), 1371.

- (2) Every problem or crisis need not be immediately escalated to a church or professional counselor. Some should be. If you are not sure when it is appropriate to counsel a member, seek guidance from an elder or pastor.
- ii) Dr. Gary Collins defines lay counseling: “Lay counseling refers to people helping done by lay counselors who lack the training, education, experience, or credentials to be professional therapists but who nonetheless are involved in helping people cope with personal problems.”⁴⁰
 - (1) More research is needed in this area, but in both Christian and secular arenas, lay counseling has been shown to be as effective as professional therapist, even when we consider the limitations of lay counselors.⁴¹
- iii) Many of our members can be effectively counselled by addressing issues biblically.
 - (1) As a small group leader, we have a built-in trust because the person came to you and recognizes that you strive to live your life according to biblical principles. If you do, then you already possess expertise in biblical living.
 - (a) The ability to deal with or confront problems in life is often an issue of discipleship. You are positioned perfectly for guiding your member.
 - (i) A lack of trust in God is the root of most anxieties.
 - 1. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:6-7).
 - 2. We do not want to oversimplify this verse, but prayer and thanksgiving are important aspects of spiritual disciplines and discipleship.
 - (2) Counsel from a biblical perspective.
 - (a) Do not look to secular solutions for spiritual problems.
 - (b) Follow Christ’s model. Jesus was compassionate, accepting, met people’s needs, used the right words, emphasized right behavior, encouraged people to accept responsibility, he gave people hope, and he also admonished and confronted.⁴²
 - (3) Be a good listener.
 - (a) Know when to speak and when to keep quiet.
 - (4) Always pray with your member.
 - (5) Do not counsel opposite gender members one-on-one.
 - (a) Relational issues can be problematic.
 - (i) Accountability becomes an issue.

⁴⁰ Siang-Yang Tan, “Lay Counseling,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, Baker Reference Library, ed. David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 672.

⁴¹ Tan, “Lay Counseling,” 673.

⁴² H. Norman Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling: What to Do and Say When It Matters Most!* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2011), 17.

- (ii) There is a possibility of transference if they see you in an admirable light.
- (b) Include your spouse if that is a good option.
 - (i) Couples counseling couples can be very helpful.
 - (ii) Maybe your spouse can counsel them one-on-one.
- (c) Refer them to someone else of the same gender that you trust.
 - (i) You are not the only person in the world that can help them.
- (6) Consult with other mature Christians, elders, and pastors for guidance.
 - (a) Be sensitive and secret about your member.
 - (b) Ask their permission if you feel you must reveal their identity.
- (7) These guidelines do not cover everything. Entire courses have been designed to train and equip lay counselors.
 - (a) Most issues that relate directly to spirituality can probably be handled by small group leaders.

c) Escalation

- i) Not every problem can be addressed by leading members to engage in spiritual disciplines.
 - (1) Problems involving abuse, addiction, medications, or serious issues of mental health should be referred to professionals. Seek guidance from elders and pastors. If they are currently being treated by professions, encourage that process.
 - (2) Issues that involve dishonesty, infidelity or sexual immorality may need to be addressed through church discipline which can only be handled by elders and pastors. Consult with elders and pastors before taking the step of confrontation described in Matthew 18:15-20.
 - (3) Use wisdom if you feel the issue is serious enough to escalate.
 - (4) If you are stuck, or your member is stuck, move it to the next level.

d) Legal Concerns

- i) A possibility of negligence always looms over anyone who counsels another, whether laity or clergy.
 - (1) Someone may claim that their problem was further aggravated by a lay counselor.
 - (2) Someone may claim that a lay counselor has a legal duty to refer suicidal person to medical professionals, or they may be held responsible.
 - (a) In 1988, the California Supreme Court ruled that “nontherapist clergy” do not have a duty to refer suicidal persons to medical professionals. However, the court emphasized that its ruling applied only to clergy who are not therapists. This ruling has been followed by courts in many other states. The key point is this: there is no assurance that lay counselors working on behalf of a church share the virtual immunity from liability enjoyed by nontherapist clergy counselors. This is so whether or not the lay counselors are licensed counselors or psychologists under state law.⁴³

⁴³ Richard R. Hammar, *Pastor, Church & Law: Liability & Church and State Issues*, ed. Marian V. Liautaud (Carol Stream, IN: Christianity Today International, 2008), 4:283.

- (3) If there is any possibility of accusation or impropriety (child abuse, seduction, confidentiality, etc.) consult a pastor *before* proceeding.
 - (4) Most people who come to us as small group leaders are not likely to open us up to legal issues, but we must always be mindful of the possibility.
- e) Who are the undershepherds?**
- i) Not just pastors or elders.
 - ii) Those who lead small groups are the closest connection to the members of the church.
 - (1) They have more opportunity to know us personally than the pastor or an elder.
 - (2) No one is in a better position to connect with a member than those who teach and interact with them weekly.
 - (3) 1 Peter 5:2-3 “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”
 - (4) Our small group is essentially a flock that God has placed in our care.
 - iii) “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’” (Luke 15:4-6).
 - (1) “The scandal was that as leaders of Israel, these teachers of the law were considered undershepherds of the Shepherd, God. But they were failing in their task, just as their fathers of old had done when Ezekiel prophesied against them.”⁴⁴
 - iv) Scott Thomas and Tom Wood show how Peter lays out four characteristics of “Gospel Friendship” in their book, *Gospel Coach: Shepherding Leaders to Glorify God*. They define undershepherds as people who are gospel coaches:
 - (1) A gospel coach gives a reproducible example to those they are discipling.
 - (a) Jesus provided a pattern to follow. Leaders are undershepherds, submissive to the chief Shepherd.
 - (2) A gospel coach recognizes their own identity as a sheep in need of a shepherd.
 - (3) A gospel coach initiates relationships with the people immediately around them.
 - (4) A gospel coach initiates caring acts of service for others.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 132.

⁴⁵ Scott Thomas and Tom Wood, *Gospel Coach: Shepherding Leaders to Glorify God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 113-15, 142.

f) Know the sheep

- i) In *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church*, Timothy Witmer describes five different kinds of sheep and advises those who shepherd the flock to be able to identify each.⁴⁶
 - (1) We evaluate them in the context of small groups.
 - (2) All sheep in all categories should have regular or periodic contact from the group leader or care-group leader and encouraged to reach out to leaders at any time.
 - (3) The primary objective is to know and account for the sheep.
- ii) Sheep categories
 - (1) Healthy sheep
 - (a) Concerned with the body of Christ
 - (b) Observable behavior
 - (i) Regular attendance in small group
 - (ii) Involved in ministry
 - (c) Shepherd action
 - (i) Look for spiritual maturity and desire for growth
 - 1. Regular attendance is not a sure indicator of salvation
 - (ii) Make enough contact to know their story and be an encourager
 - (iii) Ask how you can serve them and pray for them
 - (2) Weak sheep
 - (a) Concerns are limited to themselves
 - (b) Observable behavior
 - (i) Regular for frequent attendance to worship
 - (ii) Occasional attendance to small group
 - (iii) Not engaged in ministry to others
 - (c) Shepherd action
 - (i) Make an effort to know why they attend sporadically
 - 1. They may work Sundays or drive long distance
 - (ii) Look for them and know when they are absent
 - (iii) Ask how you can serve them and pray for them
 - (3) Stray sheep
 - (a) Unconcerned about church involvement
 - (b) Observable behavior
 - (i) Sporadic attendance in small group—quarterly or less
 - (ii) Uninvolved in ministry
 - (iii) Seen at Christmas and Easter only
 - (c) Shepherd action
 - (i) Welcome them personally when they attend (know their names)
 - (ii) Contact them when the class has special events
 - 1. email, or better yet, call
 - (iii) Ask how you can serve them and pray for them
 - (4) Lost sheep
 - (a) Forsaken the church

⁴⁶ Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader*, 199-204.

- (b) Observable behavior
 - (i) Name on the roll is the only connection with small group
- (c) Shepherd action
 - (i) Contact them to let them know their name is still on the roll
 - (ii) Encourage them to return to the group
 - (iii) Ask how you can serve them and pray for them
 - (iv) Ask if they want to be removed from the roll if they are not coming back
- (5) Circumstantially inactive sheep
 - (a) *Cannot* attend
 - (b) Observable behavior
 - (i) Shut-in, Nursing home, away at college, military, or moved away
 - (c) Shepherd action
 - (i) Still need attention from a caring shepherd
 - (ii) If shut-in or nursing home, make sure they are known to the church's caring ministry
 - (iii) If moved, encourage to become part of a local congregation
 - (iv) If away at college or military, keep them on your email lists.
Support them in prayer and send occasional encouragement. Know when they will return or if they have found another church home.
- iii) The primary shepherding action is to know the sheep and account for each one.
 - (1) Know the group well enough to know the challenges and struggles they face.
 - (2) Use your roster to pray for each member. Keep a notebook of when and how you prayed for them.
 - (3) Look over the attendance records and note changes to members regular patterns.
 - (4) Keep in touch with the sheep:
 - (a) Members in smaller groups should be contacted by the group leader.
 - (b) Large groups can be split into smaller groups of care-group leaders.
 - (i) The primary leader should still make contact, but with less frequency than the care-group leaders.
 - (c) Make in-person connections whenever possible outside of class activities.
 - (i) Chat after group is over (intentional rotation is a good idea)
 - (ii) Meet for coffee or lunch
 - (iii) Share a common activity like golf, a ball game, or an event.
 - 1. Personal or couples. Do this apart from group activities.
 - 2. Promotes familiarity and trust.
 - (iv) Invite them to a bible study outside of small group

g) Discussion

- i) How have you made connections with your members?
- ii) Do you have or need care group leaders?

SESSION 6: SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
AND THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

1) **ALG Ministry and the Role of the Church**

- a) This session will focus on the difference between community built through fellowship events and those built through shepherding practices. ALG class events will be discussed as a method to build a shepherded flock rather than an end goal of ALG ministry.
- b) *Learning Outcome: The learners will be able to distinguish between shepherding activities and practices that merely provide an environment shepherding those activities.*

2) Outline

a) **Introduction: The Foolishness of Congregations**

- i) Eugene Peterson on “Church”:

“St. Paul talked about the foolishness of preaching; I would like to talk about the foolishness of congregations, God’s choice of venue. Of all the ways in which to carry out the enterprise of church, this has to be the most absurd—a haphazard collection of people who somehow get assembled into pews on Sundays, half-heartedly sing a few songs most of them don’t like, and tune in and out of a sermon according to the state of their digestion and the preacher’s decibels, awkward in their commitments and jerky in their patterns.”

“But the people in those pews are also people who suffer deeply and find God in their suffering. They make love commitments, are faithful to them through trial and temptation, and bear fruits of righteousness, Spirit-fruits that bless the people around them. Babies, surrounded by hopeful and rejoicing parents and friends, are baptized [or dedicated] in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. The dead are offered up to God in funerals that, in the midst of tears and grief, give solemn and joyful witness to the Resurrection. Sinners repent and take the body and blood of Jesus and receive new life.”

“And these two realities are mixed, impossible to separate.”⁴⁷

- ii) Peterson’s description describes a church that is a community. Not because they like the same music, or live in the same neighborhood, or all have the same ethnicity or economic status. Something keeps them together beyond their likes and preferences. The true church is not a club, it is a place where we share our lives together.
- i) Remember Calvary’s description for ALGs?
“Adult Life Groups are where we do life together! These smaller groups are an essential part of helping everyone connect at Calvary and *grow in faith together*. ALGs meet to study God’s Word, pray, enjoy fellowship, and share the joys and challenges of life. This is where we develop lasting friendships and *build community* that stretches far beyond Sundays.”

⁴⁷ Eugene Peterson, “The Jonah Syndrome,” *Leadership Journal* 11, no. 3 (1990): 43.

b) Mistaken ideas of what a shepherded community is:

i) Great preaching

- (1) Great preaching gets people in the doors. A great number of those who join the Calvary Church have the same story when they receive the “right hand of fellowship”: “We came because the Word of God is preached at Calvary.”
- (2) However, as many of you know, Calvary has scores of people that walk in the door, participate in worship, listen intently to the message from the pulpit, and then go to the parking lot and leave. Less than 50% of attendees to worship regularly attend ALG. They get a steady diet of corporate worship and never experience community or any growth along with others.
- (3) Great preaching is not an example of shepherding, but it is a *means* to establish shepherding.

ii) Small group events

- (1) When people connect with small groups, they take the first real step towards Christian community. But a single hour is quite a limited time to try and build relationships. Especially when most of the time is spent in a focused study of the Bible. Even if you devote fifteen minutes to “fellowship,” that will never result in meaningful relationships.
- (2) Small groups are the perfect venue for launching events that build community outside of the regular classes. But do these events *necessarily* build the relationships that we envision for growing in faith together?
- (3) Small group events are also not an example of shepherding, but they are a *means* to establish shepherding.
 - (a) Familiarity sets the stage for trust.
 - (b) The shepherd cannot lead the sheep without being trusted.
- (4) Great preaching and social events alone will not build a shepherded community.

iii) Community

- (1) Wilhoit: “Scripture, history, and common sense all teach us that God uses means of grace to communicate grace. The means of grace are those relationships, practices, situations, and such through which the Holy Spirit works to restore the image of Christ in individuals and communities.”⁴⁸
- (2) He emphasizes that Christian fellowship is an important means of grace. There may be occasional instances of a person who matures solely through private devotions. But, as we discussed earlier, Christianity is essentially based in love of God and others. It is practiced and cultivated in community.

c) Why do members bond?

(1) Mutual personal support (*koinonia*)

- (a) According to James Dunn, the preferred translation of *koinōnia* is “community.” The definition of *koinōnia* embodies themes of commonness, sharing, togetherness and unity in diversity. The first mention of *koinonia* in the New Testament is immediately after the event of Pentecost. Dunn has argued that the disciples of Jesus became

⁴⁸ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 215.

“self-conscious” about their communal identity at the event of Pentecost.

- (2) Bible study
- (3) Prayer
- (4) Worship
- (5) Mission⁴⁹

d) Biblical and Theological Foundations for Small Group Ministry

Summarized from Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry: An Integrative Approach*:

- i) God existed as a community of being from the beginning.
- ii) God created humanity as a community that reflects the eternal community of God as man and woman together with God. A minimum community of two along with the community of God is called to live in intimate, reciprocal, dialogical and growing relationship.
- iii) From the beginning, humanity struggled to maintain integrity of community with God. As the human community continually chooses to develop itself outside of intimate community with God, its relationships and individuals break and die. Except for the continuing intervention of the beckoning and gracious community of God, human community would be self-possessed, broken and lost permanently.
- iv) Cut off from God, the human community can choose to receive or reject God’s gracious offering to restore divine-human community. In rejecting intimacy with God, the human community continues in a state of sin, broken relationships and dying persons.
- v) If the broken human community chooses to accept God’s gracious and personal embrace of restored divine-human community, God works at the redemptive process of restoring and completing the human community by re-interjecting divine community in the midst of human community.
- vi) The ultimate and focused demonstration of God’s reconciling movement toward humanity comes in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ, who, in his own being as both God and human, enters the human arena as a man who does the work of restoring community between God and humanity.
- vii) The small groups of men and women who responded to, lived with, and loved the historical Jesus came together as a new community with the resurrected Christ.
- viii) Wherever the person of Jesus calls together two or more other persons, male or female, young or old, Jew or Gentile, there is the divine-human community in microcosm, the ecclesia, a Christian small group.
- ix) The ecclesia are small groups of Christians who are scattered around the world, bound together by a common Spirit. Meeting in all arenas of human systems and organizations, these ecclesiae are networked together in multiple groupings of various numbers and configurations.

⁴⁹ Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry: An Integrative Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), chap. 24, “Popular Models of Small Group Ministry,” para. 1, Logos Bible Software.

- x) All small groups, and groups of groups, who come together in the name and nature of Jesus, all ecclesia, and networks of ecclesia, are being beckoned to participate in the eternal community of Jesus with Abba God. *Every Christian small group is being drawn into eternal community with Father, Son and Spirit.* The Christian small group is a penultimate expression of an ultimate eschatological reality. The ultimate expression of human community is the eternal community between God and humanity, focused in Jesus Christ.⁵⁰
- e) **Curriculum for Christlikeness – 4 R’s (Wilhoit)**
 - i) Questions designed to look at the formation process from two perspectives. Wilhoit recommends that we evaluate our mission in the light of whether we are moving people towards Christlikeness. Evaluation is difficult because of human vulnerability to self-deceive and because we have blind spots.⁵¹
 - (1) Receiving: Where Do People Receive God’s Grace and Love?
 - (a) Is our ALG cultivating a desire to receive God’s love?
 - (2) Remembering: Where Are People Encouraged to Remember Who They Truly Are as Children of God and Whose They Truly Are?
 - (a) How well are we teaching people to adopt Jesus’ lifestyle?
 - (b) Are we teaching the practice of spiritual disciplines that marked Jesus’ life?
 - (3) Responding: In What Ways Do We Foster a Disposition to Be People of Love and “Right Living”?
 - (a) Are we equipping people for evangelizing?
 - (b) Are we equipping people to be good stewards of God’s creation?
 - (4) Relating: Where Do We Provide Opportunities to Grow in and through Relationships?
 - (a) Do we show hospitality to one another and to strangers?
 - (b) Are we teaching others to be on the lookout for known patterns of sin around us?
- f) **Your ALG Ministry**
 - i) Define your ministry
 - ii) Have a plan
 - iii) Be intentional
 - iv) Seek the Lord’s guidance
- g) **Discussion**
 - i) Questions or comments on class material
 - ii) Successes, failures, experiences with small group members
 - iii) Share practices used or planning to use
- h) **Close the course**
 - i) Display contact information.
 - ii) Encourage attenders to contact me for discussion or questions.
 - iii) Pray for the attenders and the Holy Spirit’s guidance for teachers and their small groups.

⁵⁰ Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations*, “Conclusion.”

⁵¹ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 258-60.

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING SHEPHERD-TEACHERS AT CALVARY CHURCH IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
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This project sought to foster practices and attitudes of shepherd-teaching in leaders of Adult Life Groups and small group Bible studies in general by equipping current leaders at Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the ministry context at Calvary Church, including the project's goals, rationale, research methodology, and limits and delimitations. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for the project. An exegesis of Joshua 1:1-9, James 3:1-5, Ezekiel 34:1-6, and 1 Peter 5:1-4 supports the premise that teaching God's Word necessarily involves biblical shepherding practices when church members are placed in their care. Chapter 3 addresses the theoretical and practical issues related to shepherd-teaching small groups. Chapter 4 is a detailed description of the project's implementation. Chapter 5 evaluates the project's effectiveness as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

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